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## Kwik Star

By Danny Fairchild

What's this I hear about the Kwik Star down on Dodge St. across from Plaza 20 having some pretty damn good food? Really? You're going to stand there and tell me that a friggin' GAS STATION has good food? You're sure that's how you want to spend your time, telling me that? You're sure that's what you want to demand of MY time? Cuz let me tell you something...I believe you.

Anybody who grew up in a dinky town (I'm a Denison boy, myself) knows where to go for pizza and gas. Or a sub and gas. Or chicken gizzards and gas. Why would I be surprised?

I'm certainly not surprised that it's at the Kwik Star down on Dodge St. across from Plaza 20. I have a history with that gas station. I lived in the neighborhood behind it and would get cheap milk there. And would raid the clearance holiday candy. It's been nice seeing that place continue to grow and develop. It's gotten so impressive that my partner calls it the "super gas station." So now that's what it is.

Let's address one thing: the parking. It's a little bonkers. There's hardly any space between the gas pumps and the lanes to get around them so you can park in front of the store. Pro tip: there's parking around back. Not a lot of parking around back, but I swear, it's way easier to deal with than parking in front. Turning into the Kwik Star down on Dodge St. across from Plaza 20 can be a chore, too. But here's the thing: you can let EatStreet deal with that.

I already knew their pizza was a yummy thing. They were my neighbors, after all. I wouldn't go out of my way for the pizza, but it's certainly worth a, "Honey, can you pick something up?"

What I didn't know about because it wasn't quite a thing yet, was how awesome the fried chicken. Holy crap. I know that this is Dubuque. And I know we have some fried chicken options. And I know we all have our loyalties when it comes to those fried chicken options. Please allow me to make a case for the Kwik Star down on Dodge St. across from Plaza 20. Remember in the film *Fried Green Tomatoes* when unappreciative husband "Ed," played by Gailard Sartain, keeps complimenting Evelyn's (Kathy Bates) fried chicken as having a really good "scald?" It's actually a thing. And you already know what it is just by me mentioning it, don't you? It's that uniform crispiness on the outside with the juicy goodness



FRIED CHICKEN

inside. I want you to know that the Kwik Star down on Dodge St. across from Plaza 20 possibly does that scald better than anything outside a supper club around here. And good? So good, you guys! So good. I'm won over.

Life hack time. I loathe to share it because I can't stand you McRib-sucking bastards. You know who you are. I judge you all and find you wanting. I mean jeepers cripes, get a friggin' life.

Anyway, the McRib is seasonal. And as such, it'll only break your heart. The Kwik Star down on Dodge St. across from Plaza 20 has their rib sandwich available all...the...time. And it stacks up to your precious McRib. In fact, it's better. In fact, now I get what your childish craving is all about. I want another one, and it's only been a few hours since I had one. I don't mean to trivialize addiction by comparing it to a rib sandwich craving, but...I get it now. Maybe they were wise to make the McRib seasonal. I don't think we can handle it year round. Oh God. Oh GOD! What has the Kwik Star down on Dodge St. across from Plaza 20 done?! I kid, of course. Now go get you some rib sandwiches and shut up about the McRib.

The burgers. I'm not going to go into much detail about the burgers here. They're similar to many a gas station burger you may have had. But 'cept you won't regret them. Because these come from the Kwik Star down on Dodge St. across from Plaza 20. If you look at the menu and the burgers call out to you, I assure you you're in safe hands.

The mashed potatoes. Now we're getting to the sides. Can't get fried chicken without some mash-t'pay-toes, amirite? I love how they present the family-sized portion. They keep it into scoop-formed mounds, lunch lady-style. It makes it easy to portion out since one person can take their own mound of potatoes. That's your mound, that's my mound. Keep your hands off my mound, and I'll keep my hands off your mound. Oh, there's a mound leftover? Cool, someone can have that for lunch tomorrow along with any leftover chicken. The potatoes are good. A nice, creamy consistency

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but not in a runny way. Just smooth. The gravy is awesome, too. Both for the potatoes and for dippin' the chick. Nom.

The mac 'n' cheese. Am I wrong in saying that fast food has upped its mac 'n' cheese game lately? I mean...it can still be a bit mushy because they can't possibly make it to order, so if you have a texture thing, be advised, but the flavor we're getting from Arby's of all places AND the Kwik Star down on Dodge St. across from Plaza 20 is real good, you guys. Like...childhood memory good. I was hesitant to even order it because the picture on their website looks like soup. So granted, my bar was set low, but I think I've earned some trust here. Trust me. If you need a side in addition to the mashed potatoes, there you go.

Cheese stuffed spuds. They don't hyphenate "cheese stuffed" so I won't, either. You know what these things are like? It's like ordering an appetizer in a Wisconsin bar. I'd say they're like eating croquettes, but...they're like croquettes from a Wisconsin bar. And no



MASHED POTATOES &amp; GRAVY



MACARONI &amp; CHEESE



## A Taco Twist with Tilapia

By Hy-Vee Nutritionists Megan Horstman (Asbury) and Amy Cordingley (Locust)

Spring into healthy habits by making Tilapia Tacos this week! Stop by your Hy-Vee seafood department for sustainably-raised Rainforest tilapia. Hy-Vee's Responsible Choice program ensures top-notch, quality seafood where the best aquaculture practices are used to protect seafood ecosystems. Tilapia is a versatile, mild-flavored white fish, making it a family favorite. It's easy to bake, grill, pan-sear or air-fry.

### Four easy ways to cook Tilapia

**Bake:** Preheat oven to 400°F. Spray a foil-lined baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray. Pat tilapia fillets dry and season tilapia as desired. Bake for 10 to 12 minutes or until fish flakes with a fork and reaches 145°F.

**Grill:** Brush fish with olive oil and season as desired. Place on greased grilling screen and grill over medium-high heat for 4 to 5 minutes or until fish flakes with a fork, turning once halfway through.

**Pan-Sear:** Pat fish dry and dip in seasoned flour mix. Sear in a tablespoon of oil in a nonstick skillet over medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes per side or until crust is golden and fish flakes with a fork.

**Air-Fry:** Coat fillets with seasoning as desired. Air-fry at 375°F for 5 to 10 minutes or until fish reaches an internal temperature of 145°F, turning once halfway through.

With your health top of mind, eat seafood at least twice each week and connect with a Hy-Vee dietitian to enroll in programs to help you reach your nutrition goals. Programs include virtual or in-person nutrition store tours

about heart-health or diabetes (more topics available) or individual nutrition counseling to discuss your personal nutrition needs or Healthy Habits menu program, all with weekly accountability check-ins. You've only got one body, so take care of it and keep it a top priority.

Try this recipe for your next taco night. ■

### Air Fryer Tilapia Tacos

MAKES 4 SERVINGS (2 TACOS EACH)

#### Ingredients

- 1 lb. fresh tilapia fillets
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup +  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup Old El Paso zesty ranch taco sauce, divided
- 2 cups Hy-Vee plain panko bread crumbs
- 1 (1.25-oz) pkg Hy-Vee original taco seasoning mix
- Hy-Vee nonstick cooking spray
- 5 cups Hy-Vee coleslaw mix
- 8 Hy-Vee taco-size flour tortillas
- Desired toppers: Grilled corn, diced avocado, chopped tomato, guacamole salsa, diced mango, red onion, jalapeno slices, chopped onion, Mexican crema, chopped cilantro, Cotija cheese

#### Directions

1. Preheat air fryer to 375°F.
2. Pat tilapia fillets dry; cut into  $2\frac{1}{2}$ - x  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces.
3. Place  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup Old El Paso zesty ranch taco sauce in a shallow bowl.
4. Combine panko bread crumbs and taco seasoning mix in another shallow bowl.
5. Dip fish, one piece at a time, into sauce; shake off excess. Evenly coat with bread crumb mixture, pressing to adhere.
6. Lightly spray the air fryer basket with Hy-Vee nonstick spray.
7. Air fry for 5 to 6 minutes or until lightly golden and fish flakes easily with a fork (145°F), turning fish and spraying with additional nonstick spray halfway through.
8. While fish is air frying, combine Hy-Vee coleslaw mix and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup additional Old El Paso ranch taco sauce.
9. Serve fish on taco-size flour tortillas with cabbage slaw and desired toppers.

#### DANNY FAIRCHILD

DANNY DOESN'T TAKE CRAP FROM NOBODY, BUT HE'LL TAKE FOOD FROM ALMOST ANYBODY. IF YOU WANT TO FIGHT DANNY, OR FEED HIM NOM-NOMS, EMAIL HIM AT [DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM](mailto:DINING@DUBUQUE365.COM).



# Hy-Vee

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Source: April 2021 Seasons magazine

The information is not intended as medical advice. Please consult a medical professional for individual advice.