

Cleo Coyle's City Chicken

Text & photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi who writes [The Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) as [Cleo Coyle](#) with her husband, Marc Cerasini

City Chicken is a delicious comfort food that makes use of the word chicken in the title but not in the recipe. Although published recipes for "mock chicken" were found as far back as one hundred years ago, City Chicken really took off during the Depression, when meat scraps of pork, beef, and even veal were less expensive than chicken, especially in urban areas that were far from poultry farms. There are many regional variations of this dish.

The recipe I'm sharing with you was the one used by the mother of my husband (and partner in crime writing). Although Marc and I now live and work in New York, we were born and raised in Pittsburgh, which is why our version of City Chicken is "Pittsburgh style" (breaded, sautéed, baked, and served with pan gravy). We love it this way, and hope you will, too. ~ Cleo

Makes six servings

INGREDIENTS:

6 six-inch wooden skewers (*in a pinch, simply cut down longer skewers*)

3 pounds of meat cubes (we use):

- 1-½ pounds boneless pork pieces (or "stew meat") +
- 1-½ pounds veal pieces (or "stew meat")

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 cup seasoned breadcrumbs (we use Italian seasoned)

2 large eggs (beaten with fork)

1 tablespoon milk (or water) to create "egg wash"

1 medium white or yellow onion, chopped

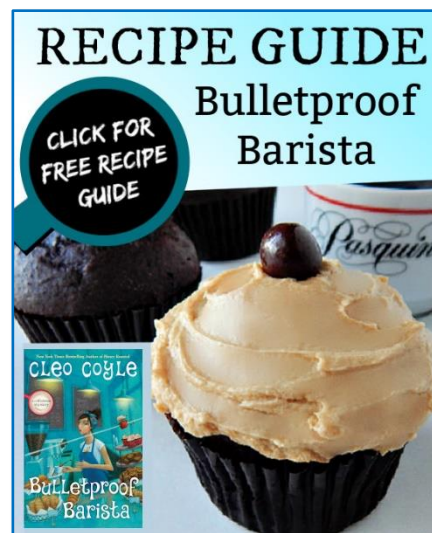
¼ cup vegetable oil

2 Tablespoons butter

2/3 cup chicken or vegetable stock

Salt and pepper to taste

1 tablespoon (or so) Wondra flour or cornstarch



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DIRECTIONS:

Note: If you are using "stew meat" packages as shown on the previous page, you should be ready to go. If you can't find stew meat, use pork loin chops and/or veal steaks and cut them into small pieces (about 1- to 1-1/2 inches in size).



Step 1: Prepare the Meat - Arrange meat pieces on each of the six skewers. If using more than one type, alternate them (pork, veal, pork, etc...) Fit the pieces together tightly to create a mock chicken drumstick. Dredge each mock drumstick in flour, then in egg wash (2 eggs beaten with 1 T. milk or water), and coat well with seasoned breadcrumbs.

Step 2: Brown the meat – Preheat oven to 325 degrees Fahrenheit. While oven is heating, place the vegetable oil in a large oven-proof skillet over medium high heat. When this shallow oil is hot enough to ripple, add 1 tablespoon of butter and allow it to melt. Sauté the mock drumsticks about five minutes in the hot oil, turning often, until the outsides are golden brown. Remove the mock drumsticks from the pan and set them aside on a holding plate. Turn the heat to low.



Step 3: Sauté the onions – Add the chopped onion to the hot oil, along with about 1 tablespoon butter.

Cook and stir over the low heat until the onions are brown, about five minutes. Now return the mock drumsticks to the pan (along with any drippings that may have accumulated on the holding plate). Cook them only for another minute or two.

Step 4: Bake – Add ½ cup chicken or vegetable stock to the skillet, cover with a lid, and bake in the preheated oven for about 50 minutes, or until the meat is tender.

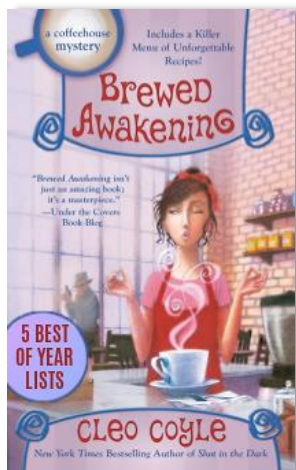


Step 5: Make the gravy - The onions and stock create a tasty gravy as the meat cooks. While you can spoon this thin gravy over the mock drumsticks as is, we prefer to thicken it. To do this, you'll need to remove all of the mock drumsticks from the pan while leaving the liquid in there. Over low heat, whisk the Wondra flour (or cornstarch) into the liquid. If you like, you can stir a bit of butter into the gravy for richness, as well, although it's not a necessity. Simmer for a minute or two, whisking in more flour or cornstarch until the gravy thickens to your liking. Then plate the mock drumsticks, spoon the gravy over them, as shown, and...

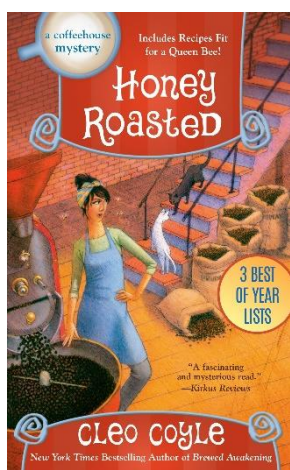


Eat with joy! ~ Cleo

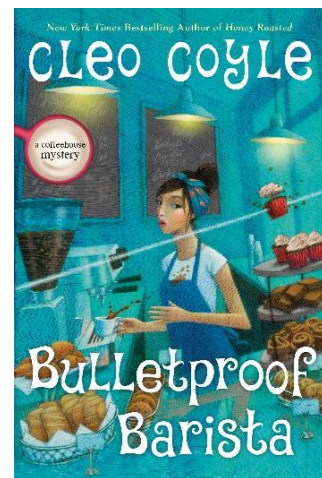
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