

Pittsburgh-Style BBQ Chipped Ham Sandwich

Photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi who writes [The Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) as [Cleo Coyle](#) with her husband, Marc Cerasini.

Chipped Chopped Ham is unique to Pittsburgh, PA, (and the greater Ohio Valley) as my husband and I discovered after moving to New York City decades ago—and watching deli guys blink in total confusion whenever we tried to order a sandwich with it. The chipped ham concept began with a chain of regional stores called *Isaly's*, a name you might recognize as the original producer of the Klondike ice cream bar. When my husband and I were growing up, the BBQ Chipped Ham Sandwich was one of the most popular lunches served in Pittsburgh's school cafeterias.

It was the retro sandwich of our youth. It was also delicious, easy, and cheap. In fact, cheap is the point. The "chipping" of deli ham is an excellent way to make a less expensive brand of ham more tasty. There's a good reason why it does, too, just keep reading...

Makes 4 Sandwiches

Ingredients:

1 pound of *Chipped Ham (*Our directions teach you how to order this at any deli.)

1/2 cup (8 tablespoons) ketchup

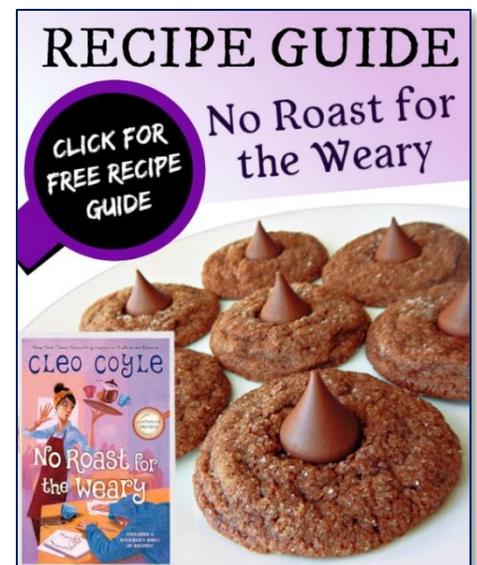
1/4 cup (4 tablespoons) BBQ sauce

4 soft hamburger buns

(Optional garnish) **Relish, sweet or dill**

Directions:

Step 1: Order the Ham - Although the original "chipped chopped" ham was made with pressed ham, you can order up any deli ham for this sandwich. *Note:* Even if you usually order the more expensive hams, don't be afraid to try the less expensive or "on sale" hams for this sandwich. Here's how to do it...



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Simply tell your deli person to **shave the ham razor thin**. Tell him (or her) not to be afraid to allow the ham to break up into pieces. The deli person is actually "chipping" the meat against the commercial meat slicer blade. This is what it should look like. >>>

By shaving (chipping) the meat very thin, the ham is more tender and has more flavor than if it were sliced more thickly. In Western PA, Northern West Virginia, and Eastern Ohio (aka the Ohio Valley), this slicing process is known as "*Pittsburgh Style*."



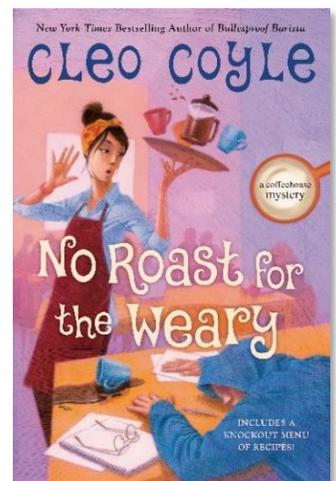
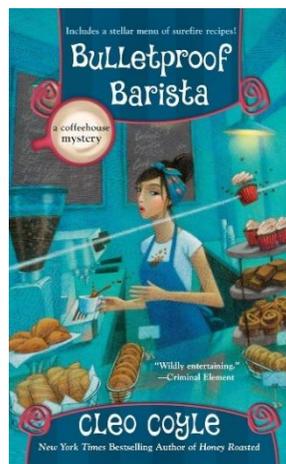
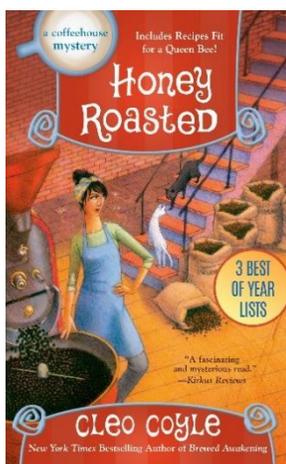
Step 2: Make the Frizzle Fry - When you get the chipped ham home, you're ready to create your "frizzle fry" sandwich.

A. Heat the Chipped Ham: Place a large skillet over medium heat. Break up the up into the pan and stir until heated through.

B. Make your Quickie Sauce: Mix the ketchup and (your favorite) BBQ sauce in a bowl and add to the skillet. (Some people add a little mustard and/or brown sugar at this stage. We don't, but it's an option, depending on your own taste and the tang of your BBQ sauce.)

C. Combine Ham and Sauce: Stir and cook for a few more minutes. The chipped ham should be evenly coated with the ketchup-BBQ sauce. The ham should be steaming and sticky.

D. Pile it high and garnish: Divide the ham up onto the four hamburger buns. My husband eats this sandwich with no other garnish. Many in Pittsburgh enjoy adding sweet relish. I like dill relish. Other garnish ideas: pickled jalapenos or banana pepper rings—the tart heat nicely complements the sticky-sweet meat. So finish as you like and...



Eat (and read) with joy! ~ Cleo

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