

# Schmaltz-Fried Chicken Katsu

## ANOTHER USE FOR CHICKEN FAT

**I**t's such a simple idea, but when was the last time you fried chicken in its own fat? You could be buying organic chickens and making your own breadcrumbs, but if you just fry chicken in vegetable oil, you're missing a big flavor opportunity.

All over Tokyo, you'll find tonkatsu shops serving fried, breaded pork cutlets. This is a slight variation using chicken, but I still serve it with traditional accompaniments of tonkatsu sauce (I like Bulldog brand), a heaping pile of finely shredded cabbage, and a mound of Japanese short-grain rice. Add a bowl of miso soup, and you've got a classic Tokyo diner dish that I ate countless times during my first stint in Japan. Cook this for your family, and somewhere, a young, aimless Ivan Orkin with poor Japanese skills will be smiling upon you.

### *Makes 4 servings*

4 (150-gram/5-ounce) skinless,  
boneless chicken breasts

500 milliliters (2 cups) cold  
water

28 grams (2 tablespoons)  
salt, plus additional for  
seasoning

1 clove garlic, crushed

½ head green cabbage

170 grams (½ cup)  
all-purpose flour

2 large eggs

- 1 Place each breast between two sheets of plastic wrap or parchment paper. Pound the breast flat using a meat mallet or the bottom of a saucepan until it's uniformly about 13 millimeters (½ inch) thick.
- 2 Mix together the water, salt, and garlic, and stir until the salt dissolves. (This quick brine is a great flavoring agent that you can use with any meat when your time is short.) Add the chicken to the brine and soak for 30 minutes while you prepare the other ingredients.
- 3 Shred the cabbage with a sharp knife or mandoline; reserve in a bowl of cold water.
- 4 Place the flour, eggs, and panko in three separate shallow vessels. Beat the eggs. **(CONTINUED)**

80 grams (1½ cups) panko

240 milliliters (1 cup)  
**CHICKEN FAT** (page 104)

700 milliliters (3 cups)  
vegetable oil

Warm **STEAMED RICE**  
(page 191), for serving

Bottled tonkatsu sauce,  
for serving

**(CONTINUED)**

- 5 Remove the breasts from the brine and quickly pat them dry. Dredge each breast in the flour and shake off the excess. Next, give the breasts a quick dip in the egg, again shaking off any excess. Finally, coat the breasts with panko. Press the breadcrumbs onto the meat to form a solid crust.
- 6 Choose a sauté pan large enough to hold one or two of the chicken breasts, and tall enough that the fat can cover the meat completely with plenty of room to spare. Heat the chicken fat and vegetable oil in the pan over medium heat to 350°F (176°C), then carefully slide in 1 or 2 breasts, depending on how many fit in your pan. Fry until crisp and browned on both sides, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Remove the fried breasts to a paper towel-lined plate and season with salt. Cook the remaining breasts in the same way.
- 7 Drain the cabbage well.
- 8 Serve the chicken with rice and a pile of cabbage on the side. Drizzle tonkatsu sauce all over everything.