

Fried Chicken with Pancetta Cream Gravy

Perhaps you've noticed by now, we have no problem taking an already gluttonous dish and making more so. That's goes with the territory when you have so much pancetta lying around. But once you toss a few chunks of it in this gravy, you might grab a spoon and forget about the chicken it's meant to adorn. But *do not* forget about that chicken, because when you use our method, it's so crispy that your grandma is going to demand you tell her your secret.

See Cook's Note on using potato starch.

Ingredients

chicken

3/4 cup potato starch
1 tablespoon kosher salt, plus more for seasoning
1 tablespoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon onion powder
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon cayenne powder
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 (3½ to 4-pound) chicken, cut into 8 to 10 pieces (breasts halved crosswise if large; wing tips and backs saved for stock or discarded)
Vegetable oil, for deep frying

gravy

1/4 pound pancetta, cut into 1/4-inch cubes (3/4 cup)
3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 cups milk, warmed
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Pinch cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest (from 1 lemon)

special equipment

deep fry thermometer
large (7-quart) Dutch oven or other heavy pot

Directions

for the chicken

Combine the potato starch, salt, garlic powder, onion powder, baking powder and pepper in a large bowl. Add the chicken pieces to the bowl and toss well. Set aside for 30 minutes at room temperature.

Pour oil to a depth of 2½ to 3 inches in a large Dutch oven and heat the oil over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer registers 375 degrees. Cook the chicken in batches, thighs with drumsticks for 15 minutes, and breasts with wings for 10 to 12 minutes, allowing the oil to return to temperature before cooking the next batch. Transfer chicken to a paper towel-lined plate or sheet pan as done. Season with salt as it comes out.

for the gravy

Sweat the pancetta, stirring often, in a medium heavy skillet over medium-high until the fat renders and the pancetta turns golden, about 7 minutes. (If you like a creamier gravy without tidbits of pancetta, scoop out the pancetta with a slotted spoon after it's rendered its fat and has crisped up.) Reduce heat to medium. Sprinkle the flour over the pancetta and cook, stirring, until the raw taste of the flour gets cooked out and it turns a light tan, 4 to 5 minutes. Slowly whisk in the milk (so lumps don't form) and continue to simmer until mixture thickens. The gravy will continue to thicken as it sits. If it gets thicker than you'd like, thin it by whisking in some hot milk or water. Season with salt and pepper, cayenne and lemon zest.

Serve chicken with the gravy.

Cook's Note

Potato starch replaces the more commonly used flour in this fried chicken, helping the chicken retain a crunchy crust longer. For more flavor, coat the chicken in the seasonings and let sit overnight in the refrigerator. The next day, toss the seasoned chicken with the potato starch straight from the fridge and allow to sit 30 minutes to set the coating and bring the chicken to room temperature.

total time: 1 hour

active prep: 40 minutes

serves: 4

difficulty: *medium*