

## Fat friendly fowl

Gary Carter



Remember the commercial with the little girl saying, in her Southern drawl, "It's Shake and Bake, and I helped"?

Well, Shake and Bake chicken was a staple on any kitchen table in the 1970s and early '80s. It was also responsible for burning out legions of youngsters on oven-baked chicken.

It's no wonder America turned to fried, made the Colonel a household fixture, and got fat in the process.

I'll let you in on a secret ... fried chicken tastes good.

So, when it comes to tempting tummies, home cooks know a quick way to please a crowd at a summer party is with a batch of grandma's secret recipe fried chicken.

The concoctions for frying chicken always range from plain to spicy, and from interesting to just plain dumb.

To buttermilk bathe the chicken or not? Flour, cracker meal, or bread crumbs for crust? Don't forget the

secret blend of spices.

But there's one thing milkwash, batter and spices can't hide. Fried chicken is fattening. There, I said it.

But we're not going to lament the fact, let's just move on.

You can see why Shake and Bake chicken rose in popularity back in the day. The '70s brought about a health consciousness that peaked in the '90s. Today, the culinary climate is changing and taste and quality is championing the cause of cooking once again.

Chic restaurants in most Metropolitan cities, most notably in Atlanta and Dallas, have included fried chicken on their menus.

In some restaurants, such as Kent Rathbun's Jasper in Dallas, fried chicken has taken on a starring role. He calls it his "Grandma Minnie's fried chicken," cooks it up in a cast iron skillet, and has done so since his days at the Mansion on Turtle Creek.

And if it's good enough for Kent's kitchen, it's good enough for ours. Like they say, you can't trust a skinny chef ... so you can trust Kent. Present company included.

My taste in fried chicken runs toward the fried in a little oil in an iron skillet, getting the batter good and brown, dark brown, heck let's say almost burnt. Fancy folks call that the Maillard effect; I call it the wow factor. It's the same principle behind making a good gumbo a great gumbo.

But that's another column for another day.

The crispier the chicken the better, skin on or off it doesn't matter to me. I like the wings and the breast, but everyone's different.

So here we come to Memorial Day, and we're talking fried chicken, and you're mouth is watering. But, you just can't take a departure from the low-fat diet you've hung on to since January (yeah, right).

So, Shake and Bake then? No, I have something better.

### Onion Baked Oven Chicken

*(or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Low Fat)*

Take a batch of chicken breast tenders (sometimes for less than \$2 a pound) and put them in a big sealed baggy with a glob of non-fat mayonnaise. Shake it around and get the chicken covered, then pour into the bag some bread crumbs and a few packages of onion soup mix (also quite economical). Keep shaking until the chicken tenders are coated.

Spread the concoction out on a baking tray and cook at 275 degrees in the oven until golden brown.

Now, squint your eyes and take a bite. Kind of tastes like fried chicken doesn't it? OK, well, it's good and it's low fat.

Happy eating!



