Sauces / United States

Nashville Hot Sauce

The incendiary cayenne-and-lard basting sauce that is brushed over freshly fried chicken at Prince's Hot Chicken and its descendants — a deep-red, glossy paste of cayenne, brown sugar, and spices that soaks into the crust and builds a slow, rolling heat that earns its city's reputation. The lard is non-negotiable; it is what makes the sauce cling.

Time 15 min **Servings** 4

What you'll need.

- ☐ 4 parts Lard or neutral frying oil (from the fried chicken fryer, strained)
- ☐ 2 parts Cayenne pepper (ground, freshly opened jar)
- ☐ 1 parts Brown sugar (dark, packed)
- ☐ 0.5 parts Smoked paprika
- ☐ 0.5 parts Garlic powder
- ☐ 0.5 parts Fine sea salt
- ☐ 0.5 parts Apple cider vinegar

Let's make it.

01 Gently heat the lard or frying oil in a small saucepan over medium heat until it reaches approximately 150–160 C (300–320 F) — just beginning to shimmer and move in the pan when swirled. This temperature is hot enough to bloom the spices and dissolve the sugar without scorching. If using strained fryer oil from freshly fried chicken, it is likely already at the right temperature.

02 Remove the pan from heat. Add the cayenne, brown sugar, smoked paprika, garlic powder, and salt to the hot fat all at once. Whisk vigorously and continuously for 30–45 seconds. The residual heat will bloom the spices, dissolve the sugar, and toast the powders in the fat, deepening their flavor dramatically. The mixture will foam and sizzle briefly and turn a vivid, deep brick-red.

03 Allow the bloomed spice-fat mixture to cool slightly for 2 minutes — to approximately 80 C (176 F). Add the apple cider vinegar and whisk immediately to emulsify. The sauce will thin slightly and brighten from the acid. Taste carefully (it is very hot): it should be fiery, slightly sweet from the brown sugar, with a sharp acidic back end from the vinegar. Use immediately to brush generously over freshly fried chicken, or store in a jar at room temperature for up to 2 weeks.

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