



Extra-Crunchy Fried Chicken

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WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS: Preparing a fried chicken recipe at home can be a messy, time-consuming affair. For a fried chicken recipe that could be made at home without the big mess, we brined the chicken in heavily salted buttermilk to keep it moist and well-seasoned. For the crunchy coating, we combined flour with a little baking powder, then added buttermilk to make a thick slurry, which clung tightly to the meat. Frying the chicken with the lid on the pot for half the cooking time contained the spatter-prone oil and kept it hot. We also found that shortening provided the cleanest flavor and least-greasy chicken, while peanut oil was a close second.

Serves 4

Keeping the oil at the correct temperature is essential to producing crunchy fried chicken that is neither too brown nor too greasy. Use a candy/deep-fry thermometer to check the temperature of the oil before you add the chicken (see related testing). If you cannot find a chicken that weighs 3 1/2 pounds or less, or if you don't have a pan that is 11 inches in diameter, you will have to fry the chicken in two batches. Follow the recipe, frying the chicken four pieces at a time and keeping the first batch warm in a 200-degree oven while the second batch is cooking. If you want to produce a slightly healthier version of this recipe, you can remove the skin from the chicken before soaking it in the buttermilk. The chicken will be slightly less crunchy.

INGREDIENTS

- 2** cups buttermilk plus 6 additional tablespoons
- 2** tablespoons table salt
- 1** whole chicken (about 3 1/2 pounds), cut into 8 pieces, giblets discarded, wings and back reserved for stock
- 3** cups all-purpose flour
- 2** teaspoons baking powder
- 3/4** teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2** teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4** teaspoon garlic powder
- 4 - 5** cups vegetable shortening or peanut oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk together 2 cups buttermilk and salt in large bowl until salt is dissolved. Add chicken pieces to bowl and stir to coat; cover bowl with plastic and refrigerate for 1 hour. (Don't let chicken soak much longer or it will become too salty.)
2. Whisk flour, baking powder, thyme, pepper, and garlic powder together in large bowl. Add remaining 6 tablespoons buttermilk; with your fingers rub flour and buttermilk together until buttermilk is evenly incorporated into flour and mixture resembles coarse wet sand.
3. Working in batches of two, drop chicken pieces into flour mixture and turn to thoroughly coat, gently pressing flour

mixture onto chicken. Shake excess flour from each piece of chicken and transfer to wire rack set over rimmed baking sheet.

4. Heat oil (it should measure 3/4 inch deep) in large heavy-bottomed Dutch oven with 11-inch diameter over medium-high heat until it reaches 375 degrees. Place chicken pieces, skin-side down, in oil, cover, and fry until deep golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove lid after 4 minutes and lift chicken pieces to check for even browning; rearrange if some pieces are browning faster than others. (At this point, oil should be about 300 degrees. Adjust burner, if necessary, to regulate temperature of oil.) Turn chicken pieces over and continue to fry, uncovered, until chicken pieces are deep golden brown on second side, 6 to 8 minutes longer. (At this point, to keep chicken from browning too quickly, adjust burner to maintain oil temperature of about 315 degrees.) Using tongs, transfer chicken to plate lined with paper towels; let stand for 5 minutes to drain. Serve.

SECRETS TO A CRUNCHY COATING

1. Soak the chicken in a buttermilk-salt mixture.



2. Coat the chicken with the buttermilk-moistened flour.



3. Add the chicken to the hot oil and cover the pot to capture the steam.



4. Use tongs to flip the chicken and finish cooking with the cover off.



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