

Fried Chicken

Serve 4 to 6

Avoid using kosher chicken in this recipe or it will be too salty. Maintaining an even oil temperature is key. After the chicken is added to the pot, the temperature will drop dramatically, and most of the frying will be done at about 325 degrees. Use an instant read thermometer with a high upper range; a clip on candy/deep fry thermometer is fine, too, though it can be clipped to the pot only for the uncovered portion of frying.

CHICKEN

1/2 cup table salt

1/4 cup sugar

2 tablespoons paprika

7 cups buttermilk

3 medium garlic heads, cloves separated and smashed

3 bay leaves, crumbled

4 lbs bone in, skin on chicken pieces (split breasts cut in half, drumsticks, and/or thighs), trimmed

3-4 quarts peanut oil or vegetable oil, for frying

COATING

4 cups (20 ounces) unbleached all purpose flour (you can add 1 teaspoon garlic powder, 1 teaspoon paprika)

1 large egg

1 teaspoon baking powder

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1 cup buttermilk

1. FOR THE CHICKEN: Dissolve the salt, sugar, and paprika in the buttermilk in a large container. Add the garlic and bay leaves, submerge the chicken in the brine, cover, and refrigerate for 2 to 3 hours.
2. Rinse the chicken well and place in a single layer on a wire rack set over a rimmed baking sheet. Refrigerate uncovered for 2 hours. (At this point, the chicken can be covered with plastic wrap and refrigerated for up to 6 more hours).
3. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and heat the oven to 200 degrees. In a large Dutch oven, heat 2 inches of oil over medium high heat to 375 degrees.
4. FOR THE COATING: Place the flour in a shallow dish. Whisk the egg, baking powder, and baking soda together in a medium bowl, then whisk in the buttermilk (the mixture will bubble and foam). Working with 3 chicken pieces at a time, dredge in the flour, shaking off the excess, then coat with the egg mixture, allowing the excess to drip off. Finally, coat with flour again, shake off the excess, and return to the wire rack.
5. When the oil is hot, add half of the chicken pieces to the pot, skin side down, cover, and fry until deep golden brown, 7 to 11 minutes, adjusting the heat as necessary to maintain an oil temperature of about 325 degrees. (After 4 minutes, check the chicken pieces for even browning

and rearrange if some pieces are browning faster than others). Turn the chicken pieces over and continue to cook until the thickest part of the breasts registers 160 to 165 degrees and the thickest part of the thigh or drumsticks registers 175 degrees on an instant read thermometer, 6 to 8 minutes. Drain the chicken briefly on a paper towel lined plate, then transfer to a clean wire rack set over a rimmed baking sheet and keep warm in the oven.

6. Return the oil to 375 degrees (if necessary) over medium high heat and repeat with the remaining chicken pieces. Serve.