

Our State eats

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Sweet Tea-Brined Fried Chicken

Yield: 6 servings.

- 4 cups water
- 2 family-size iced tea bags
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup Kosher salt
- 1 (3-pound) whole chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 medium lemon, seeded and thinly sliced
- Peanut oil, for frying
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon ground black pepper
- 1 cup whole buttermilk

In a large saucepan, bring water to a boil, remove from heat, and add tea bags. Steep tea for 10 minutes. Remove and discard tea bags. Add sugar and salt, stirring until dissolved. Refrigerate brine for 2 hours.

Place chicken in a large, heavy-duty plastic bag. Add brine and lemon slices; seal bag, pressing out as much air as possible. Place bag in a large baking dish. Refrigerate overnight.

Remove bag from refrigerator and let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Fill a large Dutch oven halfway with peanut oil. Heat oil to 375°.

While oil is heating, whisk together flour, cornstarch, salt, and pepper in a large baking dish. Place buttermilk in another large baking dish.



Remove chicken from brine. Dredge in flour mixture, shaking off excess. Dip in buttermilk, letting excess drip off. Dredge in flour mixture again, shaking off excess. Working in batches, fry chicken, turning 3 to 4 times, until golden brown and internal temperature reaches 165°, about 9 to 12 minutes. Let drain on paper towels. Serve immediately.

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Fried Chicken Livers & Onions

Yield: 4 servings.

- 1 pound fresh chicken livers**
- 1 cup whole milk**
- 1 cup vegetable oil**
- 1 large onion, cut into ¼-inch rings**
- 1 cup all-purpose flour**
- 1 teaspoon salt**
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper**
- Hot sauce (optional)**

Soak chicken livers in milk for up to a couple of hours to help remove any strong flavors. Place livers in a colander and rinse under cold water; discard milk. Cut each liver in half.

Pour ½ cup oil into large skillet and bring to 350°. Add onions and cook, stirring often, until golden in color. Remove onions with a fork and place on paper towel to drain.

In a pie pan or shallow dish, whisk together flour, salt, and pepper. Dredge livers in flour mixture until well coated.

Bring remaining oil to 350°. Shake off excess flour from livers and fry in batches of 2 or 3 to avoid overcrowding. Cook livers about 2 to 3 minutes per side or until the outsides are crispy. The centers should be slightly pink with an internal temperature of 165°.

Transfer livers to a paper towel-lined platter and top with cooked onions. Salt to taste. Serve immediately with your favorite hot sauce, if desired.



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Sesame-Glazed Chicken Thighs

Yield: 8 servings.

For the sauce:

- ¼ cup honey
- ¼ cup soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon brown sugar
- 3 tablespoons rice wine vinegar
- ½ cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh ginger, peeled and grated
- 3 teaspoons sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper

For the chicken:

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 8 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs
- 4 green onions, thinly sliced (optional, for garnish)

Preheat oven to 400°.

To make the sauce, whisk together all ingredients in a small bowl; set aside.

In a large ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken, skin-side down, and sear both sides until golden brown, about 2 to 3 minutes per side. Stir in sauce.

Place chicken in oven and roast until completely cooked, with an internal temperature of 175°, about 25 to 30 minutes. Then broil for 2 to 3 minutes, or until caramelized and slightly charred.

Garnish with green onions, if desired, and serve immediately.



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Grilled Barbecued Chicken Breasts

Yield: 6 servings.

6 boneless, skinless chicken breasts

For the barbecue sauce:

- 2 cups tomato sauce**
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste**
- 1/3 cup apple cider vinegar**
- 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce**
- 1/3 cup molasses**
- 2/3 cup light brown sugar**
- 2 teaspoons chili powder**
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika**
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder**
- 1 teaspoon Kosher salt**
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper**

For the brine:

- 3 cups cold water**
- 3 cups buttermilk**
- 1/4 cup salt**
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar**

Combine all barbecue sauce ingredients in a saucepan. Simmer over medium-low heat until thickened, about 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Refrigerate until ready to grill.

In a large bowl, combine all brine ingredients. Add chicken, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for 30 to 60 minutes.

Preheat grill on high for 15 minutes. Remove chicken from brine and pat dry with paper towels; discard brine.



Scrape grill grates and prepare with cooking spray.

Place chicken on the hottest part of the grill and cook for 2 to 2½ minutes.

Turn chicken over and brush with sauce. Cook until browned on the second side, about 2 to 2½ minutes.

Turn chicken over and move to cooler part of grill. Brush with sauce and cook for 2 more minutes.

Repeat the turning and brushing 2 more times, cooking for 2 minutes on each side.

Flip chicken one final time and brush with sauce. Cook for 1 to 3 minutes or until the internal temperature reaches 165°.

Move chicken to a plate and let rest for 5 minutes before serving.

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