

Trends

## Rallying for ranch: Americans adore their favorite salad dressing



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Courtesy of Carmel Valley Ranch

Ranch stands supreme as America's favorite dressing.

Salad dressing sales have been flat for years, but there's one flavor that is bucking the trend. Italian, you say? Thousand Island? Honey mustard? Oh, please.

Across the United States, ranch rules. Not only is ranch the top dressing shipped to restaurants, cafeterias and dining institutions, its sales are double that of the second-place contender, blue cheese, according to a new report by the [NPD Group](#), a consumer market information company.

So it's no wonder that Americans go on high alert when some restaurant owners balk at serving ranch. For instance, Dallas pizzeria Cane Rosso got lots of [attention on Reddit](#) last month for a sign in the restaurant that reads, "Side of Delicious Ranch Dressing \$1,000."

Owner Jay Jerrier — the man behind "Ranchgate" — said he put the sign up three years ago as a joke. "I'm shocked that people care about this at all!" he told TODAY.com.

The funny thing is that Jerrier actually likes ranch and serves it at his other restaurant, Zoli's. "A nice house-made jalapeno ranch is my go-to dressing for salads, where dressing is more typically found," he said. "It just doesn't seem to really make sense for pizza."

He likens the dipping of his painstakingly authentic Neapolitan-style pizza into ranch dressing to the taboo use of barbecue sauce on Texas barbecue. “If the food is good, it should be fine on its own,” he said.

Celebrity chef Todd English also has [earned a rep for not serving ranch](#) in his restaurants, though his spokesperson said it’s not that English doesn’t like ranch. It’s just that the dressing just doesn’t really go with his Mediterranean, European and Northeast-inspired cooking — plus, everyone else serves it, and English wants to offer diners something different.

Meanwhile, many restaurateurs enthusiastically embrace ranch.

“Are you kidding? Ranch goes with everything,” said Flynn Dekker, chief marketing officer for Wingstop, noting the chain’s 600 restaurants serve a made-from-scratch dressing. “And despite what some foodies might say, there’s nothing better than wings and ranch dressing. Unless of course you’re a blue cheese kind of person, and we’re good with that too.”

Ranch-inspired sauces can even have a place among Asian-inspired wings. Chef Bill Kim at Chicago’s Belly Shack serves a miso and sesame yogurt sauce on the side of his red Thai curry wings. “It’s our take on ranch dressing,” he said, adding that he’s not really a fan of the original stuff.

Amy Mills, owner of the barbecue joint 17th Street Bar & Grill in Illinois, is one barbecue expert who will admit ranch can be “bland.”

“I’m not hating on ranch by any means,” she said, noting that the dressing can benefit from a little creativity, which is why 17th Street serves a 50/50 ranch-barbecue sauce dressing with Southern deep-fried pickles and other appetizers. (Try her recipe below.)

If you’re looking to step up your classic ranch, consider this tip from Greg Karjala, a chef at California’s Carmel Valley Ranch: Use fresh herbs straight from a garden, not dried herbs. He recommends trying equal parts of cream and yogurt, buttermilk, lemon juice, Tabasco, a splash of white wine vinegar, sea salt, plus fresh fennel, lemon thyme, parsley, chives and sage.

As for the “Ranchgate” scandal, Dallas pizza maker Jerrier said he’s enjoying how “people are just losing it over this” and he hopes Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban will come in and plunk down a thousand bucks for the ranch. “If anyone does it, we’ll donate it to a dog charity,” he said.

### **17th Street Bar & Grill barbecue ranch dressing**

© Amy Mills and 17th Street Barbecue.

*Adapted from "Peace, Love, and Barbecue" and used with permission from Rodale*

Makes 2 cups

- 1 cup real mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup sour cream

- 1/4 cup Italian flat-leaf parsley leaves, minced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill, minced
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup buttermilk (as needed for desired consistency)

Combine the mayonnaise, sour cream, parsley, garlic, dill, chives, Worcestershire sauce, black pepper, vinegar, salt, paprika, and cayenne in a medium-sized bowl. Add the buttermilk to desired consistency and whisk to combine. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed. Chill for at least two hours before serving. Thin with more buttermilk as necessary.

Store in a glass jar for up to three days. Mix with your favorite barbecue sauce if desired.