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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Friday, July 2, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FRIED CHICKEN FOR THE FOURTH." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Breathes there a man with soul so dead who never to himself has said, "I'd like some good....fried....chicken!?" If such there is - and he is in ear's reach of this broadcast - drag him away from the radio quickly. Because what I'm going to talk about - in a split second - is frying chicken!

Now I know well enough that fried chicken is no longer just a summer food. Modern refrigeration has made this meat available the year around. But I also know that some of you listeners have come from farms and small towns where there's a sort of unwritten slogan, "Spring fries by the Fourth of July."

So you'll agree with me that now is a good time to talk about fries and broilers.

Common as fried chicken is - and popular as it is - it is often badly cooked, both in restaurants and in homes. I'll report to you the methods the food specialists in the Bureau of Home Economics in Washington suggest for getting chicken ready to fry and then for frying it.

First the cleaning. As even our June brides know, chicken has to be well inspected first for pin feathers. And after it is drawn it should be thoroughly washed - have water run through it. Then dry it, and cut it into pieces suitable for serving.

Personally I'm for splitting the breast into two pieces. It cooks more easily, and splitting makes it possible for two people to share this choice bit.

Don't let either the whole or the dismembered chicken lie in water. I've seen women who were leading otherwise spotless lives leave the cut-up pieces of chicken to soak in water! That is a thoroughly bad practice, because some of the good juices, some of the excellent flavor, is thereby lost. It leaches out into the water.

As soon as your split broiler or your frying pieces are well washed, salt and then flour them. I know some women who put salted flour into a heavy paper sack and then shake up the chicken pieces inside the sack. Maybe it is an unorthodox way of flouring, but it certainly does the work evenly and neatly.

Then the cooking. Use a thick walled skillet so as to have an even heat. If you use a thin skillet you are just sure to scorch your chicken. And have one-half to three-quarters inch of melted fat in the skillet. Some cooks use too little fat. And you just can't skimp on the amount of fat and expect to get the best results.

Cooks differ as to the kind of fat to use for frying chicken. Actually any well flavored fat will do. I know one excellent cook who always uses bacon fat for frying her chicken. And another who prefers half butter and half lard or vegetable oil.

Get the fat hot but NOT smoking hot, and then put in the chicken pieces, the biggest ones first. Don't crowd them. Use a lid while you are putting those pieces in, to protect yourself as much as possible from spitting fat. The hand that is slipping in the chicken can't be entirely protected, but the other one and your dress front can be. And the ceiling! If there's anything that makes fat sputter worse than chicken does, I don't know what it is!

Keep the skillet partly covered during the frying, on account of that spitting, and also so as to keep the chicken as moist as possible. After the chicken is in the pan you can't go off and read a chapter in your latest novel.

You have to watch frying chicken closely so as to turn it as soon as it is a little browned. Those first pieces won't brown as much as the ones you cook later. The split breast and the thighs will probably take about 20 minutes to get done.

And here's quoting from our home economists again: Use a moderate heat throughout the cooking so as to have juicy, tender meat. Do not overcook! A good way to test whether or not a piece is done is to take a sharp pointed knife and make a tiny cut through the flesh to the bone.

As soon as a piece of your chicken is done, remove it to a hot covered crock or pan. If you have a rack handy, put it in the bottom of the pan. Then the fat can drain off the cooked pieces. Or you can drain off the excess fat on some brown paper.

If your fryer is a big one, you might pour off the fat, half way through the cooking period, add some water, clap on the lid and set the skillet into the oven to finish. But younger birds are better cooked without water. They're so tender they don't need it.

The basic rule for poultry cookery is: Use rather low cooking temperatures as you would for all other protein foods. And with the younger birds that can be broiled, fried, or roasted, water is not needed, because there is so little connective tissue in them.

If we all follow these instructions of our foods specialists, our Fourth of July fried chicken ought to melt in people's mouths!

