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Wing Stop: An American History Lesson

Chicken wings are a significant part of American food just as hot dogs and hamburgers are. It is realistic to say that chicken wings are the preferred appetizers when eating at a restaurant. Wings are a side meal, such as French fries, that is so popular in the United States that many restaurants now focus on selling this as their main-course product. Restaurants such as Buffalo Wild Wings and Wing Stop provide such legitimacy and have a high reputation for satisfying customers' empty stomachs. Wing Stop, in particular, concentrates on American culture by making their hot "wings" an innuendo with the wings of airplanes, and actually informing customers about planes in which these customers range anywhere from teenagers to middle-aged, and even sometimes, senior citizens. While one waits for his or her order, or even sits and eats, he may notice that the television constantly displays the sports channel, which further reinforces the restaurant's atmosphere of American culture.

To cleverly set up their theme, Wing Stop has a hangar-like feel when one walks in. Personally, I felt as if I were in a hangar because of the bottom half of the wall being made out of aluminum just as real hangars are made of metal. The top half of the wall is painted a dark green to give the reassurance the customer of its typical Wing Stop style. The hangar-like feel expands with its employees since the seven-to-eight employees I saw there wore their engineer or mechanic-seeming uniforms, because of their black shirt with the khaki colored stripe on lateral sides of both sleeves. Possibly for marketing reasons, there was more woman than men working

*at the restaurant the day of my visit; nonetheless, the scenery of a hangar stayed in my mind as I ate with friends. By implying the innuendo of airplane wings to chicken wings, I believe Wing Stop ties in American culture in both subjects since both originated in the United States. More specifically, the planes that hung on their portraits all came from western United States such as Lancaster, California as well as Midwestern states such as Illinois, Kansas, and Nebraska. At least in this specific Wing Stop location, there was not any evidence of innovation in aviation from the southern or eastern United States. Ultimately, by serving an American-based food in an airplane-themed atmosphere, Wing Stop holds an ambiance of American pride in order to keep food and cultural history alive amongst customers.

Most middle-aged men and women usually have kids and want to eat at a familial restaurant. This particular Wing Stop does not have high chairs available for children and the largest booths only fit up to four people, proves that only a small group of acquaintances may socialize. Mostly, this setup appeals to adolescents and those in about their mid-twenties because of the convenience of the tables due to its booths, which have symmetrical seats meant for interaction within the party. Also, the caloric and fat intake from the wings is not the most appealing to older folks. Younger folks have a more stable body, maintaining equilibrium with its food intake, while middle-aged people tend to pay the consequences of eating high-caloric foods by gaining weight easier and even being more prone to high blood pressure. Aside from this, the music here is played louder than usual at other restaurants, which is more appealing to teenagers since the pop music matches their energetic, youthful personalities. Since most teens do not have jobs and still hold a youthful metabolism, and the Wing Stop environment is energetic and comfortable to adolescent personalities, Wing Stop undoubtedly works in teens' favor. I believe what makes Wing Stop such a busy restaurant is the thousands of teens a week,

around the nation, who choose to eat the delicious, yet unhealthy, chicken wings that middle-aged men and women tend to avoid. I believe that this is the same reason younger-looking employees are working here—to socialize with customers and provide an atmosphere of unity and comfort. If this were not true, I do not think the managers would expect employees to call the customer by his or her name instead of a number as other fast food restaurants do. By attracting all these teens to their company, I came to the conclusion that Wing Stop sets up their store in order for teens to spend their money and have a “hang out” place where they may socialize and eat. The idea of youth itself is cherished in American society, as it is proven when the elderly pay for any type of surgery to make them seem younger, and by attracting the youth to eat the unhealthy foods, the company attracts the majority of the unhealthy eaters to buy the product, further causing the company to make high profits.

When I walked into this Wing Stop, I immediately noticed the shape of it. It was in the shape of the letter, ‘L,’ which I believe was an attempt to make a wing-shaped building. When I sat, I noticed two televisions hung up on wall mounts. Each television was on the same channel because of Sunday Night Football and quickly reassured me that the American theme in the restaurant became reinforced even through the television channel chosen by the one of the Wing Stop employees. This restaurant is somewhat different from my culture because of the different part of the chicken that is used at Wing Stop. The same ideas are noticed, but the ritual of how the chicken is cooked is drastically different. The way the wings are cooked at this restaurant is Americanized, using fryers, a lot more grease, and ways of industrialized, quick heat. Typically, my Mexican family, and even cousins or aunts born here in the US, take the breast and thigh part of the chicken to cook and eat. They are cooked upon a traditional stove on a pan and take the usual time to prepare the meal. My mother strips the chicken into a seemingly lean, healthy meal

with the exception of providing a red and or green sauce to add a spicy, Mexican-styled sauce to it. Another type of meal she cooks is exceptionally spicy and healthy due to her way of making it with onion and green beans. It took me many tries to enjoy it and once I acquired the flavor, I learned that the name for it was *tinga*. This is only a small sample from the wide variety of meals in Mexican culture. For a side course, however, one might have tortilla in Mexico whereas in the US, it might be French fries. Hence, an appetizer in Mexico probably does not exist. The idea of an appetizer within itself is an American ideal. Culturally, the foods as well as the mainstream sports in Mexico and America are exceptionally distinct. The flavors are also distinct and the sport of football is more extreme and dangerous than the most practiced sport in Mexico—soccer. Football *is* soccer in Mexico with the exception that it is spelled *futbol*. Not only Mexicans know the American concept of football as *futbol Americano* but also pertains to all of Latin America itself. American football is so widely accepted in America that there are sports bars varied among the nation and serves in the best interest of marketing as well as those hungry, football-loving customers who want to socialize with friends all while eating some American food to comply well with an American sport. Wing Stop supports this tradition and does it well to reassure its customers that American culture is satisfying with the help of sports and good food.

Wing Stop surprisingly had much culture to it once I actually sat down and questioned my surroundings. From simple things such as watching football on the television to roaming around and reading the words on the hung portraits, I learned that those inanimate objects that were insignificant before actually matter once questioned. As I left, I felt satisfied and felt as if I received my money's worth. As for the culture of the place, I was surprised to know that a restaurant I ate at several times before had a message through its theme that it was trying to point

out, which I believed was to eat at a restaurant comfortably, one should know some history first. Wing Stop provided just that with its half and half walls, colors, lighting, employees, uniforms, location, shape, and customers themselves. The music kept the body awake and provided a set tone once sat down and eating in order to “live up to the hype,” which also kept its young, hip way of attracting and appealing to its intended audience—the social high school kids who urge some spicy, sweet, sour, or mild appetizing chicken wings with a side of seasoned fries in their hungry stomachs with a refreshing drink to wash it all down.