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FRIED & TRUE

at one of these retailers:
To my parents, Ken and Marlene Schrager, who recognized early on that being different is sometimes better.
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WHO DOESN’T DIG FRIED CHICKEN? If you’re a vegan you probably don’t, and in that case put this book down, ’coz you’re not going to be able to resist the desire for that chicken. Fried chicken is a staple in many cultures. It’s comfort food, and it isn’t a black, Asian, or white Southern thing—it’s a human thing. I LOVE my fried chicken. I mean I really, really, really, really LOVE my fried chicken. Nothing makes me or my mouth happier. I remember my mom taking the brown paper bag, adding the flour, putting in the chicken and shaking, shaking, shaking. And when it hit the oil . . . that smell! I’m not much of a cook myself, but I do know my fried chicken. (I cook a mean turkey once a year at Thanksgiving; really slow, all night, and baste, baste, baste). But fried chicken is my one true love.

Each year there is something called the Food Network South Beach and New York City Wine & Food Festivals. A few years ago, the very amazing Rachael Ray couldn’t make it to her event, the Burger Bash. The most generous man, Lee Schrager, approached me to fill in. Now, who doesn’t like a great burger? So that was an easy “yes” for me! But as I was walking from station to station sampling all the burgers from everywhere, I turned to Lee and suggested a fried chicken event for the following year. I’m proud to be part of Chicken Coupe, now going into its fourth year in New York and its third year in Miami. (Thanks, Lee!) But who knew Lee was such a fried chicken fan, too? He says writing a fried chicken cookbook wasn’t always on his bucket list . . . but now I’m not so sure.

Fried & True doesn’t just give you 50-plus fried chicken recipes—from the ones Lee picked up on his road trip to some from the best restaurants, in some of the best cities in the world—but also the stories that go along with them and make for some good reading. My favorite is “Fried Chicken 101”—yup, tips! Um-hm . . . “don’t crowd, and give each piece time.” That’s good advice.

Thanks, Lee—I’m hoping to meet some of these recipes at the next Chicken Coupe event.
Southern Inspirations

If One American Region can claim fried chicken as its own, it’s the South. More than in any other part of the country, Southern chefs and cooks told us tales of Sunday suppers, pre- and post-church repasts, family reunions, and other festive meals where fried chicken played a pivotal role in the proceedings. It makes sense, when you think about it: particularly where hot weather prevails, fried chicken can be made early in the morning, then covered with a tea towel and served at room temperature with all the fixings. It is inexpensive and can feed a crowd. Most importantly, everyone loves it—and we’re quite sure you will, too. Though there are as many permutations on fried chicken in the South as elsewhere, a few themes prevail. Several recipes use lard as part of the frying oil; many are dipped in buttermilk, then dredged in seasoned flour; and the use of a cast-iron skillet often defines a recipe as hailing from below the Mason-Dixon line.

LEFT: Arnold’s Country Kitchen’s Fried Chicken, Chicken Livers, Braised Turnip Greens, and Fried Green Tomatoes, see page 38 for recipe.
**NEW ORLEANS**

**McHardy’s, Willie Mae’s, and Dooky Chase’s**

**NEW ORLEANS AND FRIED CHICKEN GO TOGETHER** like red beans and rice, a fact confirmed after a couple of days in The Crescent City. Two establishments, Dooky Chase’s and Willie Mae’s Scotch House, loom large in fried chicken mythology here, but we found a city filled with memorable versions of fried chicken, many of them humble stand-alone institutions helping to tell the city’s story.

When we stopped in unannounced at McHardy’s Chicken & Fixin’, owner Alvi Anderson-Mogilles was pleased as punch to see us. “I’m the Colonel here,” said Alvi, 61, a former school administrator who persuaded her husband, Kermit, to leave his successful banking career and open McHardy’s in 2004. Defying Katrina’s devastation, they reopened at the end of 2006, determined to help the city get back on its feet, one five-order box at a time. “Feeding people took on more meaning,” she told us. Alvi insists on rinsing and chilling her chicken (“It’s got to be cold!”), then coating it in a secret blend of spiced flour, a recipe handed down from her late mother (we detected strong hints of lemon pepper and ground celery seed). McHardy’s also participates in a prison work-release program, helping inmates readjust to life on the outside after incarceration. “Frying chicken is a journey,” Alvi told us as she sent us on our way with a to-go box. “I’m just along for the ride.”

Arriving at Willie Mae’s Scotch House, we were looking forward as much to a true taste of New Orleans history as we were to the fried chicken. Willie Mae Seaton first opened a restaurant in 1956 in the French Quarter,
DONALD LINK

SUNDAY NIGHT FRIED CHICKEN
and Lake Charles Dirty Rice

SERVES 4–6

FOR THE CHICKEN

1 whole chicken, cut into 10 pieces, with wing-on breast halves
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon freshly ground white pepper
½ teaspoon garlic powder
5 dashes Louisiana hot sauce
1 cup buttermilk
3 cups lard, vegetable shortening, bacon fat, or a combination of the three, for frying
3 cups all-purpose flour

FOR THE RICE

2 tablespoons canola oil
4 ounces ground pork
4 ounces raw chicken liver, puréed (½ cup)
1½ teaspoons kosher salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
½ teaspoon chili powder
1½ cups chicken stock
1 small onion, finely chopped (1 cup)
2 celery stalks, finely chopped (½ cup)
1 or 2 jalapeño peppers, seeds and ribs included, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 tablespoon dried oregano
3 cups cooked white rice
4 scallions (white and green parts), chopped (1 cup), plus more for garnish
2 tablespoons chopped parsley, plus more for garnish

ON THE PASS-THROUGH BETWEEN the open kitchen and the dining room at Donald Link’s New Orleans restaurant, Cochon, there sits an enviable collection of cast-iron vessels, used nightly to prepare Link’s modern-traditional take on Cajun cooking. Link’s understandably popular fried chicken is made just like his granny used to make it in Lake Charles: seasoned, skillet-fried, dark, and so crunchy that each bite practically echoes through the large, wood-accented dining room. The recipe calls for a mix of fats, but don’t fret if you end up using just one. And once it’s out of the skillet, slow down: Link believes that waiting up to 20 minutes allows the bird’s natural chicken juices to settle. Take the extra time to make that dirty rice: the introduction of puréed liver lends an earthy depth to the dish (and fools the liver-averse every time).

For Link’s recipe, cutting the chicken into ten pieces instead of the more typical eight (two wings, two breasts, two drumsticks, two thighs) results in smaller, easy-to-hold pieces with more crispy goodness. Cut the chicken into eight pieces (or buy a presectioned chicken), leaving the breast side of the wing attached. Cut the breast in half, making ten pieces, which gives you two wings, two thighs, two legs, and four pieces of breast—two with the drumstick side of the wing attached.
**SEASON THE CHICKEN:** In a large bowl, toss the chicken with the salt, black pepper, cayenne pepper, white pepper, garlic powder, and hot sauce until evenly coated. Cover with plastic wrap2 and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 1 day (the longer the better, to allow the seasonings to permeate the meat).

**DREDGE THE CHICKEN:** Transfer the chicken to a clean mixing bowl and pour the buttermilk over the chicken. Heat the frying fat of your choice in a large (12-inch) cast-iron skillet to 350°F, or until a pinch of flour sizzles when dropped into the fat. As the oil heats, remove the chicken from the buttermilk, allowing excess liquid to drip off, and transfer to a clean bowl. Add the flour and toss to coat.

**FRY THE CHICKEN:** When the oil is ready, working in batches and starting with the large bone-in cuts, add the chicken pieces to the skillet, shaking off any excess flour before placing in the oil. (Make sure not to overcrowd the pan.) Fry the chicken pieces, turning with tongs occasionally and making sure the oil maintains a mellow sizzle, 8 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken to a plate lined with paper towels to soak up the excess oil. Let the chicken sit for 20 minutes while you make the rice.

**MAKE THE RICE:** In a large, heavy skillet, heat the oil over high heat. Add the pork and liver and cook, stirring, until browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in the salt, pepper, and chili powder to combine. Add ¼ cup of the chicken stock and cook until evaporated, allowing the meat mixture to get browned and crusty once again and stick to the pan, an additional 5 to 6 minutes. (Resist the impulse to stir constantly: you want the meat to stick to the pan and get nice and crusty.)

Add the onion, celery, jalapeño, garlic, and oregano and cook, stirring, until the vegetables are nicely browned and crusty and begin to stick to the pan, about 4 minutes. Add the remaining 1½ cups stock and the rice, scallions, and parsley and stir until the liquid is absorbed and the rice is heated through, 3 to 4 minutes.

Season with salt and pepper to taste and garnish with additional scallions and parsley, if desired. Serve the chicken with the dirty rice on the side.
Donald Link’s Sunday Night Fried Chicken and Lake Charles Dirty Rice
IN HIS BOOK *Fried Chicken: An American Story*, food authority John T. Edge aimed to demonstrate that fried chicken was a wholly American art form rather than merely a Southern one—a generous admission from the man whose Southern Foodways Alliance works to preserve food traditions below the Mason-Dixon line. “For decades fried chicken was slumbering in the Southern ghetto, and now it has emerged,” he told us. “Chefs and consumers have embraced it in a way that celebrates its Southern-ness but brings all sorts of ethnicities and regional specialties to bear.” We couldn’t agree more, and this collection of recipes only bolsters the argument. Some contain heavy Southern influences, but their accompanying side dishes modernize both presentation and experience. Still others beautifully reflect the influence of immigration and the way it creates new traditions that get stirred up in the American melting pot. When it comes to fried chicken it’s hard to say where the South ends and the rest of America begins, but one thing’s for sure: as a group these recipes are proof positive that fried chicken can hold its own in any state—and any style—of the union.

*LEFT:* Café Boulud’s Skinless Fried Chicken, Baked Beans, and Pickled Fresno Chiles, see page 138 for recipe.
| 1  | GAVIN KAYS EN | Café Boulud Skinless Fried Chicken, Baked Beans, and Pickled Fresno Chiles |
| 2  | MICHEL LE BERNSTEIN | Michy’s Fried Chicken and Watermelon Salad |
| 3  | BLACKBERRY FARM | Sweet Tea-Brined Fried Chicken |
| 4  | MICHAEL SOLOMONOV | Federal Donuts Fried Chicken and Sauce |
| 5  | WYLIE DUFRESNE | Popeyes-Style Chicken Tenders and Biscuits |
| 6  | ASHA GOMEZ | Keralan Fried Chicken, Lowcountry Cardamom Waffles, and Spicy Maple Syrup |
| 7  | MARCUS SAMUELSSON | Coconut Fried Chicken with Collards and Gravy |
| 8  | HONEY’S KETTLE | Home-Style Smashed Garlic Fried Chicken |
| 9  | HIGHLAND KITCHEN | Fried (Chicken) and Frozen (Cocktail) |
| 10 | MICHAEL ROMANO | Graham Cracker–Crusted Chicken |
| 11 | PARM | Fried Chicken Cacciatore |
| 12 | RUSTY HAMLIN | Louisiana Battered Fried Chicken |
| 13 | PIERRE THIAM | Senegalese Chicken |
| 14 | STEVEN SATTERFIELD | Yogurt-Marinated Chicken Thighs, Charred Vegetables, and Sherry-Honey Glaze |
| 15 | TUJAGUE | Chicken Bonne Femme |
| 16 | JEFF MCINNIS | Fried Chicken and Cauliflower Mash |
“MY ROOTS ARE THE INDIAN

South; my home is the American South,” says Asha Gomez, chef-owner of Atlanta’s Cardamom Hill. Growing up on the beach in Kerala, a region of India whose cuisine reflects its Christian-Portuguese influence, Gomez was exposed to a host of ingredients—sorghum, pork, coconut, and rice among them—that she was surprised to find in abundance when she moved to Georgia at age 16. Her fragrant, crunchy fried chicken, marinated overnight in an emerald-green purée of buttermilk, herbs, and spices before breading, is a revelation. The accompanying rice-studded Lowcountry waffles, topped with spice-infused maple syrup and flash-fried curry leaves, brilliantly connect the dots between her culinary past and present.
ASHA GOMEZ

KERALAN FRIED CHICKEN,
Lowcountry Cardamom Waffles, and Spicy Maple Syrup
SERVES 8

FOR THE SPICY MAPLE SYRUP

2 teaspoons whole cumin seeds, coarsely ground
2 teaspoons whole coriander seeds, coarsely ground
1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
2 cups maple syrup

MAKE THE SYRUP: Toast the cumin, coriander, and red pepper flakes in a dry, hot medium skillet until fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Whisk the toasted spices into the maple syrup and let the syrup infuse at room temperature for 24 hours.

FOR THE CHICKEN

2 cups buttermilk
10 garlic cloves
6 whole serrano (or 3 large jalapeño) peppers, seeded if desired
Bunch of fresh cilantro
Bunch of fresh mint
2 tablespoons kosher salt
8 boneless, skin-on chicken thighs (about 3 pounds)
Vegetable oil, for frying
4 cups all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons coconut oil, melted
2 stems fresh curry leaves

MARINATE THE CHICKEN: In a blender, purée the buttermilk, garlic, ginger, peppers, cilantro, mint, and salt until smooth. Place the chicken in a large glass dish or bowl, pour the buttermilk purée over the chicken, toss to coat, and refrigerate for 24 hours.

FRY THE CHICKEN: Fill a large (12-inch) cast-iron skillet with \( \frac{1}{3} \) inch oil and gently heat to 300°F. Set a wire rack on top of a rimmed baking sheet and set aside. While the oil is heating, remove the chicken from the buttermilk purée, gently shake off excess, and dredge each piece in flour. Place the chicken in the skillet, skin side down; the oil should come halfway up the pan. Cook the chicken until it turns golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes per side. Drain the chicken on the rack and drizzle with the melted coconut oil. While the chicken is draining, crisp the curry leaves by frying in the oil until crisp, 10 to 15 seconds.

TO SERVE: Serve the chicken on top of the waffles and drizzle with the spiced syrup. Garnish with the fried curry leaves.
CARDAMOM WAFFLES

MAKES 8 WAFFLES

1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup rice flour
1/4 cup unsweetened malt powder
2 tablespoons (packed) light brown sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon ground cardamom
1 teaspoon salt
2 large eggs
2 1/2 cups buttermilk
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled,
plus more for greasing the waffle iron
1/2 cup cooked basmati or white rice

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, rice flour, malt powder, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, cardamom, and salt. In a separate bowl, whisk together the eggs, then add the buttermilk and melted butter and whisk again.

Slowly whisk the wet mixture into the dry ingredients, then add the cooked rice, whisking just until combined. Cover and let the batter rest for about 1 hour at room temperature.

Heat a waffle iron and brush with melted butter. For each waffle, ladle 1/2 cup batter into the waffle iron and cook until crisp and golden, 4 to 5 minutes.
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