

Les's Atomic Buffalo Turds – Comfort du Jour

With this year's Super Bowl coming up, Terrie asked me to make these and share the recipe, so here goes. I wish I could credit a specific source for these, but I cannot remember where I found the recipe. It's just an awfully good one, and very conducive to substitutions of spices and topping sauce. The key is the mix of sweet to offset the intense heat. The original recipe suggested cooking these on an outdoor smoker, but this adaptation is adjusted for baking in a home oven.

INGREDIENTS

6 medium size jalapeno peppers, halved and trimmed* (see notes)
12 li'l smoky sausages*
3/4 brick of cream cheese
1 ¼ tsp. smoked paprika*
3/4 tsp. cayenne pepper
6 slices of bacon, cut in half cross-wise*
12 toothpicks
2 Tbsp. sweet rub seasoning*
Sweet finishing sauce*

*NOTES

Scoop out the innards of the jalapenos, removing most of the membrane and the seeds. However, if you really want heat, feel free to leave some of that membrane intact.

There are different brands of li'l smokies. Ideally, we'd love to find some without nitrites, but if they are made, we can't find them. You can, however, probably substitute other kinds of normal size sausage and simply cut them down to the bite-size smoky portion.

For this batch, we used a bourbon smoked paprika we'd found online at bourbonbarrelfoods.com.

Thinner bacon works best for this recipe. I usually wrap the bacon raw around the jalapenos, but there is something to be said for slightly cooking the bacon in a skillet to render the fats for crispier end result.

The sweet rub seasoning can be anything you find that suits the bill; it is used to offset the heat. You can also make some your own, as we did in this case, using 3 parts of brown sugar to one part of [Flatiron Pepper Co.'s dark and smoky BBQ rub](#). Flatiron is a very good specialty pepper company and we have enjoyed many of their products, which tend to bring the heat! Their products are also salt-free, so we control the sodium.

The finishing sauce is usually a sweet/tart, often fruit-flavored BBQ-oriented sauce. It goes on after the turds have cooked and provide a beautiful cooling note. Or, if you're like us, you can look for a fruit-flavored-but-still-has-a-kick sauce. One year, I used a cherry-ancho BBQ sauce (and it was awesome). For this batch, we had a [raspberry-habanero sauce](#) I'd bought from a friend who sells Pampered Chef products.

INSTRUCTIONS

Preheat oven to 300° F.

The first thing to do is prep the jalapenos, which involves cutting off the stems, splitting them and then taking out the seeds and membrane. The more of either you leave inside, the more heat your turds will pack (what a weird sentence). Wash your hands thoroughly (unless you have kitchen gloves to work with, which I don't) when you're done. And don't even think of getting that itch near your eye, even after you've washed your hands. Trust me. Been there, done that.

Prepare the cream cheese mix by adding the paprika and cayenne. The cream cheese will turn orange. Don't be alarmed. It helps, by the way, to let the cream cheese get room temp for easier mixing. Scoop the cream cheese to fill the half jalapenos and be relatively generous. Then place one smoky right on top of the cream cheese, lining up your jalapenos on a parchment-lined cookie sheet.

Take one of the half-slices of bacon and wrap around the jalapeno, covering the smoky and cream cheese mix and securing with a toothpick on top through the bacon. Push down through the smoky and keep going until you feel resistance from the bottom of the jalapeno. Do not pierce the jalapeno if you can avoid it, as that will cause the cream cheese mix to seep out.

Sprinkle a generous portion of whatever your sweet rub mix of choice is on each smoky and place the cookie sheet in the oven. Allow about 90 minutes. This long, slow baking is a substitute for actual outdoor smoking, which I don't like to do in winter.

When the bacon looks done, remove the turds and brush or drip your finishing sauce on top of the turds. Then, enjoy the burn!