

Time Out

New York

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Eat Out

THE CITY'S BEST RESTAURANTS, BARS AND CULINARY RICHES

SHICK PICK Football players with the NY Sharks watch in a which wings fly. Offensive menace Anna "Tonka" Tate (inset) plays the field.



LORDS OF THE WINGS

In search of the city's tastiest Super Bowl wings, TONY calls in the big-gun judges: football players with the all-female New York Sharks.

By David Tamarkin Photographs by Astrid Stawiarz



According to Buffalo wing expert Anna "Tonka" Tate, we must take two precautions before we eat the Super Bowl staple. First, check for hairs. Then, smell the meat. This isn't exactly the kind of routine we want to go through at game time—Buffalo wings are meant to be inhaled, not inspected—but we're not going to argue with the woman. At 5'11" and 285 pounds, Tonka, an offensive lineman on the New York Sharks female football team, isn't someone you want to mess with, as any player in the Independent Women's Football League will confirm. Her motto, in life and on the field, is "Move, bitch. Get out of the way."

Wings are just part of the game-day experience for football fans, but for players like Tonka and her teammates, the chicken parts are practically a religion. To hear the Sharks talk wings, you'd think the women had invented them. Dipping a wing in batter is a fumble, a heavy hand with the vinegar is a penalty, and changing

a price that has a number to the left of the decimal point is a slap in the face. Their chatter is full of winning wags. Make it chicken, make it better than hell, and make it messy. Anne Periss, a rookie Shark, says she's seen rap kids go through the batter the wrong way.

For TONY's first-ever Wing Bowl, we gave the Sharks (Tonka, defensive end Rose Addison, star member Star Wilson and Periss pictured, left) right batches of wings and asked them to rate the entire bunch. They doled out up to seven possible "bitch down" points each in terms of appearance, texture and taste—just a taste for the big game by that other football league. If the Sharks were to begin the battle off, they talked even bigger, shouting out insults that would make grown men cry. We started up some of the language, but otherwise, so far, everything's been sweet, no holds barred opinions. If you've got issues with the commentators, take it up with them yourself.

ATOMIC WINGS
 528 Ninth Ave
 between 39th
 and 40th Sts,
 212-760-9090



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It's unanimous: The flavor's excellent, but the medium wings are, as Addison says, "weak enough to give to my two-year-old."

Team	HOOTERS 211 W 50th St between Broadway and Seventh Ave 212-581-5656	BISCUIT 167 Flatbush Ave between Seventh Ave and Sterling Pl, Prospect Hts, Brooklyn, 718-398-2227	AMY RUTH'S 113 W 116 St between Lenox and Seventh Aves, 212-280-8779	BLUE SMOKE 116 E 27th St between Park Ave South and Lexington Ave, 212-447-7733	LE ZINC 795 Duane St between Church St and West Broadway, 212-513-0001	SOCIAL 795 Eighth Ave between 48th and 49th Sts, 212-459-0643	VEG-CITY DINER 55 W 14th St between Fifth and Sixth Aves, 212-490-6266	ATOMIC WINGS 528 Ninth Ave between 39th and 40th Sts, 212-760-9090
Scouting report	Enough with the breasts; we're just interested in wings. We ordered the mild version battered and fried, and the hotter one naked (as it should be).	The "firecracker" wings are smothered in a sauce made with chipotle, simple syrup and lemon juice, and served with a buttermilk-cheddar dip.	This Harlem soul-food spot is famous for its fried chicken, so we expect big things from the wings—even if they are \$1 a pop with a minimum order of 48.	These meager-looking wings are brined, smoked, deep-fried and smothered in a dark, rich, molasses-y sauce—and, being Danny Meyer wings, they're served with designer wet nap.	Football as we know it isn't popular in France, so we'll excuse Le Zinc's blatant disregard for the form: Their "wings" are from a duck—and served with a sweet and hot bean sauce.	This new venue serves a simple, down-to-earth version with a bright orange sauce speckled with spices.	Sensing the uproar that would ensue, we try to pass off these oversize vegetarian "wings" (made of breaded soy) as the real thing.	These fluorescent-orange entries from New York's prolific wing joint come in six degrees of heat, from mild to suicidal. We give the team medium-strength.
Pre-game analysis	At first glance, the Sharks are worried. With little meat and a lot of bone, the wings resemble legs from a cartoon.	The team's eyes light up at the sight of these "fire" wings. And those are good.	Price is no object...yet. The wings look like the meatiest of the bunch.	Good first impression. No hairs, and the meat smells promising.	Our judges are wary of touching the duck wing, noting that it "looks like something I might have stepped in on my way here."	The girls are impressed with the vibrant color of the sauce and the texture of the skin.	At first, the Sharks are fooled—and impressed with the aroma, saying that these smell not enough to open your pores.	Although the flaming color is promising, our judges worry that medium won't cut it. No wings should ever be less than dangerously spicy, they say.
Play-by-play	They agree the wings are "like butter." Which isn't a good thing. "Butter is not what wings are supposed to taste like."	Decent flavor, but not spicy enough to warrant the name. "It's more like a barbecue sauce, sweet with a spicy kickback."	The wings are tasty enough—slightly salty with a lot of tang—but they miss on texture. They're called "spongy," "dried out" and "crispless."	The process of smoking wings is dismissed as "lame," despite the decent flavor.	Is it chicken? Is it beef? After learning that it's duck, the ladies decide these are an abomination, no matter what they taste like.	The promising-looking wings turn out to be a bit too salty but are otherwise leaders of the pack.	Insults range from "tastes like by-products" to "worse than McDonald's muggers."	It's unanimous: The flavor's excellent, but the medium wings are, as Addison says, "weak enough to give to my two-year-old."
Score	6. No better than Banquet wings from the grocery store freezer case.	18. High marks for layers of flavor and the deep-red color.	7. It's the economy, stupid. Wings aren't supposed to cost \$1.	13. The wings taste fine, but no one wants to pay \$9.50 for a dozen wings just because they spent time in a higher smoker.	7. If the wing ain't broke, don't fix it.	20. Punks all, the Sharks appreciate simple, traditional wings.	0. The judges say that if anyone gives them these wings again, they'll slap them right back.	21. A proven scouting tip: Look at the name and order atomic-strength meat.

21. A winner, so long as you take a cue from the name and order atomic-strength heat.