

# Crispy Sage Fried Chicken

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**Total Time** At least 25¾ hours

**Prep Time** 15 minutes

**Cook Time** 1½ hours, plus at least 24 hours' brining

**Rating** ★★★★★ (47)



David Malosh for The New York Times. Food Stylist: Simon Andrews. Prop Stylist: Megan Hedgpeth.

This juicy, crispy, vaguely-tastes-like-Thanksgiving fried chicken makes an exciting stand-in for the usual turkey. The recipe takes every step to maximize moisture and flavor, so no dry poultry arrives at your table, holiday or otherwise: Start with bone-in, skin-on chicken legs, submerge the pieces in a brine for at least 24 hours, fry low and slow to allow all the fat and connective tissue to render and finally, shower over a boxed stuffing-inspired seasoning. As an optional touch, dredge the chicken pieces in Italian 00 flour instead of all-purpose — its ultra-fine texture makes the crust simultaneously extra crispy and less greasy.

## INGREDIENTS

**Yield:** 6 to 8 servings

### FOR THE CHICKEN BRINE

3 tablespoons kosher salt, such as Diamond Crystal (or 1½ tablespoons fine salt)

3 tablespoons granulated sugar

1½ teaspoons MSG (optional)

8 whole chicken legs (or 8 drums and 8 thighs), about 6 pounds

### FOR THE HERB SEASONING

¼ cup dried parsley

1 tablespoon dried sage

1 tablespoon chicken bouillon powder

1 ½ teaspoons onion powder

1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 teaspoon granulated sugar

¾ teaspoon ground cayenne

¼ teaspoon MSG (optional)

### FOR FRYING AND SERVING

5 to 8 cups peanut or safflower oil

5 cups all-purpose flour or Italian 00 flour (see Tip)

2 teaspoons kosher salt, such as Diamond Crystal (or 1 teaspoon fine

## PREPARATION

### Step 1

**Brine the chicken:** In a large container with at least 6-quart capacity, combine 2 quarts water with the salt, sugar and MSG (if using), and whisk until dissolved. (Or mix the brine in a bowl and divide into two containers with at least 3-quart capacity.)

### Step 2

Divide the legs into drumsticks and thighs by slicing through the knee joint along the white fat line (unless you start with drums and thighs). Trim away any excess fat, then transfer the pieces to the brine as you work. Cover and refrigerate for at least 24 hours and up to 36 hours.

### Step 3

**Meanwhile, make the herb seasoning:** In a small bowl, crumble the parsley between your fingers until fine. Combine with sage, chicken bouillon, onion powder, pepper, sugar, cayenne and MSG (if using). Set aside.

### Step 4

**When ready to fry:** Fill a large Dutch oven with enough oil to come halfway up the sides. Attach a clip-on thermometer and heat the oil to 325 degrees, keeping the burner at medium-high heat. Line one sheet tray with paper towels and set a wire rack in another sheet tray. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour and salt. Drizzle ¼ cup of chicken brine into the flour and gently toss with your hands to prime it with little clumps that will create a craggy surface on the chicken.

salt)

1/3 cup lightly packed fresh sage leaves

2 lemons

#### **Step 5**

While the oil is heating up and when it reaches 275 degrees, add the sage leaves and fry, stirring frequently until bubbling subsides, about 2 minutes. Use a slotted spoon to transfer to the paper towel-lined tray.

#### **Step 6**

Remove the chicken from the fridge. Working with one piece of chicken at a time, lift chicken from the brine and immediately place it in flour with your "wet" hand. Using your other, "dry" hand, bury the chicken and press flour into all sides, packing tightly to form large clumps of flour coating on each piece. Lift chicken out of flour and shake to remove any loose flour before placing into the hot oil. Proceed until the skillet is full of pieces closely resting together (it will take 2 to 3 batches to fry all the chicken). Fry, flipping once, until golden brown all over, 7 to 9 minutes per side. (Once the chicken is added to the oil, the temperature will drop to between 250 and 275 degrees. Do not increase the heat to compensate; allow the oil temperature to gradually return to 325 degrees as the chicken cooks. The temperature should be up to 300 degrees after 10 minutes; if not, increase the heat. Once the oil returns to 325 degrees, reduce heat to maintain that temperature. Drop heat down to low in between batches while you're breading and adding in the next round of chicken, as an empty pot of oil will quickly climb in temperature.)

#### **Step 7**

As each piece of chicken has turned golden brown and has an internal temperature of at least 175 degrees, remove from oil to briefly blot on the paper towel-lined sheet tray. (If the oil temperature is well managed, crust color and cook time are good indicators of doneness if you don't have an instant-read probe thermometer.)

#### **Step 8**

Transfer chicken to the wire rack, generously season all over with herb seasoning, then let rest for 5 minutes and up to 1 hour (room temperature fried chicken is great!). To serve, crumble over the fried sage leaves and finely grate over the zest of the lemon. Cut the lemons into wedges and tuck alongside for guests to spritz.

#### **TIP**

*00 flour is a finely milled Italian flour typically used for pizza and pasta doughs. Its powdery texture makes it less absorbent than other flours, sopping up less oil during frying and keeping the crust crisp and dry. You can purchase it online or from specialty stores.*

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