

how to make chicken fried steak

How to Make Chicken Fried Steak is a beloved Southern dish that combines the best of both worlds: tender beef steak and flavorful breading. This dish is not only delicious but also provides a comforting experience that many people crave. Chicken fried steak is typically served with creamy gravy, mashed potatoes, and greens, making it a staple in Southern cuisine. In this article, we will guide you through the process of making the perfect chicken fried steak, from selecting the right ingredients to frying it to crispy perfection.

Understanding Chicken Fried Steak

Chicken fried steak is a dish that features a breaded and fried beef steak, often served with a rich, creamy gravy. The term "chicken fried" refers to the cooking method, which mimics that of fried chicken. It is important to note that chicken fried steak does not contain chicken; instead, it uses a cut of beef, typically round steak or cube steak.

Ingredients Needed

To make chicken fried steak, you will need the following ingredients:

- For the Steak:
 - 2 pieces of cube steak or round steak (about 1/2 inch thick)
 - Salt and pepper to taste
 - 1 cup of all-purpose flour
 - 1 teaspoon of garlic powder
 - 1 teaspoon of onion powder
 - 1 teaspoon of paprika
 - 1 large egg
 - 1/2 cup of milk
 - Vegetable oil (for frying)
- For the Gravy:
 - 1/4 cup of the leftover flour from breading
 - 2 cups of milk
 - Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation Steps

Before cooking, it's essential to prepare your ingredients and equipment. Follow these steps to set yourself up for success.

Step 1: Tenderizing the Steak

If you are using round steak, tenderize it before cooking. You can do this by:

1. Placing the steak between two sheets of plastic wrap.
2. Using a meat mallet, pound the steak gently until it is about 1/4 inch thick.
3. Season both sides with salt and pepper.

Step 2: Create the Breading Station

Setting up a breading station will streamline the process of coating the steak. Here's how to do it:

1. Set Up Your Bowls:
 - In one shallow bowl, combine the flour, garlic powder, onion powder, paprika, and a pinch of salt and pepper.
 - In another shallow bowl, whisk together the egg and milk until well combined.
2. Coating the Steak:
 - Dredge each piece of steak in the flour mixture, covering it completely.
 - Dip the coated steak into the egg mixture, ensuring it is fully submerged.
 - Return the steak to the flour mixture for a second coating, pressing it lightly to adhere the flour.

Frying the Steak

Frying is the most critical step in making chicken fried steak. It requires attention to detail to achieve the perfect crispy exterior.

Step 3: Heating the Oil

1. In a large skillet, pour enough vegetable oil to cover the bottom of the pan (about 1/2 inch deep).
2. Heat the oil over medium heat until it reaches 350°F (175°C). You can test the oil by dropping a small amount of the flour mixture into it; if it bubbles and sizzles, it's ready.

Step 4: Frying the Steak

1. Carefully add the breaded steak to the hot oil, taking care not to overcrowd the pan. Fry in batches if necessary.
2. Cook each side for about 3-4 minutes or until golden brown and crispy.
3. Once cooked, transfer the steak to a paper towel-lined plate to drain excess oil.

Making the Gravy

While the steak is resting, you can prepare the creamy gravy that complements this dish perfectly.

Step 5: Preparing the Gravy

1. In the same pan used to fry the steak, leave about 1/4 cup of oil and the browned bits (fond) left in the pan.
2. Sprinkle the leftover flour from the breading into the pan and whisk it into the oil to create a roux. Cook for about 1-2 minutes until it turns golden brown.
3. Gradually add 2 cups of milk to the roux, whisking continuously to avoid lumps.
4. Bring the gravy to a simmer and cook until it thickens to your desired consistency, usually around 5-7 minutes.
5. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Serving Suggestions

Once your chicken fried steak and gravy are ready, it's time to serve. Here are some delicious serving suggestions:

1. Classic Plate:
 - Serve the chicken fried steak smothered in gravy over a bed of creamy mashed potatoes.
 - Add a side of collard greens or green beans for a balanced meal.
2. Breakfast Style:
 - Serve the steak with fried eggs on top and a side of buttery biscuits for a hearty breakfast.
3. Sandwich Option:
 - Slice the steak and place it on a toasted bun with lettuce, tomato, and a drizzle of gravy for a tasty sandwich.

Tips for the Perfect Chicken Fried Steak

1. Choose the Right Cut: Cube steak is the traditional choice for chicken fried steak due to its tenderness. Round steak can also work well but may require more tenderizing.
2. Don't Skip the Double Dredge: Double coating the steak in flour helps create a thicker, crunchier crust.
3. Maintain Oil Temperature: If the oil is too hot, the breading may burn before the steak cooks through. If it's too cool, the steak will absorb too much oil and become greasy.
4. Experiment with Seasonings: Feel free to add your favorite spices to the flour mixture for a unique flavor profile.

Conclusion

Chicken fried steak is a comforting dish that brings warmth and satisfaction to any table. With its crispy exterior, tender meat, and rich gravy, it's no wonder that this dish has become a Southern classic. By following the steps outlined in this article, you can create an authentic chicken fried steak experience in your own kitchen. Whether you serve it for a special occasion or a simple family dinner, this dish is sure to impress. So roll up your sleeves, gather your ingredients, and enjoy the delightful process of making chicken fried steak!

Frequently Asked Questions

What is chicken fried steak?

Chicken fried steak is a Southern dish made of a breaded and fried beef steak, typically served with gravy.

What type of meat is best for chicken fried steak?

The best cuts for chicken fried steak are usually tender cuts like cube steak or round steak, as they are more tender and flavorful.

How do you prepare the meat for chicken fried steak?

To prepare the meat, you should tenderize it with a meat mallet, season it with salt and pepper, and then dip it in flour before frying.

What ingredients do I need for the batter?

You will need all-purpose flour, eggs, milk, and seasonings like salt, pepper, and paprika for the batter.

What is the best way to fry chicken fried steak?

The best way to fry chicken fried steak is to use a cast-iron skillet with hot oil, frying the steaks until they are golden brown on both sides.

How do you make gravy for chicken fried steak?

To make gravy, use the drippings from the skillet, add flour to create a roux, then whisk in milk and seasonings until thickened.

What sides pair well with chicken fried steak?

Common sides that pair well with chicken fried steak include mashed potatoes, green beans, and coleslaw.

Can chicken fried steak be made ahead of time?

Yes, chicken fried steak can be made ahead of time and reheated in the oven or skillet, although it is best served fresh for optimal crispiness.

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