

Crispy Fried Catfish: Southern Classic Recipe

, which is achieved by a double-dredge method and the use of cornmeal. The blend of



OVEN
350°F

TIME
5 min

METHOD
Air fryer

PRINT
Recipe Card

INGREDIENTS

2 pounds catfish fillets
2 teaspoons Old Bay seasoning
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon black pepper
1 cup all-purpose flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup yellow cornmeal
2 large eggs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup buttermilk
1 Tablespoon hot sauce
Lemon wedges and tartar sauce for serving (optional)

Swaps and Notes:

Catfish Fillets: Choose fresh or frozen (thawed) fillets. Ensure they are well-dried before seasoning. Tilapia or cod can be used as substitutes, though the flavor and texture will differ.

Old Bay Seasoning: This is iconic for seafood frying, but you can adjust or use other seasoning blends if preferred.

Buttermilk: Buttermilk helps tenderize the fish and allows the breading to adhere well. If you don't have buttermilk, combine 1 teaspoon of lemon juice or white vinegar with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of regular milk and let it sit for 5 minutes before using.

Hot Sauce: A dash of hot sauce in the egg wash adds a subtle background kick without making it overtly spicy. Adjust to your preference or omit.

Frying Oil: Vegetable oil, canola oil, or peanut oil are good choices due to their high smoke points. You'll need enough to submerge the fish adequately (at least 4 inches deep in your pot).

DIRECTIONS

1. Let's get this delicious : Crispy Fried Catfish cooking!
2. Preheat : Oil: In a deep fryer or a large, heavy-bottomed pot (like a Dutch oven), add about 4 inches of vegetable oil (or your preferred frying oil). Heat the oil to 350°F (175°C). Use a reliable kitchen thermometer to monitor the temperature and adjust the heat as needed. Maintaining a consistent temperature is crucial for crispy, non-greasy fish.
3. Prep : Fish: While the oil heats, pat the catfish fillets very dry with paper towels. Excess moisture can make the coating soggy and cause oil to splatter. Set the dry fillets aside.
4. Seasoning : Blend: In a small bowl, stir together the Old Bay seasoning, garlic powder, onion powder, kosher salt, and black pepper. This is your flavorful spice mix.
5. Prepare : Dredging Stations: In a large shallow bowl (or a pie plate), stir together the all-purpose flour, yellow cornmeal, and about half of the prepared spice mix. Whisk well to combine.
6. In another large shallow bowl, whisk together the eggs, buttermilk, and hot sauce until well combined.
7. Dredge the : Fish: One at a time, take a fish fillet and first dip it into the flour mixture, ensuring it's completely coated. Shake off any excess flour. Next, dip the floured fish fillet into the egg mixture until it's fully coated, letting any excess drip off.
8. Finally, dip the fish fillet back into the flour mixture for a second coating. Press gently to ensure it's well covered, then shake off any excess breading. Place the fully coated fillet on a clean sheet tray. Repeat this process with all the remaining fish fillets.

9. Fry the : Fish: When the oil is at the correct temperature (350°F / 175°C) and you're ready to fry, gently add one fish fillet at a time to the hot oil. Avoid overcrowding the fryer, as this will drop the oil temperature and lead to greasy fish. Fry for about 3-4 minutes per side, or until the fish is beautifully golden brown, cooked through, and flakes easily with a fork. You may need to flip the fillet partway through for even browning.
10. Drain and : Keep Crispy: As each fillet is cooked, remove it from the fryer using tongs or a slotted spoon. Place it on a plate lined with paper towels to soak up any immediate excess oil. Then, immediately transfer the fried fish fillets to a sheet tray fitted with a wire rack on top. This setup allows air to circulate around the fish, helping to keep it crispy while you fry the remaining batches.
11. Serve: Repeat with the remaining fish fillets. Serve hot with fresh lemon wedges and your favorite tartar sauce on the side. Enjoy your perfectly crispy homemade fried catfish!

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Dry Fish is Key: Patting the fish thoroughly dry before seasoning and dredging prevents a soggy coating.

Oil Temperature: Maintaining 350°F (175°C) is crucial.

Too low, and the fish will be greasy; too high, and the coating will burn before the fish cooks through.

Give each piece of fish enough space in the fryer for proper air circulation and even cooking.

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