

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN

Picnic Fried Chicken

YIELD Serves 4

TIME 1½ hours, plus 1 hour brining and 30 minutes chilling

Why This Recipe Works

For fried chicken that's crispy and delicious even when it's cold, we pull out a few tricks. A combination of Wondra flour and cornstarch make for a coat that keeps its crunch, and dredging the chicken twice with a water dip in between creates a thick, craggy crust. Double-frying the chicken lets extra moisture evaporate from the skin, and chilling it uncovered further guards against sogginess. Finally, since cold dulls flavors, brining and extra seasoning are in order.



Gather Your Ingredients

- ☐ Salt and pepper
- ☐ **3** pounds bone-in chicken pieces (split breasts cut in half crosswise, drumsticks, and/or thighs), trimmed
- ☐ **1½** cups Wondra flour
- ☐ **1½** cups cornstarch

Before You Begin

- * We like it best the day it's made, but you can refrigerate this fried chicken for up to 24 hours. Use a Dutch oven that holds 6 quarts or more.

Instructions

1. Dissolve ¼ cup salt in 1 quart cold water in large container. Submerge chicken in brine, cover, and refrigerate for 1 hour.

- ☐ **2** teaspoons white pepper
- ☐ **1½** teaspoons baking powder
- ☐ **1** teaspoon dried thyme
- ☐ **1** teaspoon dried sage leaves
- ☐ **1** teaspoon garlic powder
- ☐ **¼** teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ☐ **3** quarts peanut or vegetable oil

- 2.** Whisk flour and cornstarch together in large bowl. Transfer 1 cup flour mixture to shallow dish; set aside. Whisk 1 tablespoon pepper, white pepper, baking powder, thyme, sage, garlic powder, 1 teaspoon salt, and cayenne into remaining flour mixture. Add ¼ cup water to seasoned flour mixture. Rub flour and water together with your fingers until water is evenly incorporated and mixture contains craggy bits of dough. Pour 2 cups cold water into medium bowl.
- 3.** Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet. Working with 2 pieces of chicken at a time, remove chicken from brine and dip in unseasoned flour mixture, pressing to adhere; dunk quickly in water, letting excess drip off; and dredge in seasoned flour mixture, pressing to adhere. Place chicken on prepared wire rack and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours.
- 4.** Add oil to large Dutch oven until it measures about 2 inches deep and heat over medium-high heat to 350 degrees. Fry half of chicken until slightly golden and just beginning to crisp, 5 to 7 minutes. Adjust burner, if necessary, to maintain oil temperature between 300 and 325 degrees. (Chicken will not be cooked through at this point.) Return parcooked chicken to wire rack. Return oil to 350 degrees and repeat with remaining raw chicken. Let each batch of chicken rest for 5 to 7 minutes.

5. Return oil to 350 degrees. Return first batch of chicken to oil and fry until breasts register 160 degrees and thighs/drumsticks register 175 degrees, 5 to 7 minutes. Adjust burner, if necessary, to maintain oil temperature between 300 and 325 degrees. Transfer chicken to clean wire rack. Return oil to 350 degrees and repeat with remaining chicken. Let chicken cool to room temperature, transfer to paper towel-lined plate, and refrigerate uncovered until ready to eat, up to 24 hours in advance. (Serve cold or let chicken come to room temperature.)