Sauces / United States

Fried Chicken Brine

A tangy, herb-spiked buttermilk bath that penetrates deep into the chicken over 12–24 hours, tenderizing the muscle fibers and building a seasoned base that carries all the way to the bone.

Time 720 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 8 parts Full-fat buttermilk
- ☐ 0.5 parts Kosher salt
- ☐ 0.5 parts Hot sauce (Crystal or Frank's)
- ☐ 0.2 parts Smoked paprika
- ☐ 0.15 parts Garlic powder
- ☐ 0.1 parts Onion powder
- ☐ 0.1 parts Fresh thyme sprigs
- ☐ 0.1 parts Black pepper, coarsely ground

Let's make it.

01 Pour the buttermilk into a large bowl or container. Add the kosher salt and whisk until fully dissolved — undissolved salt will create salty pockets in the finished chicken rather than even seasoning throughout. Add the hot sauce, smoked paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, and black pepper, and whisk until uniform. Bruise the thyme sprigs between your palms to release the essential oils before adding them.

02 Add the chicken pieces (typically a cut-up 1.5 kg bird or equivalent parts). Press each piece under the brine and turn to coat. If using a zip-lock bag, remove the air before sealing so every surface is in contact with brine. Refrigerate for a minimum of 8 hours; 12–24 hours is ideal. Do not brine for more than 24 hours — the acids will begin to denature the surface proteins and make the coating slippery.

03 Remove the chicken from the brine and place on a wire rack set over a sheet pan. Do not rinse. Allow to rest at room temperature for 20–30 minutes before dredging. Cold chicken brought straight from the brine to hot oil causes two problems: the outside fries before the inside cooks through, and the temperature drop in the oil slows browning. Room-temperature chicken fries more evenly.

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Servings are an estimate; check quantities in the source recipe.
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