



Chef Richard Crocker's Double-Dredged Fried Chicken Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 whole fryer chicken with skin, cut into 10 useable pieces (two wings, two legs, two thighs, two breasts, cut in half) plus backbone, or chicken parts with skin. I prefer legs and thighs, but I understand that some people prefer white meat. Bone-in is better but it's okay for boneless, cut breasts in half if they are large, it helps them to cook evenly.
- Kosher Salt
- Fresh thyme, on the stalks
- Bay leaves
- Black pepper, freshly ground
- Buttermilk (cultured, lowfat 1% buttermilk – about 1 quart per whole chicken)
- Paprika
- Cayenne
- Crushed chili flakes (optional)
- All purpose flour
- Vegetable oil (enough to put 1 1/2 inches in your frying pan).
- Frying pan. Any wide, flat bottomed pan with sides deep enough will do. I prefer cast iron frying pans, but I also use my big Creuset Dutch oven. A note of caution, a tight-fitting lid is helpful to have in case of an accidental fire. It's also prudent to have baking soda or a fire extinguisher handy in any kitchen.
- Instant read thermometer to test oil and chicken temperatures

Instructions:

The night or a few hours before: season the chicken with salt, combine with fresh thyme, dry bay leaves and a sprinkling of pepper, combine in a bowl cover and refrigerate.

Next day or a few hours later make the marinade. For 1 Qt buttermilk, add a couple large pinches of salt, 2 tsp paprika, 1 tsp cayenne, 1 tsp crushed chili flakes and ground black pepper to taste. It should not be too salty but should have a bit of a hot bite.

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Add the chicken including the herbs to the buttermilk marinade and combine so that all the chicken is coated. Marinate for 30 – 60 minutes at room temperature. Do not marinate for longer than 1.5 hours

While the chicken is marinating in the buttermilk, prepare the dredge. Using a large bowl or container, combine a healthy amount of flour to cover the bottom of the container about 1 inch deep. Sprinkle into the flour: large pinches of salt, 1 tsp paprika, 1 tsp cayenne, 1 tsp crushed chili flakes and mix by hand to combine.

Prepare drying racks for dredged chicken – use wire cookie cooling racks placed over cookie sheets.

Dredge: You're going to have one wet hand and one dry. Take chicken out of marinade one piece at a time with one hand, let excess buttermilk drip off and place into dredge. Only place a few pieces in the dredge at one time, and don't let the chicken pieces touch. Using your other 'dry' hand, toss dredge onto each piece, the flour will keep your fingers from getting damp from touching the chicken as you turn and coat it. Try not to touch the wet chicken. Place each dredged piece onto the drying rack, not touching each other. Repeat. When all chicken is on the drying rack. Let sit for about 10 - 20 minutes.

Prepare to cook: While chicken is on the drying racks, add vegetable oil to the cast iron pan(s), about 1 ½ inch deep so that chicken pieces will be almost totally covered once submerged in the oil. Heat on high until oil is 350°F. It will take about 10 minutes for the oil to heat. While you're waiting, do a second dredge of each piece and put back onto drying rack, again being careful to keep a lot of flour between your fingers and the chicken. Pat on the dredge, you want it to look a bit shaggy and rough.

Test the temperature of the oil. When the oil reaches 350°F, carefully place the chicken pieces into the oil. Don't crowd the chicken and don't let chicken pieces touch each other. Be careful of splashing and spattering oil, and be sure to not let the oil boil over if using a shallow pan.

Once the chicken is in the pan, the oil temperature will drop precipitously. Keep it on high for a few minutes, but then adjust the heat throughout cooking to maintain oil temperature at about 325°. Check oil temperature regularly so it doesn't get too hot or cool.

Once the coating has set, it's OK to flip the chicken. Use tongs. It's okay to turn it more than once. When it looks done, it'll be a nice dark mahogany color, which takes about 15 minutes. Pull a piece out of the oil, and use the thermometer to check the temperature of the chicken. It should be about 155°F – 160°F. Test each piece in several places. Once done, remove from the oil and place on a clean rack setup similar to the drying rack. The residual heat will carry the cooking temperature to 165°F. Season one more time with Kosher salt while hot. Serve immediately or later at room temperature, or refrigerate it for enjoyment even later. There are few things better than homemade fried chicken.

Enjoy!