

Southern Fried Chicken – “The Virginia Way”



Funny how my brother and I sometimes end up being simpatico but always with slightly different perspectives. My wife had been talking about feeding our kids Kentucky Fried Chicken when I ran into a deal at our local Asian food market - chicken legs for 69 cents a pound. I knew I had to use the chicken legs immediately (there presumably was a reason why they were on special).

Soup was a possibility, but my boys love fried chicken. So fried chicken it would be (and no, I had not seen my brother's posting before making this decision).

So, as my brother asks: "what breading?" I started making a batter coating that has been successful in the past, but then thought better of it. I grew up in Connecticut, but I now live in Virginia. How do Virginians

make southern fried chicken?

The Heritage of Southern Cooking is a true authority from which I have learned a lot. I also sometimes look at Craig Claiborne's [Southern Cooking](#) since I know it's meticulously researched. I haven't picked up the [Lee brother's book](#) yet, but plan to one of these days.]

The authorities I consulted were consistent: the coating is flour mixed with some salt and pepper (Claiborne cautions that "pepper is important in this recipe"). Thus, Southern Fried Chicken is really very simple. Take some chicken. Rinse and dry it. Coat it in flour mixed with some salt and pepper (you can shake in a bag if you like). Shake off the excess. Fry in hot oil (preferably in a large cast iron skillet) for 8 minutes, turn over and fry another 12 minutes (or more) until it's "cooked through". (Ms. Glenn talks about covering the skillet for the first eight minutes, presumably to reduce the spatter. She has you take off the cover when you turn it because you have to watch it).

How do you know when it's "cooked through"? Good question. Undercooked chicken is dangerous. This is where experience comes in. Ms Glenn has the experience to know when its done just right. Lacking that, do what I did - simply take out a piece, cut it up and see if it's done.

Other variations: Claiborne tells you to soak the chicken in milk with some tabasco sauce for an hour before your coat. I did not do this. Claiborne seems to always put in something extra to make it special. I knew my boys wanted plain old fried chicken.

Of course, eating this stuff every day is not good for you. It's also not good for your kitchen - the oil spatters and you have a big mess to clean up. But the kids do love it!!

Any real southerners out there with comments? How did your grandmother make fried chicken?