

Pickle-Brined Chicken Tenders with Fried Onion Salt

Yield: 4 servings

Scraps used: Pickle juice and onion trim (skin, ends, outer layers) are the heroes.

Why: Recipes for brines can be intimidating, but the juice in a bottle of pickles is brine that's all ready to go. Nothing could be easier. The dried papery outer layer of onion skin has a mild roasty onion flavor. Their problem is texture. Although they feel delicate, chewing them is a challenge. Let's just say the mouthfeel is tough as leather. Quickly frying them tenderizes them and gives them a craveable fried-onion flavor.

The Salt: The rich flavors of fried onion are captured when pulverized with coarse salt. The rough edges of the salt help to release the flavors of the browned onions.

Ingredients:

2 pounds chicken tenders

2 cups pickle juice

Vegetable oil for frying

1 cup onion trimmings, (ends, skin, dry or discolored outer layers), from 2 large onions

1½ cups flour

1 or 2 teaspoons medium hot pepper sauce, such as Sriracha

2 teaspoons Morton® Coarse Sea Salt or Morton® Coarse Kosher Salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

Brine the chicken: Put the chicken tenders and 1 cup of the pickle juice in a gallon zip-top bag. Squeeze out as much air as possible and seal. Refrigerate at least 4 hours, or preferably overnight.

Fry the onion: Pour about 3 inches of oil into a large heavy saucepan and put over medium high heat until it reaches 350°F on an instant read thermometer, about 5 minutes. Add the onion trimmings and fry until the pieces shrivel and crisp, about 3 minutes, moving them around with a wooden spoon to help them fry evenly. Lift from the pan with a slotted spoon or strainer and transfer to paper towels to blot. Keep the oil warm over a low fire.

Make the batter: Put half the fried onion trimmings in a high-speed blender with 1 cup of the flour, the other cup of pickle juice and the hot sauce. Blitz until everything is smooth. Pour into a wide shallow bowl. Put the other ½ cup of flour in another wide shallow bowl.

Make the fried onion salt: Chop the rest of the fried onion in a food processor until very fine, scraping down the sides every now and then. If a few pieces won't chop, fine

enough...pick them out and compost them. Scrape into a small bowl and mash them a bit with the coarse salt and pepper.

Fry the tenders: Raise the heat under the oil to medium until it returns to 350°F. Drain the pickle juice from the tenders and pat off any extra moisture with paper towel. When the oil is up to temp, dredge the chicken tenders a few at a time in the flour and pat off any excess. Dip them in the batter, wiping off all but a thin coating and fry in the hot oil until golden brown, frying 3-4 at a time or as many that will fit in the pot without crowding. When done, lift them with slotted spoon or strainer onto paper towels to drain. Fry the rest in the same way and serve sprinkled with fried onion salt.