

SMOKE, SOUL & SOUTHERN COMFORT

THE STORY OF JORDAN J. MALLARI & J.BONE'S BARBECUE

—BY SEAN-PATRICK M. HILLMAN—

If you had told me one of the best barbecue experiences I'd have this year would be tucked away in Westfield, New Jersey—run by a former television producer—I might've raised an eyebrow. But then I met Jordan Mallari and took a bite of his brisket. All doubt vanished.

Jordan Mallari isn't your typical pitmaster. Before opening J.Bone's Barbecue, he was behind the camera, not the smoker, working as a producer for BBQ Pitmasters on TLC alongside his future wife, Lindsay. While the rest of the world was binge-watching the drama and smoke rings, Jordan was studying every minute of footage, absorbing techniques from icons like Myron Mixon, Tuffy Stone, and Aaron Franklin. "Post-production was literally barbecue boot camp," he told me. "Every rub, every firebox, every mistake — I learned by watching, producing and asking questions, over and over."

J.Bone's Barbecue is the result of that obsession. It's not just a restaurant—it's a love letter to American barbecue, signed with smoke and sauce. Located at 1117 South Avenue West in Westfield, the space is warm, unpretentious, and filled with the kind of energy only found when someone turns their passion into purpose.

Jordan ate up every kernel of experience and wisdom he could from the judges and contestants alike on BBQ Pitmasters. But it's always experience that wins when you're dealing with the science of barbecue, and the idiosyncrasies of opening a restaurant. As Pitmasters Myron Mixon and Tuffy Stone helped teach Jordan the ins and outs of barbecue, and have been supportive of his endeavors, the "Winningest Woman in BBQ," Melissa Cookston, all but mentored Jordan as he built his business plan and mapped out how J.Bone's was going to operate. Between these BBQ icons, Jordan had a virtual buffet of support, expertise and care for what he was trying to do. And it shows.

I visited on a Saturday afternoon, and from the moment I opened the car door, I knew I was in the right place. That unmistakable smell of oak smoke filled the air. Inside, the vibe was laid-back — jam bands and classic rock over the speakers while guests tucked into trays of food piled high. I ordered the Texas-style brisket, sliced thick, with a bark so flavorful it should be illegal. The pulled pork was Carolina-style with a vinegar-based zing that hit just right. Both were smoked low and slow, every bite telling its own story.



But what really surprised me was the creativity. Jordan isn't afraid to take risks. His brisket egg rolls, inspired by his patriarchal roots of China and the Philippines, are pure genius—crispy shells stuffed with smoked meat and coleslaw, served with a tangy dipping sauce. Then there's the Texas Twinkies: jalapeños stuffed with brisket and cream cheese, wrapped in bacon and smoked until every layer sings. It's BBQ gone gourmet without losing its soul.

I asked Jordan why he traded in cameras for smokers and grills. "I was producing stories about people creating these incredible barbecue experiences," he said. "But after a while, I realized that I had my own story to tell. It was time to step out from behind the lens and into the pit."

That fire burns bright in every detail—from the perfectly rendered brisket to the banana pudding his wife Lindsay makes fresh every week (get two...trust me on this.)

J.Bone's isn't just a weekend BBQ joint—it's Jordan's journey on a plate. He's eaten barbecue in 49 states, from the smokehouses of Texas to the vinegar pits of the Carolinas. What he's created in Westfield is a greatest hits album of American barbecue, with his own original tracks mixed in. And it's no surprise that locals are lining up.

Jordan Mallari may have traded television for tongs, but he's still telling stories — only now, they're seasoned, smoked, and served hot on a tray. For those who think great barbecue is hard to find north of the Mason-Dixon, J.Bone's Barbecue is proof that passion and precision know no borders.

Like many in barbecue culture, Jordan's a phenomenal guy who just loves great food. I asked him if he would help our readers out with a recipe, and he shared his amazing Smoked Then Fried Chicken Wings recipe for your grilling pleasure!



J.Bone's Barbecue's Smoked Then Fried Chicken Wings

First thing's first – You're going to need J.Bone's Barbecue Wing Rub:

Ingredients

- 1 ½ Teaspoons Garlic Powder
- ¼ Teaspoon Ground Sage
- ½ Teaspoon Dry Mustard
- ¾ Teaspoon Black Pepper
- ¼ Teaspoon Cayenne Pepper
- 1 ½ Teaspoons Granulated Sugar
- ¾ Teaspoon Paprika
- 1 ½ Teaspoons Sea Salt (Not Coarse)
- 1 Tablespoon Brown Sugar

Instructions

Mix all ingredients thoroughly and store in an airtight container. Yields enough for one to two batches of wings.



Smoked Then Fried Chicken Wings Recipe:

Ingredients

- 12 Chicken Wings
- J.Bone's Barbecue Wing Rub (Recipe Above)
- Wood Chunks Or Chips (Oak, Apple, Cherry, Or Hickory)
- 1-1.5 Inches Of High-Smoke-Point Oil (Peanut Oil Preferred)
- Sea Salt Or Kosher Salt, To Finish

Optional: your favorite dipping sauce

Instructions

1. Season the Wings: Coat the wings generously with the rub, making sure all sides are covered. Don't overdo it—just an even coating.
2. Prepare the Grill for Smoking: Light your charcoal and let the coals get hot. Move them to one side of the grill to create a two-zone setup. Add wood chunks or chips to the hot coals.
3. Smoke the Wings: Place the wings on the cool side of the grill, away from the coals. Close the lid and maintain a temperature between 300-350°F. Cook until the internal temperature reaches 165°F, flipping once halfway through (about 30-40 minutes total).
4. Fry for Crispiness: Heat 1 to 1.5 inches of oil in a deep cast iron skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil reaches 375°F, fry the wings in batches for 3-4 minutes until crispy and golden.
5. Finish and Serve: Drain the wings on paper towels, sprinkle lightly with sea salt or kosher salt, and serve hot—naked or with your favorite dipping sauce.



J.Bone's is open Thursday through Sunday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., and it's BYOB — so pack your favorite six-pack or bottle of wine and settle in. The team serves up trays until they sell out, which often happens before sundown. To learn more, visit jbonesbarbecue.com