

Classic Sweet and Sour Chicken: Better Than Takeout!

crispy exterior of the chicken



OVEN
360°F

TIME
10 min

METHOD
Air fryer

PRINT
Recipe Card

INGREDIENTS

- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups water, divided
- 1 (8 ounce) can pineapple chunks, drained (juice reserved)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup white sugar
- $\frac{1}{8}$ cup distilled white vinegar
- 2 drops orange food color (optional, for that classic hue)
- ... cup cornstarch (for the sauce)
- 2 ... cups self-rising flour
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil (for the batter)
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch (for the batter)
- 1 egg
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt
- ... teaspoon ground white pepper
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups water (for the batter)
- 8 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves - cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 quart vegetable oil for frying
- 2 green bell peppers, cut into 1-inch pieces

DIRECTIONS

1. Prepare the : Sweet and Sour Sauce: In a medium saucepan, combine 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water, the reserved pineapple juice from the canned pineapple, white sugar, distilled white vinegar, and the optional orange food coloring. Bring this mixture to a boil over medium heat, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Once it boils, remove it from the heat and set it aside.
2. Thicken the : Sauce: In a small bowl, whisk together ... cup of cornstarch with ... cup of water until you have a smooth slurry (no lumps!). Gradually pour this cornstarch mixture into the hot sweet and sour sauce, stirring continuously. Return the saucepan to low heat if needed, and continue stirring until the sauce slightly thickens to your desired consistency. It should be thick enough to coat a spoon.
3. Make the : Chicken Batter: In a large mixing bowl, combine the self-rising flour, 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil, 2 tablespoons of cornstarch, the egg, salt, and ground white pepper. Gradually whisk in 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups of water, adding it slowly to create a thick, smooth batter. Ensure there are no dry spots or lumps.
4. Coat the : Chicken: Add your 1-inch chicken cubes to the batter in the large bowl. Stir until each piece of chicken is thoroughly coated in the thick batter.
5. Fry the : Chicken: Heat 1 quart of vegetable oil in a large, deep skillet or wok to 360°F (180°C). Use a thermometer to ensure the oil is at the correct temperature for best results. Carefully place the battered chicken pieces into the preheated oil, being careful not to overcrowd the pan. Fry the chicken in batches for about 10 minutes per batch, or until it's

golden brown and cooked through. Remove the fried chicken pieces with a slotted spoon and drain them on a plate lined with paper towels to absorb excess oil.

6. **Combine and :** Serve: On a large platter or in a serving bowl, layer the cut green bell peppers, the drained pineapple chunks, and your freshly fried crispy chicken pieces. Pour the hot sweet and sour sauce generously over the top of everything. Serve immediately and enjoy the delightful flavors!

SWAPS & NOTES

Chicken: While chicken breast is specified, boneless, skinless chicken thighs also work wonderfully and tend to stay a bit juicier.

You could also try this with pork tenderloin for a different

take.

Pineapple: Fresh pineapple chunks can be used instead of canned, but you'll need to add a little extra water to the sauce to compensate for the lack of reserved juice.

You can also use canned mandarin oranges for a similar fruity

sweetness.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Oil Temperature is Crucial: For truly crispy chicken, maintaining the correct oil temperature is vital.

If the oil isn't hot enough, the chicken will absorb too much oil and become greasy.

If it's too hot, the outside will burn before the inside cooks through.

Don't Overcrowd the Pan: Frying in batches ensures the oil temperature doesn't drop too much, leading to crispier chicken.

More recipes: [ChefManiac.com](https://chefmaniac.com)

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/classic-sweet-and-sour-chicken-better-than-takeout/>