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HONORING FRANK AND TERESSA'S ANCHOR BAR
ON THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHICKEN WING
Extensions of Remarks – Thursday, March 6, 2014

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS
OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. HIGGINS . Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor Frank & Teresa's Anchor Bar and the 50th anniversary of their signature dish, the chicken wing. The Anchor Bar is an establishment that is deeply ingrained in the fabric of Buffalo, New York; its story exhibits resilience and ambition that define the city in which it stands as well as the people who live in it. This Thursday, March 6, is a date which signifies the 50th anniversary of the chicken wing and its legacy, which transformed the landscape of American cuisine, and made Buffalo, New York synonymous with a finger food that has left its lasting impression on the culinary industry.

Frank Bellissimo was born in Montemaggiore Belsito, a little town in the province of Sicily, Italy. His parents immigrated to the U.S. when he was just four years old. At the age of 14 during a night out in downtown Buffalo, Frank fell in love with the ambiance and persona of the city. He vowed to one day be a part of it.

Frank met his wife Teresa while he was a butcher. Teresa, the daughter of Sicilian immigrants as well, was born in Buffalo. The two became married in 1934 and discovered their shared love of cooking.

After accumulating a few hundred dollars, the two decided to open a restaurant and in 1935, rented a place on Canal Street at the foot of Main Street in downtown Buffalo. Teresa noticed how the sailors docking their boats in the adjacent Buffalo River would drop their anchors into the water. Henceforth, the Anchor Bar was given its emblematic name.

The bar quickly grew in popularity, forcing Frank and Teresa to move to 1047 Main Street – the address at which the bar is located to this day. Not long after that, the dish that would revolutionize pub food was created.

Frank and Teresa's son Dominic was tending bar at his family's restaurant on a late Friday night in March 1964. Some friends stopped by to pay him a visit and have a few drinks. Before long, they asked Dominic for something to eat, though they yearned for something out of the ordinary – something they could eat with their fingers while retaining the ability to drink and converse. Dominic went to his mother Teresa for help. She had recently received a large shipment of wings that were “too meaty” to be used in the stockpot for soup. Remembering those wings, she decided to deep fry them, toss them in a spicy red sauce recipe and serve them with celery sticks and blue cheese dressing. At 12:10 a.m. on Saturday, March 6, 1964, the chicken wing was invented in Buffalo, New York.

Though Dominic and his friends were skeptical, the chicken wings became an instant hit, and the rest is history. Before long, word spread across the city, state, and the country. Today, Anchor Bar serves up more than 70,000 pounds of chicken per month, and its bottled wing sauce retails in over 5,000 supermarkets worldwide. Consumers can even purchase Anchor Bar's famous wings online and have them shipped anywhere in America. Countless celebrities have graced the bar's Main Street location to experience the sensation for themselves.

In 2003, Anchor Bar was presented with the prestigious James Beard Foundation award, given to restaurants “that have timeless appeal, beloved for their quality food that reflect the history and character of their community.” In 2014, the Anchor Bar has franchised that timeless appeal and is proudly serving their famed wings at locations in the Buffalo International Airport, Darien Lake Amusement Park, Hamilton, Ontario, and will soon be serving them on the West Coast at a location in Temecula, California.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to honor the 50th anniversary of the chicken wing. In doing so, I recognize a restaurant that stands as a testament to the American Dream. The children of Italian immigrants, Frank and Teresa Bellissimo took the creativity and resourcefulness of Italian cuisine and combined it with American values of innovation and ingenuity. What was produced was not only a business that has profited for over 65 years and remains a family owned and operated enterprise, but also a symbol that the American Dream, still stands proud today.