

Master Chicken Cordon Bleu

A cordon bleu is a dish that traditionally consists of meat wrapped around cheese, then breaded and pan-fried or deep-fried. Many modern versions of this recipe are baked.

Chicken cordon bleu, or "blue ribbon chicken," might sound intimidating, but it's not hard to make. The recipe originated in Switzerland and had nothing to do with the famous Le Cordon Bleu culinary school in Paris.

Chicken cordon bleu is made with seasoned boneless chicken breast, black forest ham, and Swiss cheese, rolled up and encased in a crispy golden breadcrumb crust. It's topped with a creamy mustard sauce. It may be old-fashioned, but it's still absolutely delicious!

Mastering chicken cordon bleu involves several key techniques that make all the difference. First, the chicken breast must be thin enough to cook in the allotted time without being so thin that it's easily torn when rolled. Second, wrapping the cheese in "ham packets" will keep it contained within the chicken as it cooks. Third, chilling the rolled chicken breasts in the fridge before cooking is another important step; it helps them hold their shape and ensures the filling stays put. Finally, a three-step breading method – coating with flour, then with beaten eggs, and finishing with breadcrumbs – is crucial for achieving that crispy exterior.

Now, let's take a closer look at the steps for preparing chicken cordon bleu.

Select and use small chicken breasts; larger ones are harder to pound, roll up, and cook evenly. Put the chicken breast on a cutting board and place your hand flat on top of it. Insert a sharp knife into the middle of the thickest part and cut horizontally; cut almost to the other side. Open it like a book.

Place chicken between two sheets of plastic wrap or inside a large zipper bag. Working from the center out, pound with the smooth side of a mallet, rolling pin, or heavy pan until the meat is 1/4-inch thick. When pounding out the chicken, start from the center and work your way out.

To make the ham packets, place two pieces of black forest ham on a cutting board, overlapping by 1 inch. Other deli sliced ham or prosciutto can be substituted. Fold 2 pre-sliced Swiss cheese squares in half or slice a piece of cheese into about a 1 x 3 x 1/4-inch rectangle. Place cheese at the top of the ham slices and roll the ham around the cheese; set aside.

Season and coat the chicken breasts with onion, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Put the ham and cheese bundle near the edge of the chicken. Roll the chicken evenly and place it onto a new sheet of plastic wrap.

Tightly wrap the chicken breast with a long piece of plastic wrap and counter-twist the sides of the plastic tightly to form and firm up the roll of chicken cordon bleu. Chill the rolls in the fridge for at least 30 minutes to set.

While the chicken chills, make the sauce according to the recipe instructions.

Preheat a tall-sided pan with about 2 inches of vegetable oil to 325°F.

After the rolls are set, dredge the chicken breasts in the flour, then the eggs, and finally, the panko breadcrumbs.

Cook chicken cordon bleu in oil for about 5 minutes per side or until the outside turns golden brown. Use an instant-read digital thermometer to test that the chicken's internal temperature reads 165°F. Remove to a paper towel-lined plate.

Serve the mustard sauce over the cooked chicken cordon bleu.

Chicken cordon bleu is a recipe that feels super fancy; each slice reveals a gorgeous flavor swirl.