

Korean Fried Chicken (Yangnyeom-tongdak)
Serves 10 to 12 as an appetizer, 4 as a main course

When I started posting recipes on YouTube, one of the most requested recipes was for KFC, otherwise known as Korean Fried Chicken. Coated with a sweet, sour, spicy sauce, *yangnyeom-tongdak* is a relatively modern dish in Korea: it's take-out food, rarely made at home, so my readers had to wait while I perfected my recipe, which is based on what I saw being made in local fried chicken joints in Gwangju.

When refining the recipe, at first I tried not to use corn syrup or ketchup, replacing them with more wholesome, less sugary ingredients, but I was never satisfied with the result. To get the authentic taste, corn or rice syrup and ketchup are essential. Something else is also necessary: frying the chicken twice. Double-frying makes the batter-coated chicken stay crunchy for hours after cooking, while leaving the inside moist. When I made the chicken for my children and they said, "Mom, this tastes exactly like the chicken place!" I knew that the recipe was finally just right. You can use a whole chicken; use a cleaver to cut the breast, thighs, and legs into smaller pieces.

for the chicken

2 pounds chicken wings or chunks of chicken, rinsed in cold water and patted dry, tips removed, drumettes and flats separated
1/2 cup potato starch or cornstarch
1/3 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1 large egg, lightly beaten
Corn oil for deep-frying

for the sauce

2 teaspoons corn oil
3 garlic cloves, minced
1/3 cup ketchup
1/3 cup brown rice syrup (ssal-yeot), corn syrup, or sugar
1/4 cup Korean hot pepper paste (gochujang)
2 teaspoons distilled white or apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds

1. Make the wings: Combine the chicken, potato starch, flour, salt, pepper, baking soda, and egg in a large bowl and mix with a wooden spoon or your hand until the chicken is well coated.

2. Heat about 4 inches of corn oil in a deep pot over high heat until it reaches 350°F. If you don't have a thermometer, test it by dipping one piece of chicken in the oil. If it bubbles, it is ready. One by one, carefully add the chicken to the pot, in batches if necessary to avoid crowding, and fry, turning a few times, until crunchy, 10 to 12 minutes. Transfer to a strainer and shake to drain, then transfer the chicken to a large bowl. Return the oil to 350°F and fry a second batch, if necessary. As it sits, the chicken will become less crunchy.

3. Meanwhile, make the sauce: While the chicken is frying, heat a large heavy pan over medium-high heat. Add the corn oil and garlic and cook, stirring, for 30 seconds. Add the ketchup, brown rice syrup, hot pepper paste, and vinegar. Turn the heat down to low and cook, stirring with a wooden spoon, until the sauce bubbles and becomes shiny, about 7 minutes.

(continued on following page)

4. Fry the wings again: Fry in batches, turning a few times, until the wings are golden brown and very crunchy on the outside, 10 to 12 minutes. Transfer the wings to a strainer and shake to drain, then add them to the pan with the sauce and stir until the chicken is coated.

5. Arrange the chicken on a serving platter, sprinkle with the sesame seeds, and serve.