

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Classic American ranch dressing herbs and seasonings appear in three components of the recipe—the buttermilk coating, the flour coating, and the ranch dipping sauce—to pack summer flavors into this fried chicken. Using boneless thighs ensures juicy meat without the hour-long brining process. Frying the thin thighs takes half the time that bone-in chicken parts require, which allows the fresh herb flavors to flourish.

Use a Dutch oven that holds 6 quarts or more for this recipe.

Chicken

8 (5- to 7-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed

Salt and pepper

2 quarts peanut or vegetable oil

Buttermilk Mixture

1 cup buttermilk

2 tablespoons minced fresh chives

2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro

2 teaspoons minced fresh dill

2 teaspoons distilled white vinegar

1 garlic clove, minced

1/2 teaspoon salt

Pinch cayenne pepper

Coating

1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 cup cornstarch

3 tablespoons minced fresh chives

3 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro

1 tablespoon minced fresh dill

1 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder

1 1/2 teaspoons salt

3/4 teaspoon pepper

Ranch Sauce

1/2 cup mayonnaise

Salt and pepper



1. FOR THE CHICKEN: Pat chicken dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper.

2. FOR THE BUTTERMILK MIXTURE: Whisk all ingredients together in bowl. Set aside 1/4 cup buttermilk mixture for ranch sauce.

3. FOR THE COATING: Whisk all ingredients together in large bowl.

4. Set wire rack in rimmed baking sheet. Set second wire rack in second rimmed baking sheet and line half of rack with triple layer of paper towels.

5. Working with 1 piece at a time, dip chicken in remaining buttermilk mixture to coat, letting excess drip back into bowl; then dredge in coating, pressing to adhere. Transfer chicken to first wire rack (without paper towels). (At this point, coated chicken may be refrigerated, uncovered, for up to 2 hours.)

6. Heat oil in large Dutch oven over medium-high heat until it reaches 350 degrees. Add half of chicken to hot oil and fry until golden brown and registers 175 degrees, 7 to 9 minutes. Adjust burner, if necessary, to maintain oil temperature between 325 and 350 degrees.

7. Transfer chicken to paper towel-lined side of second wire rack to drain on each side for 30 seconds, then move to unlined side of rack. Return oil to 350 degrees and repeat with remaining chicken.

8. FOR THE RANCH SAUCE: Whisk mayonnaise into reserved buttermilk mixture. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

9. Transfer chicken to platter and serve with ranch sauce.

KEY INGREDIENTS: THREE HERBS, THREE WAYS

We use the defining herbs of ranch flavor—chives, cilantro, and dill—in three ways for this chicken: in the buttermilk dip, in the flour coating, and in the serving sauce.

RANCH FLAVORS: Chives, cilantro, and dill.

THE AMERICAN TABLE: MEANWHILE, BACK AT THE RANCH

Talk about an unlikely origin story. The last thing that anyone expected Kenneth Henson of Thayer, Nebraska, to do during his three-year stint as a plumbing contractor in Alaska just after World War II was to develop a salad dressing recipe that would become one of America's most popular condiments.

A plumbing contractor? In Alaska? You heard it right. Henson, 29 years old when he decamped for the then-U.S. territory, was a good cook, charged with preparing meals for his work-camp colleagues. A relentless kitchen tinkerer, he developed a buttermilk-based salad dressing that his crew loved.

In the early 1950s, Henson, who eventually changed his first name to Steve, relocated to the hills outside Santa Barbara, where he and his wife bought a 120-acre parcel and opened up a dude ranch, which they called "Hidden Valley." Henson's salad dressing was a fan favorite at meal time; eventually the Hensons began sending guests home with souvenir "ranch" seasoning packets.

Henson sold the "Hidden Valley Ranch" brand to Clorox for \$8 million in 1972 and closed the ranch shortly thereafter. A shelfstable version of the dressing was created in 1983; today, ranch is the most popular salad dressing flavor in the United States.