

Anida Yoeu Ali • Double-Fried Garlic Chicken

When I got married at 24 years old and finally moved out of the house into my own home my mother gifted me a stone mortar and pestle. I have had this same one since 1998 when she first gifted it to me. Khmer food can be very complicated to make because it comes down to having so many ingredients that get pounded together to make a paste that becomes the base for soups, marinades, curries and medicine. Khmer cuisine is rooted in the pounding of fresh garlic, salt and pepper into a paste – everything else is added to the paste depending on the recipe – usually taught from generation to generation in the kitchen under the watchful eye of a matriarch. In my case, I learned to use a mortar and pestle at about 12 years old when my mom taught me the recipes to a range of Khmer cuisine. I remember how angry I was taking notes and scribbling her directions down into a pink spiral notebook. I hated that I had to learn to cook from her because I felt it made me domestic and unAmerican and unfeminist. I was wrong. I was terribly wrong and didn't treasure any of it until three decades later.

Unlike Western or Eurocentric cooking – we don't stand up and blend ingredients. We sit and pound. We sit on the floor, on a straw mat or directly on our linoleum floors. We pound with the pestle against the stone mortar. We pound while seated on the ground. I was taught to use a kitchen towel under my mortar and pestle and pound until things become a rough paste. It's lo-fi technology and I'd even say it's ancient. Kind of cool that it literally takes us back to the “stone” ages.

The double-fried garlic chicken wing recipe came out of my desire to make something super crispy and tasty that used the basic Khmer ingredients of garlic, salt, and pepper.

I came up with my recipe while living in Phnom Penh and wanted something I felt was both American and Asian. Essentially, I wanted American comfort food while living in Asia. The irony is I feel that my recipe is very Asian American. This recipe borrows the double-fried method of deep-frying chicken from a Korean chicken wings recipe I stumbled onto but preserves the garlicky taste I love in Khmer food. And as an American, who doesn't love a good crispy fried chicken!

I realized the trick is to make sure the garlic does not burn in the deep fryer. I usually save the marinated chunks and fry it at the very end after all the chicken has been fried. The secret is to sprinkle the fried garlic onto the chicken and garnish with some finely cut green onions. My family, especially my three kids, love this. It's delicious and they always request it for their birthday meals. Thank you, mom. Thank you for teaching me the tradition of using a mortar and pestle. Thank you for teaching me despite my resistance.



Laura Kina, *Anida Yoeu Ali's Double-Fried Garlic Chicken*, 2021, watercolor and pen on paper, 9" x 12".

Double-Fried Garlic Chicken Recipe

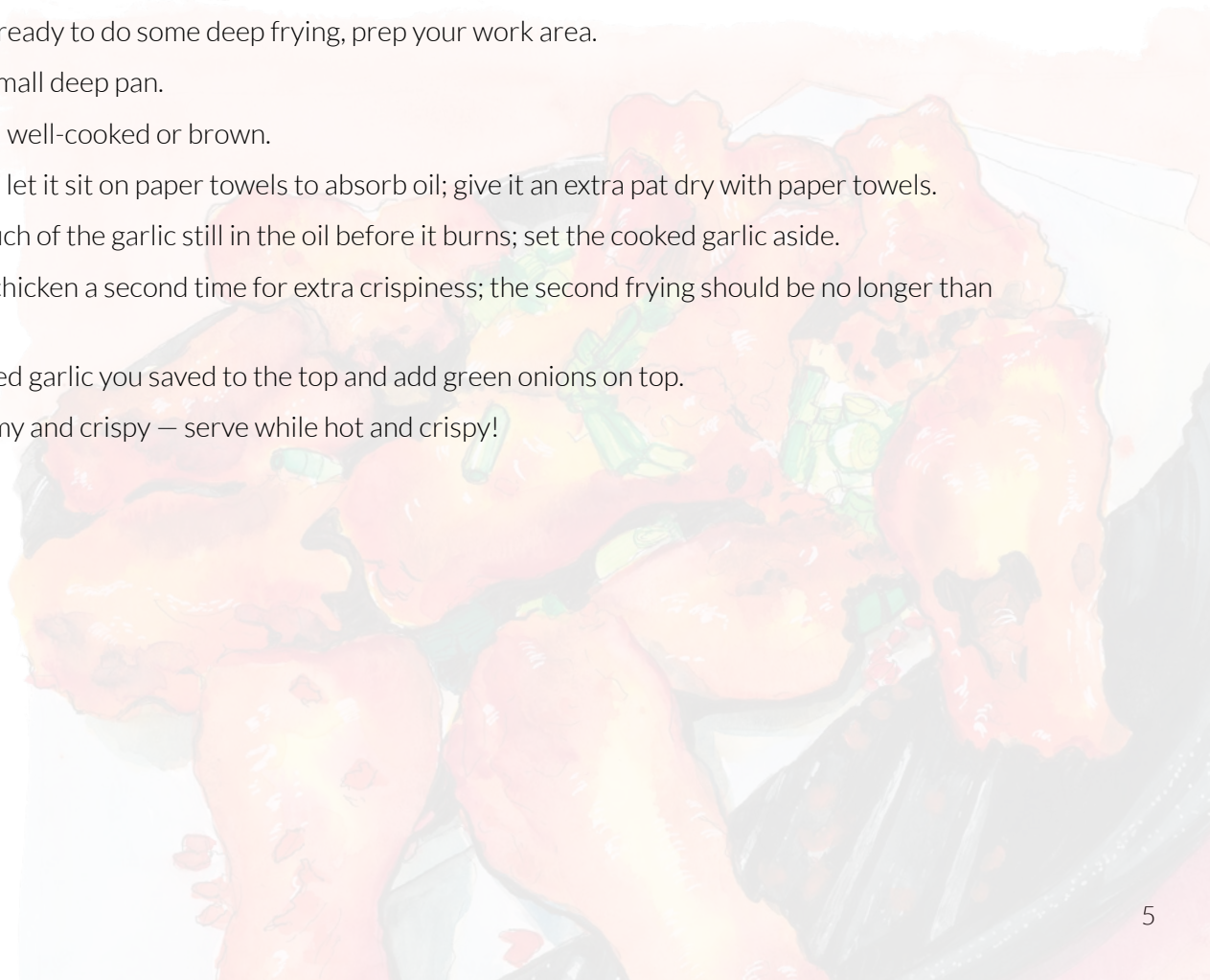
Note: my measurements are by sight since I throw everything into a stone mortar and pestle so these are all approximations

Ingredients:

- 1-2 packages of wingettes & drumettes (basically mini drums and wings; each package is about 2 pounds)
- garlic (use an entire clove or half – up to your taste; the more the better)
- about 1.5 teaspoons of salt per package of chicken (depends on how many packages of wings you use)
- 1/4 teaspoon of grounded pepper, (can also use a pinch of peppercorn smashed up) just don't use too much since the garlic already gives it a kick
- A pinch of sugar after you marinate the chicken with the paste above (add the sugar as needed to balance the taste)
- Green onions (sliced up finely; set aside as a final garnish after the deep fry)

Directions:

1. Using a traditional stone mortar and pestle, pound the garlic, salt and pepper until it becomes a mushy paste. Then, use this paste to marinate the chicken; use your hands so the paste is blended well into the meat; cover and set aside for as little as 20 minutes or as long as overnight in the fridge.
2. When you're ready to do some deep frying, prep your work area.
3. Heat oil in a small deep pan.
4. Deep fry until well-cooked or brown.
5. Pull it out and let it sit on paper towels to absorb oil; give it an extra pat dry with paper towels.
6. Pull out as much of the garlic still in the oil before it burns; set the cooked garlic aside.
7. Then fry the chicken a second time for extra crispiness; the second frying should be no longer than 1-2minutes.
8. Add the cooked garlic you saved to the top and add green onions on top.
9. It's very yummy and crispy – serve while hot and crispy!



Anida Yoeu Ali



Anida Yoeu Ali is an artist, educator, and global agitator born in Cambodia, raised in Chicago and transplanted to Tacoma. Ali's multi-disciplinary practices include performance, installation, new media, public encounters, and political agitation. Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach to artmaking, her installation and performance works investigate the artistic, spiritual, and political collisions of a hybrid transnational identity. Ali has performed and exhibited around the world from the Palais de Tokyo to the Shangri-La Museum of Islamic Art, Culture, and Design.

Currently, Ali serves as a Senior Artist-in-Residence at the University of Washington, Bothell where she teaches art, performance, and media studies classes. Ali, a founding partner of the independent artist-run Studio Revolt, spends much of her time traveling and working between the Asia-Pacific region and the US.

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Anida Yoeu Ali, "Push / 99 Eggs"
(performance still)
April 6, 2016 at Trinity College Chapel
Performance: Anida Yoeu Ali
Documentation: Pablo Delano
Image courtesy of the artist



"This performance was a response to the issues students of color were attempting to address on our campus in 2016. Inside the chapel, I allowed myself to become the sacrificial lamb as 99 eggs were set out for people to take and "egg" me with. My hope was for students, staff, and faculty to take their anger and frustration out on me. It should be noted that I did give permission to everyone to participate and that in no way would my students be penalized for egging their professor."
— Anida Yoeu Ali