



# Fried Chicken, Southern Style (Miraculously Good)

*adapted from Scott Peacock and Edna Lewis; makes 4 servings*

- 1/2 cup kosher salt (do not use table salt for brining)
- 2 quarts cold water
- 1 three-pound chicken, cut into 8 pieces
- 1 quart buttermilk
- 1 pound lard (try for organic leaf lard)
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) butter
- 1/2 cup country ham pieces, or 1 thick slice country ham cut into 1/2-inch strips
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons corn starch
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

To make the brine, stir kosher salt into cold water until dissolved. Place chicken parts in a nonreactive bowl or pot; add enough brine to cover completely. Refrigerate 8 to 12 hours.

Drain the brined chicken and rinse out the bowl it was brined in. Return chicken to the bowl, and pour the buttermilk over. Cover and refrigerate for 8 to 12 hours.

Drain the chicken on a wire rack, discarding the buttermilk. Meanwhile, prepare the fat for frying by putting the lard, butter and country ham into a heavy skillet or frying pan. Cook over low heat for 30-45 minutes, skimming as needed, until the butter ceases to throw off foam and the country ham is browned. Use a slotted spoon to remove the ham carefully from the fat. Just before frying, increase the temperature to medium-high and heat the fat to 335 degrees.

Prepare the dredge by blending together the flour, cornstarch, salt and pepper in a shallow bowl or on wax paper. Dredge the drained chicken pieces thoroughly in the flour mixture, then be sure to pat well to remove all excess flour.

Using tongs, slip some of the chicken pieces, skin side down, into the heated fat. (Do not overcrowd the pan or the cooking fat will cool. You'll need to fry in batches.) Regulate the fat so it just bubbles, and cook for 8 to 10 minutes on each side, until the chicken is golden brown and cooked through. Drain thoroughly on a bed of crumpled paper towels (not flat ones), and serve. Fried chicken is delicious eaten hot, warm, at room temp or cold.