



Best Chicken Parmesan

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 14: Classic Italian Fare

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Traditional chicken Parmesan is a minefield of potential problems: dry meat, soggy crust, and a chewy blanket of mozzarella. To keep the meat moist, we salted the cutlets for 20 minutes, and to keep the exterior crunchy, we replaced more than half of the starchy (and consequently sog-prone) bread crumbs with grated Parmesan cheese. To keep the cheese topping tender, we mixed the usual shredded mozzarella with creamy fontina, and we placed the mixture directly on the fried cutlet so that it formed a waterproof layer between the crust and the sauce.

Serves 4

Our preferred brands of crushed tomatoes are Tuttorosso and Muir Glen. This recipe makes enough sauce to top the cutlets as well as four servings of pasta. Serve with pasta and a simple green salad.

INGREDIENTS

SAUCE

- 2** tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2** garlic cloves, minced
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 1/4** teaspoon dried oregano
- Pinch red pepper flakes
- 1** (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes
- 1/4** teaspoon sugar
- 2** tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh basil

CHICKEN

- 2** (6- to 8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts, trimmed, halved horizontally, and pounded 1/2 inch thick
- 1** teaspoon kosher salt
- 2** ounces whole-milk mozzarella cheese, shredded (1/2 cup)
- 2** ounces fontina cheese, shredded (1/2 cup)
- 1** large egg
- 1** tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 1/2** ounces Parmesan cheese, grated (3/4 cup)
- 1/2** cup panko bread crumbs
- 1/2** teaspoon garlic powder

- 1/4** teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/4** teaspoon pepper
- 1/3** cup vegetable oil
- 1/4** cup torn fresh basil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. FOR THE SAUCE: Heat 1 tablespoon oil in medium saucepan over medium heat until just shimmering. Add garlic, $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt, oregano, and pepper flakes; cook, stirring occasionally, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in tomatoes and sugar; increase heat to high and bring to simmer. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until thickened, about 20 minutes. Off heat, stir in basil and remaining 1 tablespoon oil; season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover and keep warm.

2. FOR THE CHICKEN: Sprinkle each side of each cutlet with $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt and let stand at room temperature for 20 minutes. Combine mozzarella and fontina in bowl; set aside.

3. Adjust oven rack 4 inches from broiler element and heat broiler. Whisk egg and flour together in shallow dish or pie plate until smooth. Combine Parmesan, panko, garlic powder, oregano, and pepper in second shallow dish or pie plate. Pat chicken dry with paper towels. Working with 1 cutlet at a time, dredge cutlet in egg mixture, allowing excess to drip off. Coat all sides in Parmesan mixture, pressing gently so crumbs adhere. Transfer cutlet to large plate and repeat with remaining cutlets.

4. Heat oil in 10-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until shimmering. Carefully place 2 cutlets in skillet and cook without moving them until bottoms are crispy and deep golden brown, $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 minutes. Using tongs, carefully flip cutlets and cook on second side until deep golden brown, $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 minutes. Transfer cutlets to paper towel-lined plate and repeat with remaining cutlets.

5. Place cutlets on rimmed baking sheet and sprinkle cheese mixture evenly over cutlets, covering as much surface area as possible. Broil until cheese is melted and beginning to brown, 2 to 4 minutes. Transfer chicken to serving platter and top each cutlet with 2 tablespoons sauce. Sprinkle with basil and serve immediately, passing remaining sauce separately.

TECHNIQUE

CREATING THIN, EVEN CUTLETS

While most recipes call for pounding breasts thin, we prefer to slice them horizontally (freeze them first for 15 minutes to help with slicing), pounding only the fat ends to achieve an even thickness.



TECHNIQUE

WHEN PARM GOES WRONG

Look familiar? Just about every chicken Parmesan recipe we tried suffered from at least one of these common flaws.

PROBLEM: Soggy crust

SOLUTION: Reduce the sauce to make it less watery and replace some of the moisture-absorbing bread crumbs in the crust with grated Parmesan.



PROBLEM: Chewy cheese

SOLUTION: Supplement chewy mozzarella (a must for flavor) with creamy, tender fontina.

PROBLEM: Dry, chewy chicken

SOLUTION: Turn thick breasts into tender cutlets and briefly salt them, which seasons them and helps them retain moisture.
