

## Easy Cornmeal Crusted Fried Catfish (Golden and Shatteringly Crisp)

This recipe is a masterclass in texture and simplicity. Here is why it's my go-to:



**OVEN**  
**350°F**

**TIME**  
**5 min**

**TEMP**  
**145°F**

**METHOD**  
**Air fryer**

### INGREDIENTS

The Star: 4 fresh catfish fillets.

The Dredge: 1 cup cornmeal and 1/2 cup all-purpose flour.

The Seasoning: 1 tsp garlic powder, 1 tsp paprika, 1/2 tsp cayenne pepper (optional), 1 tsp salt, and 1/2 tsp black pepper.

The Wet Mix: 1 large egg and 1/2 cup buttermilk (or regular milk).

For Frying: Vegetable oil (enough for about 2 inches of depth in your skillet).

### DIRECTIONS

- 1. Prep the Breading Station:** In a shallow bowl or a pie plate, whisk together the cornmeal, flour, garlic powder, paprika, cayenne, salt, and pepper. In a second bowl, whisk the egg and buttermilk until fully combined. Having your "wet" and "dry" stations ready makes the process seamless and less messy.
- 2. Coat the Fillets:** Dip each catfish fillet into the buttermilk and egg mixture, allowing any excess to drip off. Immediately place the fillet into the cornmeal mixture. Press down gently with your hands to make sure the coating is thick and even. Pro-Tip: For the crispiest results, let the breaded fillets sit on a wire rack for about 5 minutes before frying; this helps the breading adhere.
- 3. Heat the Oil:** Pour about 2 inches of vegetable oil into a large, heavy-bottomed skillet (cast iron is ideal here). Heat the oil over medium-high heat until it reaches approximately 350°F. If you don't have a thermometer, dip the corner of a fillet in-if it sizzles vigorously, it's ready.
- 4. Fry to Golden Perfection:** Carefully lay the fillets into the hot oil. Do not overcrowd the pan; work in batches if necessary. Fry for about 4 minutes per side. You are looking for a deep golden brown color and an internal temperature of 145°F. The fish should flake easily with a fork.
- 5. Drain and Rest:** Remove the catfish from the skillet and place them on a plate lined with paper towels to absorb any residual oil. This prevents the bottom of the fish from getting soggy while it rests.
- 6. Serve Hot:** Serve your catfish immediately with plenty of lemon wedges. Traditional pairings include French

fries, creamy coleslaw, and hushpuppies.

## SWAPS & NOTES

**The Buttermilk:** If you don't have buttermilk on hand, you can mimic the tang and acidity by adding a teaspoon of lemon juice to regular milk.

**The Flour Ratio:** For an even crunchier, "harder" crust, you can increase the cornmeal to 1.5 cups and omit the flour entirely.

This also makes the recipe easier to adapt for gluten-free diets (using GF cornmeal).

**The Heat:** If you're serving kids, feel free to swap the cayenne for a bit more mild paprika.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

**Pat Dry First:** Before you even start the breading process, pat your catfish fillets dry with paper towels.

Removing surface moisture ensures the buttermilk sticks better.

**Maintain Oil Temp:** If you add too much fish at once, the oil temperature will drop, and the fish will absorb the oil rather than searing, resulting in a greasy fillet.

**The "One-Hand" Rule:** Use one hand for the wet mixture and the other for the dry cornmeal to avoid "club hand" (where your fingers get

breaded along with the fish!).

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

Original recipe: <https://chefmaniac.com/easy-cornmeal-crust-fried-catfish-golden-and-shatteringly-crisp/>