



## *Kitchen Cheat Sheet: Popeye's Chicken Tenders*

### *Tips*

1. Let the excess marinade drip off before dredging. You want the chicken coated, not wearing a buttermilk parka.
2. Press the flour onto the chicken so the crust sticks and fries up thick, craggy, and glorious.
3. Let the breaded chicken sit for 10 minutes before frying if you have time. That helps the coating grab on like it pays rent there.
4. Keep the oil at 360F for the best crunch without burning the outside before the inside cooks through.
5. Fry in batches and don't crowd the pan. Too much chicken at once drops the oil temp and gives you greasy sadness.
6. Use an instant-read thermometer if you're unsure. Chicken is done at 165F, and guessing is for casserole seasoning, not poultry.

### *Variations*

- You can use boneless chicken thighs - more flavor AND more budget friendly.
- After frying, brush your chicken strips with a spicy, buttery cayenne glaze (melted butter + cayenne + honey + a splash of pickle juice). It's fiery, messy, and completely addictive—just have some napkins (or a fire extinguisher) handy.
- Toss the freshly fried strips in a mix of melted butter, minced garlic, and a heavy sprinkle of grated Parmesan. It's like garlic bread and fried chicken had a delicious, crunchy baby.
- Take your tenders up a notch by drizzling them with hot honey (or just mix honey with a dash of cayenne). The sweet-heat combo is absolute perfection—like if Popeye's and a Southern grandma decided to team up.

### *Storage*

- Fridge: Pop them in an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 3 days—but let's be honest, they won't last that long.
- Freezer: Freeze in a single layer on a baking sheet, then transfer to a freezer bag for up to 3 months (future-you will be so grateful).
- Reheating: Skip the microwave unless you enjoy disappointment. Instead, reheat in the oven (375°F for 10-15 minutes) or air fryer (400°F for 5-7 minutes) to bring back that crispy, crunchy glory.

# FAQs

## **What makes these taste like Popeyes chicken tenders?**

It's the buttermilk, and hot sauce marinade, the seasoned flour, copycat seasoning, and that double dredge. You get juicy chicken underneath and a thick, craggy crust on the outside that actually has some flavor instead of tasting like fried beige.

## **What gives the breading so much flavor?**

Smoked paprika is doing a lot of heavy lifting here, with chipotle and salt backing it up like a proper Southern posse. That combination gives the coating a deeper, slightly smoky flavor with a little kick.

## **Can I use chicken thighs instead of chicken breasts?**

Yes, and they're delicious. Boneless chicken thighs give you more flavor and stay juicy, which is lovely if you're feeding people who treat overcooked chicken like a personal betrayal.

## **How long should I marinate the chicken?**

About 30 minutes is the sweet spot. An hour is fine. Much longer and the texture can start getting weird, which is not the kind of kitchen adventure we're after today.

## **Can I make these in the air fryer?**

Nope. I tested it so you don't have to. The coating gets too thick and heavy and never crisps up the way it should. This recipe wants real hot oil, not air fryer optimism and a prayer.

## **Can I make these in a skillet instead of a deep fryer?**

Yes. A heavy skillet works just fine as long as you use enough oil and keep the temperature around 360F. Don't crowd the pan, and don't wander off like this is a crockpot situation. It is not.

## **Why do I have to dredge the chicken twice?**

Because that's how you get the thick, crispy crust instead of a sad little dusting of flour that falls off the minute life gets hard. The double dredge helps build that classic fast-food-style coating.

## **Why is my breading falling off?**

Usually one of three things happened: the chicken was too wet, the coating didn't get pressed on well, or you started flipping too soon. Let the excess marinade drip off, coat it thoroughly, and then leave it alone long enough for the crust to set.

## **What oil works best for frying?**

I like peanut oil because it fries hot and gives great results. Use another neutral frying oil if you need to work around allergies or preferences. Just pick one that can handle the heat without throwing a fit.

## **How do I know when the chicken is done?**

The outside should be deep golden brown and crisp, and the inside should reach 165F on an instant-read thermometer. Guessing is cute right up until somebody bites into raw chicken.