

The Biggest Ball of Them All / Charlie Baker 2.0 / Become a Famous Writer!

# Boston

# CHINA'S

From Newbury Street to the Seaport, big-money Chinese buyers are spending millions. Are we cashing in or selling out?

# TOWN



boston







A quick grill session leaves the Pub's winning wings with crisp, smoky skin.

For Shire's tailgate-ready chicken-wing recipe—named for her friend, Pats legend Andre Tippett—go to [bostonmagazine.com/wings](http://bostonmagazine.com/wings).

## TASTE TEST Flipping the Birds

Which wings should you order for the big game? We took chef Lydia Shire on a citywide crawl to find out.

By Jolyon Helterman

**LYDIA SHIRE'S** hulking Toyota Tundra takes up nearly two prime spots in front of Buff's Pub, the first stop on our "undercover" quest for Boston's worthiest wings. The flame-haired chef had insisted on driving, and for a brief moment—as we sit in the cab of her red monster truck, scribbling orange-grease-smearred notes in between saucy bites of chicken—

I question the wisdom of letting her chauffeur. Inconspicuous, we are not. Thankfully, the lunch crowd provides some cover.

That I've asked Shire to play wingman is no accident: A die-hard tailgater famous for elaborate spreads before and after Pats games, she's also an exacting connoisseur of snacks of the Buffalo-sauced variety. As

we pace ourselves through the day's lineup\*—tossing leftovers into the Hefty bags I've strung up in the back seat—we geek out over our shared preferences for small pieces over jumbo, and "flats" over drumettes. It's an arduous slog, but the reward is sweet: a stunning new go-to for takeout wings, in a location that surprises us both.

\*An unscientific mix of tips from colleagues, chefs, and foodie websites. Bone-in Buffalo-style wings only, ordered medium-hot.

### 1 WINNER THE PUB

**THE GOOD** The top-flight wings are a hybrid of sorts: deep-fried, brushed with sauce, and then tossed onto a hot grate, giving them spiffy grill marks.

**FLAVOR**  "Now *that* is delicious," announced Shire after a single bite. "The char adds a whole other dimension." Smoky

and salty, the beautifully crisped, charred skin was a perfect foil to the still-juicy meat underneath. **THE BAD** The trek out to Ball Square. 682 Broadway, Somerville, 617-776-7373.

### 2 HARRY'S BAR & GRILL

**THE GOOD** The wings are confited in oil and fried to order, resulting in a flawless texture. The sauce had a distinctive rich finish that we couldn't quite

**FLAVOR**  place. "It just *pleased* me," Shire said. **THE BAD** Somehow, we ended up with zero flats. As consummate professionals, however, we agreed to evaluate

from a drumettes-neutral perspective. 1430 Commonwealth Ave., Brighton, 617-738-9990, [harrysboston.com](http://harrysboston.com).

### 3 BUFF'S PUB

**THE GOOD** This Newton legend has been rocking the wing crown for decades, and it was the presumed champ going in. "The skin's crispiness is excellent," Shire said, "and the flavor of the sauce is just right."

**FLAVOR**  **THE BAD** The stingy amount of said sauce made it hard to overlook the overcooked meat—a few of the flats were nearly desiccated, with the flesh starting to pull away from the bone. 317 Washington St., Newton, 617-332-9134, [buffspubofnewton.com](http://buffspubofnewton.com).





"That tiny morsel of tender chicken between those bones is the most succulent and perfect piece of meat on the entire bird," says Shire of her love for "flats."

**4 WOODY'S GRILL & TAP**

**THE GOOD** This staff favorite, a drumette's throw from the *Boston* offices, put up a solid showing. Baked with jerk spices, fried to a

**FLAVOR**  deep ebony, and tossed with traditional sauce, these beauties gave the Pub's grill-striped wings a run for their money, looks-wise.

**TEXTURE**

**OVERALL**

**THE BAD** My palate picked up off-notes—stale frying oil, perhaps? "I wish they'd cooked them a few minutes less," Shire said. 58 Hemeway St., Boston, 617-375-9663, woodysboston.com.

**5 CLERYS**

**THE GOOD** The wings at this bustling Back Bay Station-adjacent hangout had an exceptionally crispy exterior, which we chalked up to the extra air-drying step before they get tossed into the oven. The house-made Buffalo sauce had a luxurious body that clung nicely to the well-rendered skin.

**THE BAD** Shire found the sauce too vinegary. 113 Dartmouth St., Boston, 617-262-9874, clerysboston.com.

**6 WING IT**

**THE GOOD** The meat, even on smaller pieces, remained moist. And—bonus!—the place offers weekend delivery until 2 a.m.

**FLAVOR**  **THE BAD** Wing size varied wildly within a single order, causing textural inconsistencies, especially in the drumettes. The sauce, meanwhile, lacked the suppleness of a traditional Frank's-based recipe. "It just tastes like vinegar and hot sauce," Shire said. 1153 Commonwealth Ave., Allston, 617-783-2473, wing-it.com.

**TEXTURE**

**OVERALL**

STYLING BY JESSICA WEATHERHEAD/TEAM; OPPOSITE: ILLUSTRATION BY THE ELLAPHANT IN THE ROOM

PHOTOGRAPH BY BRUCE PETERSON