

FISH & CHIPS

Serves 8 to 10.

By Dennis W. Viau; modified from a recipe
by America's Test Kitchen.

Fish & Chips is a classic meal that has been modified many times in an effort to get the right crispiness to the coating and also have crisp fried potatoes that are tender in the center. This recipe is yet another modification. The result was good, although the fish recommended by the fish market was less than satisfactory.



Ingredients:

3 to 4 russet potatoes, about a pound each
2 quarts (1.9 liters) oil for frying (corn, peanut, or safflower oil will suffice)
1½ cups (7½ ounces/213g) all-purpose flour
½ cup (2.2 ounces/62g) cornstarch
2 teaspoons salt, more for garnish
Optional: ½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
½ teaspoon paprika
⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 teaspoon baking powder
1½ pounds (680g) boneless firm white fish, such as Alaskan pollock, haddock, hake, etc.
1½ cups (355ml) beer, chilled (lager works well; avoid dark beers like stout)

For Tartar Sauce:

1½ cups (355ml/300g) mayonnaise
3 tablespoons pickle relish (sweet if you like it sweet, dill if you prefer it tart)
2 tablespoons lemon juice
Salt to taste
Optional: 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

Directions:

Peel and trim the potatoes to remove some of the rounded sides. (They don't need to be completely squared off like bricks.) Cut lengthwise into sticks about ½ inch (13mm) thick. If you like thinner, crisper fries, they can be cut smaller, but be aware that thinner fries break easily. Arrange in a microwave-safe bowl and pour about ¼ cup (60ml) oil over the potatoes. Toss gently to coat evenly and cover with plastic. Microwave on high for 3 to 4 minutes, then toss again, and microwave for an additional 3 to 4 minutes. The fries should be a little limp but offer some resistance when pierced with a knife. Transfer to a colander in the sink and rinse well thoroughly with cold water. Arrange on several layers of paper towels. Pat dry and set aside.

Combine flour, cornstarch, 2 teaspoons of salt, optional cayenne, paprika, and pepper in a large bowl. Whisk together. Transfer ¾ cup (about 100g) of the mixture to a rimmed baking sheet. Set aside.

Add the baking powder to the flour mixture remaining in the bowl and whisk thoroughly to combine.

In a large pot, heat 2 quarts (1.9 liters) oil to 350°F (177°C). While the oil is heating, line a baking sheet with several layers of paper towels. Carefully add the potatoes to the hot oil, in batches if necessary, and cook 6 to 8 minutes, stirring often, until slightly browned around the edges. Adjust the heat up or down as necessary to maintain the oil temperature. Using a slotted spoon or wire mesh strainer, transfer the fries to the lined baking sheet. Set aside.

Increase oil temperature to 375°F (161°C). Line another baking sheet or platter with paper towels. Thoroughly

dry the fish with paper towels and cut into serving-sized pieces. Dredge them in the flour mixture on the baking sheet. Shake off excess and arrange the fish on a wire rack.

Add about 1¼ cups (~300ml) cold beer to the flour mixture in the bowl and combine with a spoon. Add additional beer, a little at a time, until the batter has a wet, runny consistency. When the fish is dipped in the batter, it should have a modest coating without being overly thick.

Dip each piece of fish in the batter, coating evenly, and then return to the baking sheet with the flour. Roll each piece of fish in the flour to coat.

Carefully transfer the fish, 2 or 3 pieces at a time, to the hot oil. You can use tongs or wire strainer to protect your hands. Don't drop the fish into the oil, as any splashed oil could burn your skin. Carefully lower each piece into the oil gently. Watch the temperature closely, adjusting the flame beneath the pan up or down as needed to maintain the heat.

Cook the fish 7 to 8 minutes, turning occasionally, until thoroughly cooked and the coating is crisp and golden. Use tongs or a wire strainer to transfer the cooked fish to the baking sheet or platter lined with paper towels and allow to drain. Salt while still oily.

While the fish is cooking, combine the tartar sauce ingredients and divide among small bowls for dipping.

Return the fries to the hot oil and fry 3 to 5 minutes until golden and crisp. Transfer to a baking sheet lined with paper towels, salt to taste, and serve with the fried fish and the tartar sauce on the side.

The step-by-step photos were removed. See the video for the preparation.