



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release ON RECEIPT

DEEP-FAT FRYING METHOD FOR FISH

New ways of cooking fish are still being thought up; but since almost any variety of fish may be fried, this method stays top favorite.

There are two methods of frying fish: Sauté or pan-fry, and deep-fat frying. To pan-fry, fish is cooked in a small amount of oil or fat (never butter, since it smokes at a relatively low temperature) in a hot skillet. In deep-fat frying, the fish is cooked in hot fat to cover.

Deep-fat frying of fish, according to fish cookery experts of the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, requires slightly more attention than pan-frying, but the results--if the recipe is carefully followed--will repay the housewife for the small amount of extra trouble involved.

As in the case of pan frying, first cut the fish into serving portions and dip in beaten egg, milk, water, or beaten egg mixed with water. Then, completely cover the wet fish with some dry ingredient such as cornmeal, flour, crackers, or bread crumbs, and season. Don't forget the seasoning at this point! Fishery technologists have found by tests that the most satisfactory method is to dip the fish into water and then roll it in a well-sifted mixture composed of 1/2 cup of medium-fine unbolted yellow cornmeal, 1/2 cup of flour, and 1-1/2 tablespoons of salt.

There are on the market today, however, several already prepared, streamlined "dips" which contain cereals, egg yolks, milk, salt and pepper, to be used "as is",

without the addition of any liquid. Just roll the fish or shellfish in the dry mixture and then fry until done. Actual tests have proved that foods fried in this mixture do not absorb fat--penetration and absorption are eliminated. The food itself is not actually fried, but rather steamed in its own juices within the protective sealed surface of the "dip".

The method of cooking by deep-fat frying differs, however, from that recommended for pan-frying. First, heat fat in a deep pan or kettle provided with a frying basket, to a temperature of 385-400 degrees F. If the housewife does not have a cooking thermometer at hand, she can remember that at this heat--385 to 400 degrees--a piece of bread will brown in 20 to 25 seconds. The fat must be at the right temperature before the fish is put in so as to harden the outside, thus preventing the fat from entering the fish which would spoil the flavor and make it hard to digest.

When fat has reached this temperature, put one layer of fish portions into the frying basket, that is, enough fish to cover bottom of basket. Cook this single layer to an even, golden brown, which will take from 4 to 8 minutes depending upon the variety and thickness of the fish. When the fish has reached the right color, remove fish from basket and replace with a single layer of uncooked portions. Repeat this operation with successive single layer installments until all the fish is cooked, seeing that each layer is of the right color before removal from the frying basket. Do not attempt to fry more than one layer of fish in the basket at one time, as the additional fish will lower the temperature of the fat.

Today's housewives will have no difficulty in following this practical and simple method of frying fish. Back in 1854, however, when "Piscator", in London,

wrote "A Practical Treatise on the Choice and Cookery of Fish", it wasn't such a simple matter. In fact, his quite lengthy description of the proper process more nearly resembles a ritual:

"How to fry fish. Notwithstanding the wretched examples of fried fish we have often met with at the tables of our acquaintance, there is no branch in the art of fish cookery more easy to attain, if the proper means are but duly attended to.

"In the first place, the fire should be clear and free from smoke, and yet not burn too fiercely.

"Secondly, the frying pan must be clean, and not overworn in the service, as in the latter case the fish will be likely to stick to it, and also to become burnt and discoloured.

"Thirdly, the pan should be properly prepared by being moistened with a little butter or lard, which should be melted in it over the fire, and when completely dissolved, the pan should be wiped out with a cloth before the fat in which the fish is intended to be fried is cast into it.

"Fourthly, the lard, butter, dripping, oil, or whatever material the fish is to be fried in, must not be stinted in quantity. This should also be allowed to be not only completely dissolved, but also to boil up before the fish itself is placed in the frying-pan.

"Fifthly, the fish itself should be thoroughly dried and folded in a cloth, and either well dredged with flour, or completely coated with egg and bread-crumbs.

"Sixthly, when once in the frying-pan, the fish must never be left for one moment unattended to, and must fry at a moderate rate, and when one side is done enough, it must be carefully turned over with a fish-slice on the other, until that side also is thoroughly cooked.

"When done sufficiently, let all the fat drain off, which is best done by means of a hair sieve; then place the fish on a fish drain, or if intended for company, place it on a napkin.

"Oil is generally considered the best material to fry fish in, but we have found hog's lard answers the purpose equally well, besides the advantage of being much cheaper. Beef and pork drippings may also be used, but the dripping of mutton does not answer so well, as it is apt to impart a muttony flavour to the fish. Butter does not fry fish so well as dripping, and should not be used when the latter can be procured, except when the fish is to be merely partly fried as a preliminary stage to the stewing process, when good fresh butter will be the proper thing to be used.

"If the above rules are carefully adhered to, there will be no difficulty whatever in attaining the desired object."

If the housewife of that day had the fortitude to carry out such general instructions, she "adhered", in addition to such specific rules as this one: "To fry whiting. Fix the tail of the fish in its mouth in which position it can be secured by means of a small wooden skewer, although it frequently happens that the long, sharp teeth of the fish are alone sufficient for the purpose."

To fry pilchards, this injunction was given: "Pilchards should be thrown into the frying-pan just as they come out of the nets."

Although practically any variety of fish may be fried, this method of cooking is rated best for the following species: Black bass, bluefin, blue pike, bream, buffalofish, bullheads, butterfish, catfish, cisco, crappie, croaker, cunner, dabs, eels, flounder, fluke, hardhead, lake herring, New England whiting, perch, pickerel, pike, pilchard, pilotfish, plaice, rainbow trout, red perch, rock bass, rockfish, sand dab, sauger, pike, sheepshead, smelt, sole, spoonbill cat, striped bass, sucker, sunfish, tomcod, trout, walleyed pike, white bass, whiting, whitefish, and yellow perch.

The proper method of pan-frying, or sauteing, has been described in detail in a 4-page pamphlet, called SEAFOOD SUGGESTIONS, recently issued by the Fish and Wildlife Service. For a free copy, ask for "CE-1", and direct your request to the Publications Office, Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C.