

牡蠣フライ *Kaki Furai* Breaded Fried Oysters



When *kaki* bivalve-mollusks are in season (November through April in most parts of Japan), they appear in several guises on restaurant menus, at *depachika* (department store foods halls) counters, and on family tables, too. *Kaki furai* (breaded, fried oysters) are a popular obento item in Japan where many fried foods are served at room temperature. The crunchy coating owes its crispness to coarse shards of breadcrumbs the Japanese call *panko* that remain crisp even hours after frying. Of course fried oysters could be served piping hot, if that is your preference.

Lots of *shokudo* (cafeterias and small Mom-and-Pop eateries) offer daily special *teishoku* menus, typically a main dish accompanied by miso soup, rice, and pickles. *Kaki furai* are a favorite main dish.

Makes 2-3 portions (8 to 10 oysters).

- 8-10 fresh oysters, shucked, about 200 grams/7 ounces
- 2 cups brine (1/2 tablespoon sea salt + 2 cups water)
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 small egg, beaten with 1 tablespoons cold water
- 1 cup UNSEASONED *panko* bread crumbs
- Vegetable oil, for deep-frying



PREP THE OYSTERS:

Make a brine and rinse the oysters well in it to remove any grit or bits of shell. Pat dry with paper towels.

COAT THE OYSTERS:

Toss the oysters with the flour to lightly dust each of them. Dip the flour-dusted oysters in the egg mixture, one at a time. Then lay the egg-dipped oysters, one at a time, on a pile of breadcrumbs. Using scooping motions with a spoon (or dry fingers), cover each oyster with crumbs. Lightly press with dry fingertips. Set aside breaded oysters on a dry piece of paper towel.

The oysters can be coated several hours in advance of frying. If you plan on doing so, cover them lightly with paper towels, then seal with clear plastic wrap. Refrigerate until it's time to fry them.

FRY the OYSTERS:

You will need a depth of at least 2 1/2 inches of oil in your pan. I find that a Chinese wok, narrow at the base and wider at the top, is the best implement for this. Heat the oil to about 375F/190 C. Test your oil with a few breadcrumbs to which some of the egg wash still clings. The crumbs should sizzle gently on the surface, coloring very slowly. If the breadcrumbs sink, the oil is not hot enough. If the breadcrumbs sizzle on the surface and begin to color rapidly, the oil is too hot.

Fry the breaded oysters a few at a time, undisturbed for about 2 minutes, turning them only once midway. They should be golden brown and feel slightly firm when pinched between two chopsticks, or tongs. If concerned, check doneness by inserting a toothpick through the center. If liquid does appear around the tiny hole, it should be clear. If not, fry the oyster for another 20 or 30 seconds. Drain the oysters on paper towels. If you wish to eat them hot as a featured dish, serve immediately.

The classic way to plate them is leaning against a mound of shredded cabbage, with lemon wedges. Sometimes *sosy* (Worcestershire) or tartar sauce is served, too.

If you wish to serve these packed into an *obento* lunchbox or as an appetizer at room temperature, let the oysters cool completely on a paper-lined rack away from drafts. If the oysters are large slice them in half (on the diagonal) to serve as appetizers.

KITCHEN NOTES

GUIDELINES/CLUES/TIPS for DEEP FRYING



- ◆ **OIL for FRYING:** When choosing an oil for frying *kaki furai*, soybean oil (*daizu abura*), safflower (*benibana*; top row of bottles), Canola oil (*natane abura*; bottom row of bottles), or other mild and neutral flavored oil that can stand up to high heat is preferred.
- ◆ Avoid distinctively flavored oil or sesame oils. Nisshin has a large share of the market. pictured left is their “gift” pack, a popular mid-summer gift,

- ◆ The oil should be at least 2 inches deep.
- ◆ Heat the oil to 375 degrees F/190 C. Test 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.”
- ◆ 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.

Dry, fine crumbs (left)



Fresh soft crumbs (right)

