

Nashville Hot Chicken

Fried chicken is a favorite for most, but there is something special about Nashville Hot Chicken. As the name suggests, Nashville chicken is hot. Many places offer different levels of spiciness, but even milder recipes pack the heat. Many people love the spice of Nashville Hot Chicken, but that is not the only thing that makes it appealing. The flavor is complex, with an added touch of sweetness. A cold drink may be necessary with your meal, but this chicken is not all burn.

Nashville Hot Chicken is a specialty of Nashville, Tennessee, and it is far from just spicy. This chicken is deep-fried and then dunked into a mixture of hot sauce and spices. The spicy flavor is from the cayenne pepper added to the seasoning mix. Despite its heat level, this chicken is not overwhelming and will keep you coming back for more. Hot Chicken is commonly served on white bread with pickles.

Hot Chicken is made from whole chicken pieces that are first marinated in buttermilk and hot sauce, then coated in a flour mixture, and deep fried. Once cooked, it is smothered in a spicy red-hot paste. Create a double coating by dipping the chicken in the dry flour mixture to coat all sides. Then dip and flip the chicken in the buttermilk mixture. Dip the chicken a second time in the flour. Let the chicken sit for a little bit after you coat it. The rest time for the coating also helps the crust adhere to the chicken. This coating will fry up slightly thicker and stay crisp when you brush the spicy sauce over it.

Heat a large deep sided skillet or Dutch oven with about 2-inches of oil to 350°F. Slide the chicken into the hot oil. I use tongs and hold onto the chicken until half of it is immersed in the hot oil, then let go. Fry the chicken pieces in batches, making sure to not overcrowd the pan, flipping over once, until the chicken is golden brown, and the internal temperature reaches 165°F. Make sure the oil is at 350°F or let it come back to that temperature before frying the next batch.

Even though there is a small amount of cayenne pepper in the buttermilk brine and flour mixture, most of the heat comes from the paste used after cooking. If you want to try this dish but are not a fan of hot, spicy food, try cutting down on the cayenne pepper in the coating mix.

This spicy, sweet chicken has cayenne pepper and just a little added brown sugar. This simple but aggressive flavor is hard to resist. It is just like a traditional fried chicken with a touch more spice resulting in a delicious, unique experience.

Nashville Hot Chicken goes great with traditional sides like french fries and coleslaw. In addition, you can also serve it alongside some Southern favorites, like cornbread, hush puppies, mac and cheese, or corn on the cob.

You may think, “well, I have had hot wings, so I have had Hot Chicken.” However, this is not the case. Buffalo Chicken is most commonly drenched in a wet sauce, whereas Hot Chicken is more of a paste.

Both sauces derive their heat from cayenne pepper and use butter as a main ingredient. However, Nashville Hot Chicken utilizes more sugar for a sweeter heat flavor. Buffalo Chicken has more of a tangy spice to it because vinegar as a key ingredient.

When visiting Nashville, the first chicken you should try is the extra hot one. While there are milder versions, everyone should try the full experience at least once! If you are not going to Nashville any time soon, create the experience at home.