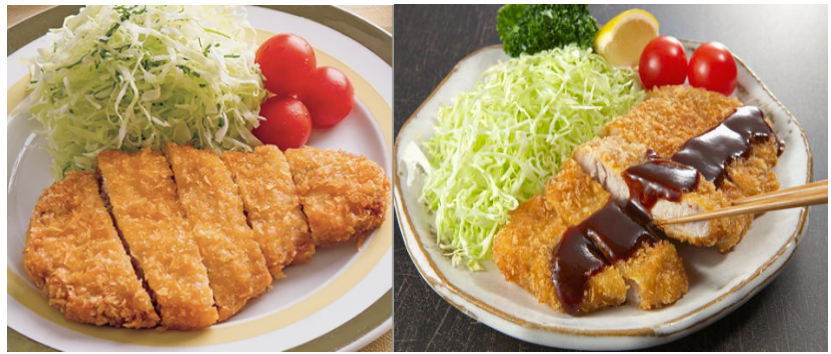


CLASSIC TONKATSU (Breaded Pork Cutlets)

豚カツ



Tonkatsu is most often made from either lean and tender *hiré* (ヒレ, tenderloin or filet) or the fattier *rosu* (ロース, loin) that is pictured, above. It is typically plated with a mound of finely shredded cabbage. Sometimes the sauce is served separately, sometimes drizzled over the meat (and cabbage, too, on occasion). I usually serve tonkatsu with cherry tomatoes and/or lemon wedges, parsley (to add color and balance nutrition).

Ingredients:

- 4 slices pork loin, each about 5mm (1/4-inch) thick, weighing about 65 grams (2 ounces)
- 2-3 tablespoons flour or cornstarch
- 1/2 beaten whole egg, mixed with 1 teaspoon cold water
- 3/4 cups *panko* coarse, dry, Japanese breadcrumbs
- vegetable oil for deep-frying
- 2 cups very finely shredded cabbage
- tonkatsu sosu* (commercially prepared spicy sauce)

To prevent unnecessary curling of the meat as it fries, make several shallow slits along the fatty rim of each slice. Then set up your breading station: egg wash in a small bowl; flour, cornstarch (or mixture of both) in a wide, shallow container; *panko* breadcrumbs in a wide, shallow container.



Lightly dust the pork slices in the flour, tapping off excess. Dip the slices one at a time in the egg wash and then lay them on top of the breadcrumbs. Use shoveling, scooping motions to cover the top surface with crumbs; press gently to be sure they adhere.

Set aside for a few minutes. If you wish to hold for longer than 10 minutes, place on a rack and cover with paper towels, then place in a re-sealable plastic bag and refrigerate. Breaded cutlets can be held for several hours in this fashion.

GUIDELINES/CLUES for DEEP FRYING:

When choosing an oil for frying *tonkatsu*, soybean oil (*daizu abura*), safflower (*benibana*) Canola oil (*natane abura*), or other mild and neutral flavored oil that can stand up to high heat is preferred. Avoid distinctively flavored oil or sesame oils.

Heat the oil in your pan.

- ◆ There should be at least 3 cm (1.25 inches) of oil and room enough to fry 2 cutlets at once.
- ◆ Heat the oil to 375 degrees F/190 C. Test temperature of the oil with breadcrumbs to which eggwash clings. Ideally, crumbs should sizzle and foam, but not color or burn, on the surface.
- ◆ If test crumbs sink and take more than 20 seconds to rise, the oil is not hot enough. Raise the heat source slightly and wait for 1 minute before re-testing.
- ◆ If test crumbs start to color immediately, the oil is too hot. Stir to cool, and lower the heat source slightly.
- ◆ Fry UNDISTURBED for 2 minutes or until lightly colored at the edges. Flip and fry undisturbed for another minute. DO NOT FLIP BACK & FORTH! Check that both surfaces are a golden brown, what the Japanese call *kistune iro* or “fox colored.” If concerned, check doneness by inserting a toothpick through the center. If liquid does appear around the tiny hole, it should be clear. If tinged with pink, fry for another 20 or 30 seconds.
- ◆ Remove to a rack lined with paper towels. Flip after 30 seconds and take paper towel with cutlet on it to a cutting board. Slice each cutlet across into 5 or 6 slices.

Plating *tonkatsu* in the classic manner: *Tonkatsu* is typically pre-sliced to make it easier to eat with chopsticks, slices are then re-aligned and set at a jaunty angle against a mound of finely shredded fresh cabbage. A tuft of parsley, a wedge of tomato and perhaps a small mound of creamy potato salad clustered at the border where cabbage and cutlet meet complete the plate.

A thick, fruity Worcestershire-like sauce called *tonkatsu sosu*, drizzled over cabbage and cutlets, is the usual accompaniment. Except in and around the Nagoya region, where a dark sauce made from *Hatcho miso* thinned with a bit of *mirin* and sea stock, is the norm.