

Spicy Fried Chicken

4–6 servings

This chicken can just be "regular" if you decide to leave out the hot sauce and cayenne. Alternatively, it can be made "extremely hot" by increasing the amount of either ingredient (not sure? can always serve hot sauce on the side). While I prefer the act of using the whole bird cut up into 10 even pieces —sometimes you want a wing AND a thigh—any bone-in, skin-on parts will work here. For sandwiches, boneless, skinless thighs are the move. Regardless of the meat, don't neglect the step where you mix the flour with the wet to create those shaggy, craggy bits.

FOR THE BRINE

1 4-4 ½ pound chicken, broken down into parts (or 2 pounds boneless, skinless thighs if making sandwiches)

1 cup pickle juice

1 cup buttermilk

3 tablespoons hot sauce, such as franks, tabasco, cholula, crystal, or queen majesty (more if you want it even spicier)

2–4 cloves garlic, grated (depending on how garlicky you like it)

FOR THE DREDGE AND FRYING

2 cups all purpose flour

¼ cup cornstarch

2 tablespoons cayenne pepper (optional)

2 tablespoons kosher salt

1 tablespoon hot smoked paprika (optional)

1 tablespoon cracked black pepper

1 48 oz bottle canola oil, for frying

Pickles, peppers or pickled peppers, for serving

IF MAKING SANDWICHES

Shredduce (shredded iceberg lettuce)

Martin's potato rolls

¼ cup mayonnaise

Splash of vinegar, such as rice wine or white distilled

Hot sauce, to taste

Thinly sliced onion

Pepperoncinis

ALISON ROMAN

1. In a large bowl, combine the pickle juice, buttermilk, hot sauce, and garlic. Season with salt to taste.
2. Season chicken with salt and pepper. Add to the brine mixture and cover as well as you can. Brine for at least 30 minutes, and up to 36 hours.
3. Combine the flour, cornstarch, salt, pepper, paprika, and cayenne in a large, high-sided bowl.
4. Prepare your space for frying. Set a wire rack inside a sheet pan and place it to the side of your frying station.
5. Preheat your oven to 425.
6. Heat the oil in a large cast iron skillet or dutch oven over medium heat until it reaches 350 degrees. If you don't have a thermometer, you can test to make sure the oil is ready by dropping in a small piece and making sure it immediately sizzles and there are lots of little bubbles forming around it.
7. Dredge the chicken. Using your hands, remove the chicken from the brine one piece at a time, and coat it in the flour mixture, scooping some of the brine into the flour mixture as you go and taking care to toss and really press the dredge onto the chicken so it adheres and forms craggy bits. Shake the excess dredge off and transfer to the wire rack.
8. Working in batches and taking care not to overcrowd the pan, add the chicken to the oil and cook over medium-high heat for about 6-8 minutes, until they are deeply golden brown on the first side. Using tongs, flip the pieces and cook for another 6-8 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a wire rack fitted inside a sheet pan as it finishes frying, then transfer to the oven for 5-10 minutes until cooked through (if you're frying boneless skinless thighs for sandwiches, they won't take as long and don't need to be transferred to the oven).
9. Serve with pickles, peppers or pickled peppers.

IF MAKING SANDWICHES

1. In a small bowl, combine ¼ cup mayonnaise with a splash of white distilled or white wine vinegar, and season to taste with hot sauce.
2. Toast your bun (preferably Martin's Potato Rolls or Big Marty's) in a small skillet with a little butter over medium heat until golden brown.
3. Assemble your sandwich by spooning a little of your special sauce onto the bottom bun, top with a piece of fried chicken, followed by onion, pepperoncini, shreddeduce, more hot sauce. Dollop another swoosh of the sauce on the top bun before topping the sandwich.