

## Brandywine Table

# Barbecue at Home with Michael Falcone

### TRY SOME UNIQUE SAUCES ON THE GRILL

Courtney H. Diener-Stokes

I'VE FOLLOWED MICHAEL FALCONE'S CULINARY path ever since I dined at his first restaurant, Funky Lil' Kitchen in Pottstown, about 15 years ago. His innovative and daring approach to cuisine inspired me.

It was a pleasure to reconnect recently with Falcone to hear his story since closing FLK a decade ago and learn about his plans for the future. And since we're focusing on outdoor grilling, I asked what he's cooking at home this summer for his wife Tonda and daughter Rio.

Falcone's latest food venture began five years ago when he met food entrepreneur David Backhus in Yellow Springs, where Falcone had his Heart Food Truck. An exchange of phone numbers led to a friendship that became a partnership.

The timing was perfect. Falcone was ready to move on from the food truck he started after closing FLK, and Backhus planned to open Oori, a seasonal Korean-inspired restaurant in Pottstown. Backhus knew Falcone's history with FLK and needed guidance.

In 2019 Falcone partnered with Backhus in Take Flight Restaurant Group, where he also serves as corporate chef. Since then, the duo

has taken the local culinary scene by storm. "David has a great vision and wants to put it to good use," Falcone says. "I'm fortunate to be along for the ride."

After launching Oori in South Coventry in 2019, they opened Bloom Southern Kitchen in Eagle a year later. In 2021 they started Collective Coffee, a coffee roastery, also in Chester County. Then in April 2023, they added Collective Coffee & Bakery in Ludwig's Village. (The group also owns Morgantown Coffee



Michael Falcone prepping asparagus



Michael Falcone, left, and David Backhus

House in Elverson, which Backhus started before their partnership.)

Their latest acquisition is The Stables: Kitchen & Beer Garden in Eagle, reopening early this summer after renovations. "It will be a casual, fun hangout but with elevated food and service," Falcone says. "Bring your family."

Plans also include expanding Bloom to the third floor for a members-only speakeasy. Falcone says the vibe of the lounge will be "dark and chill." Intended to be a late-night, after-dinner destination, the speakeasy will have a menu featuring light food and cheese boards plus a full range of bourbons and specialty cocktails.

With all he has on his plate, Falcone enjoys downtime with his family, especially when it comes to summertime meals at home centered around the grill. He shared some of his favorite barbecue recipes that, not surprisingly, venture into new or less-traveled territory. They're likely to inspire you to leave your comfort zone as they've done for me. Read on!



Oori in South Coventry

### Grilled Wings with Korean White BBQ Sauce

This white barbecue sauce was inspired by the Southern white barbecue sauce used at Bloom on its burgers. At Oori some Korean ingredients are incorporated into the same base of mayonnaise and vinegar. The sauce is used on top of the bao buns, and it's one of the wing sauce options on the fried wings. This recipe is a home version you can make on the grill. Pair with a green salad dressed with the leftover white barbecue sauce.

Serves 4



- 4 C. mayonnaise
- ½ C. mirin (rice wine)
- 1 C. rice vinegar
- 1 T. wasabi
- 1 T. gochugaru flakes (chili pepper flakes)
- 1 T. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 1 C. scallions, sliced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 dz. chicken wings (about 4 lbs.)
- 1 T. white and black sesame seeds

Puree all ingredients in a blender except scallions, chicken, salt, pepper and sesame seeds.

Add scallions and pulse until incorporated to create white barbecue sauce.

Sprinkle salt and pepper on wings before spacing them out directly on grill grates.

Cook on low, moving the wings between direct and indirect heat. Flip every three minutes to prevent burning. Cook approximately 15 minutes, until chicken reaches an internal temperature of 165°.

Place cooked wings in a large bowl, add white barbecue sauce and toss to coat thoroughly.

Place wings on a platter and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Serve immediately.

Refrigerate leftovers in a sealed container for up to two days.

### Origins of White BBQ Sauce

White barbecue sauce has roots in Decatur, Alabama, where Robert Gibson is credited with inventing it in 1925. Before being offered at his restaurant, Big Bob Gibson Bar-B-Q, it was first featured on hickory-smoked chicken and pork he'd serve to his family during backyard barbecues.

Centered on four ingredients — mayonnaise, vinegar, salt and pepper — the sauce is both peppery and tangy. In addition to poultry and pork, the all-purpose sauce pairs well with seafood, wild game, green salad, potato salad and coleslaw.

If you want to try Gibson's original recipe before you make Falcone's Korean White BBQ Sauce variation, you can order it through the restaurant's website, where they sell a variety of their sauces and rubs: [BigBobGibson.com](http://BigBobGibson.com).

### Spicy Bourbon BBQ Shrimp and Grits with Asparagus

At Bloom red bourbon barbecue sauce is featured on the shrimp and grits dish. This sauce is house-made using Creole seasoning and bourbon. No marinade time is needed for these skewered shrimp that are quick to cook. Pair with grilled asparagus.

Serves 4 (makes 8 shrimp skewers)



- 1 tsp. oil (of choice)
- 2 garlic cloves, sliced
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3 large tomatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 oz. bourbon
- ½ C. apple cider vinegar
- ½ C. brown sugar
- ½ can chipotle peppers, pureed
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 3 lbs. medium shrimp, raw and thawed

Place oil in a saucepan on medium heat. Add garlic and onion. Caramelize onions until light brown.

Add tomatoes and cook for another 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add bourbon, stir to combine and cook off alcohol, approximately two minutes.

Add apple cider vinegar, brown sugar and chipotle puree. Stir to combine, cooking another 10 minutes to thicken. Add salt, stir to combine.

Take the saucepan off the burner to cool. Once cool, puree in a blender until smooth.

Add six shrimp to each skewer. Place skewers directly on the grill grates over medium high heat. Baste the top of the shrimp with barbecue sauce and let sit for one minute before turning over to cook. While cooking, baste the opposite side. Continue cooking and basting for two minutes per side until cooked through.

Refrigerate leftovers in a sealed container for up to two days.

### Grilled Carrots with BBQ Glaze

Carrots are a favorite on the grill. They can be the main feature of any vegetarian dish. Their sweetness helps offset the spiciness of a red barbecue sauce. Since there's sugar in them, the carrots will caramelize and get grill marks on them. If you buy organically grown carrots at the farmers market, leave the skin on (but peel them if store bought). Once cooked, you can top the carrots with freshly toasted granola with almonds and raisins to add an earthiness and a crunch.

Serves 4

- 8 medium carrots, washed and peeled (unpeeled if organic)
- Spicy red barbecue sauce (store bought is fine)
- 1 C. lightly sweetened granola with almonds and raisins (store bought is fine)



## Guide to BBQ Sauces

Beyond white BBQ sauce, classic tomato-based sauce and one featuring bourbon, there are so many other unique sauces to explore over a summertime of grilling. All these sauces pair well with chicken, pork, ribs and tofu steak. Start with a basic barbecue sauce (red or white) and add these ingredients to create your own variations.

### Carolina Mustard BBQ Sauce

Yellow mustard sets the tone for this thick and tangy sauce of the South that also features apple cider vinegar and brown sugar, which adds a subtle sweetness.

### Caribbean Guava BBQ Sauce

This BBQ sauce has a tropical fruitiness featuring guava paste, dark rum and fresh ginger root.

### Habanero BBQ Sauce

Habanero pepper, dry mustard and brown sugar are a few of the main ingredients in this sweet, tangy and spicy sauce.

### Blueberry BBQ Sauce

Both sweet and tangy, blueberries are the standout ingredient along with molasses and cinnamon.

### Apple-Maple BBQ Sauce

Applesauce, maple syrup and nutmeg are some ingredients that add just the right amount of sweet and spice to this sauce.



Fill a medium pot with water. Add carrots, bring to a boil and simmer until a fork test indicates they're firm but tender, about 15 to 20 minutes.

Drain water from carrots and pat dry. Cut in half lengthwise.

Evenly space the carrots directly on a grill grate, with the flat side down over direct, medium high heat.

Baste the top side of the carrots with barbecue sauce. Let sit for a minute before flipping and cooking for two to three minutes. Baste the opposite side and flip to cook for another two to three minutes.

Place carrots on a serving platter.

Option: toast granola on a baking sheet until golden brown in a 300° oven. Remove from the oven and cool. Sprinkle over carrots.

Refrigerate leftovers in a sealed container for up to two days.

### Grilled Chicken with Yogurt Marinade

Yogurt makes a great marinade for chicken thighs or breasts. The cultures in the yogurt help break down the muscle fiber in the meat. When you cook it off, the milk fat in the yogurt caramelizes on the grill, so you'll get char marks on your meat. Fage yogurt is a good option because it's tart, but not overly. It's also a thicker yogurt, so it sticks to the chicken better. The chicken gets nice and tender and smoky on the grill. Pair with grilled vegetables.

Serves 4



- 8 oz. plain yogurt
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 12 chicken thighs or 4 large boneless breasts

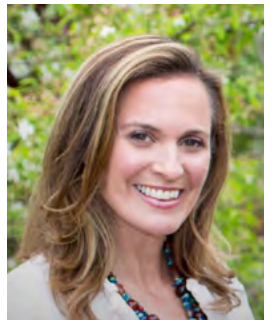
Combine all ingredients in a bowl (except for the chicken) and stir to blend. Add marinade to a plastic, sealable food storage bag. Then add chicken to the bag.

Toss chicken in the marinade to coat completely and lay the bag of chicken flat on a shelf in the refrigerator for four to six hours.

Space chicken out on the grill and cook over medium high heat until cooked through and lightly charred, reaching an internal temperature of 165°.

Refrigerate leftovers in a sealed container for up to two days. ♦

Courtney Diener-Stokes is an award-winning journalist, author, food writer, photographer and food stylist. Most recently she co-authored the Kimberthon Whole Foods Cookbook and Farmhouse Manna: Nourishing Recipes and Rituals for Head, Heart, Hands & Soul. She lives in the Oley Valley countryside with her husband, three children, two Babydoll Southdown sheep, a flock of bantam chickens and a Bernedoodle named Daisy.



For more great recipes visit  
[CountyLinesMagazine.com](http://CountyLinesMagazine.com)