

Twice-Fried Fries

French fries are strips of potato deep-fried to perfection. These delicious potatoes are sometimes called fries, finger chips, French-fried potatoes, and chips. Whether you like the classic, crinkle-cut, or curly fries, all ages love them! No matter what you call them, they are a staple food in America and can be found on most menus from coast to coast.

Many believe the name French fries began when American soldiers arrived in Belgium during World War I and ate Belgian fries. During this time, the Belgian army spoke French, so it was suggested that this delicious snack be called “French” fries. The word “French” is synonymous with “frites,” which means to “cut lengthwise” in old English, and they are fried potatoes, thus giving us the name “French Fry.”

When making restaurant-quality French fries at home, there are three secrets to remember; choose the right potatoes, cut them into equally sized pieces, and fry them twice. The first time you fry them, the oil should be at a lower temperature, softening and cooking the potatoes. The second fry should be warmer and will fry them to crispy brown perfection.

Due to the high starch and low moisture content, the best potatoes for French fries are russet potatoes, also known as Idaho potatoes. Avoid waxy red skin potatoes. For a more earthy note in your fries, leave the peel on the potatoes; this also makes prep faster and easier.

Scrub the russet potatoes. Peel the potatoes if desired and remove any eyes. Using a French fry cutter or hand-cut each potato lengthwise into 1/4-inch-thick slices, then cut these slices lengthwise into 1/4-inch-thick sticks. Keep the cuts uniform, so the potatoes cook evenly.

As you go, place the fries in a bowl of ice water to release some of the starch and to keep them from browning. Using your fingers, agitate the potatoes until the water turns cloudy, then drain the water and refill the bowl with more cold water. Repeat this process until the water is clear after agitating. Soak the fries in cold water in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.

Drain the potatoes and spread them on paper towels or a kitchen towel. Dry the potatoes completely and pat off as much water as possible. Dry potatoes will help reduce the amount of splatter from the hot oil.

Line 2 baking sheets with a double thickness of paper towels and put a cooling rack on top of each.

Meanwhile, heat 2 quarts of oil (canola, corn, peanut, sunflower) in a deep fryer or a large stockpot/Dutch oven over medium heat until it reaches 330°F.

Carefully drop one-third of the potato slices into the oil and increase the heat to medium-high. Use a large slotted spoon or a skimmer to mix your potatoes occasionally. The potatoes need to cook for 4 to 8 minutes, or until they are soft enough to cut with the side of the spoon and are creamier in color but not brown.

When the potatoes are softened, remove them from the oil, and shake them slightly to drain the excess oil. Place the slices in a single layer on one of the prepared baking sheets to drain. Fry the

other two batches, using the same process as the first, letting the oil return to 330°F between each batch.

Bring up the heat of the oil until it reaches 375°F. Add one-third of the potatoes and cook, stirring, until they turn golden-brown and become crisp, 2 to 5 minutes.

Transfer the fries to a baking sheet lined with fresh paper towels and sprinkle generously with salt.

The perfect French fry is golden and crispy, but tender and fluffy on the inside. They are one of life's simple pleasures.

(Sources: www.homestratosphere.com; blog.thenibble.com; potatogoodness.com; seriouseats.com; spoonuniversity.com)