

## Italian Chicken and Pesto Ciabatta

This family sized sandwich using Italian flavours is a delicious take on the Italian American dish – Chicken Parmigiana. You can use shop bought pesto if you like, but home made does have a fresher flavour of basil. The chicken is also delicious on its own, served with a side salad and some spaghetti (traditional Italian-American way) or potato wedges.

### Ingredients

#### For the Chicken:

2 chicken breasts  
2 cloves of garlic  
Zest of half a lemon  
50g plain flour  
100g panko breadcrumbs  
75g grated parmesan cheese  
1 egg

Cut your chicken breasts in half (longways), so you have 4 even sized fillets. Now take 2 large pieces of cling film and place the chicken fillets between them. Use a meat hammer or rolling pin to bash the chicken until they are even thickness all over.

Now place them in a shallow dish and cover with some olive oil, the grated garlic cloves, lemon zest and seasoning. Leave to marinade for 30 mins or however long you have.

To make the coating for the chicken. Take 3 bowls and put the flour in one, the whisked egg in another and the mixture of panko breadcrumbs and parmesan in the third. Dip each fillet in flour, then egg, then breadcrumbs.

Once you have coated all 4 fillets, set aside until ready to cook.

#### For the Pesto

1 large bunch of basil  
50g parmesan  
35g toasted pine nuts  
1 garlic clove, roasted in the oven for 10 minutes (to remove the raw flavour)  
100-125ml olive oil (or enough to create a nice paste)  
Squeeze of lemon juice  
Salt and pepper

Toast your pine nuts in a dry pan until they have just a little colour. Place all of the ingredients in a food processor or a mortar and pestle. Blitz together until you have a thick paste (add the oil a little at a time to make sure you get the right consistency – it may need more or less than the recipe).

#### For the Tomato Sauce

1 banana shallot  
2 cloves of garlic  
1 squeeze of tomato puree  
1 jar of crushed tomatoes or tin of tomatoes  
Tbsp olive oil  
Mixed Italian herbs

Saute the chopped shallots in the olive oil until translucent. Now add the garlic and saute for a further minute. Add the tomato puree and cook together for a minute or so. Add the crushed tomatoes, herbs and seasoning. Cook for 15-20 minutes without a lid on until you have a thick tomato sauce. Add a tsp of sugar if it tastes a little too bitter.

#### For the Caramelised Onions

1 onion

½ tsp sugar

A knob of butter

Splash of olive oil

Splash of balsamic vinegar

Chop the onion in half and then into half moons quite thin. Add to a saute pan with the butter and oil, and cook very gently for around half an hour, stirring occasionally. Once they are very soft and with a bit of colour, add the sugar and balsamic vinegar and turn the heat up for a couple of minutes to get a bit more colour on the onions.

#### To Assemble

##### Ingredients

1 large Ciabatta loaf

2 tbsp mayonnaise

2 handfuls of rocket

1 ball of mozzarella cheese

Place the Ciabatta loaf in the oven to warm through. In the meantime, heat a heavy based frying pan and add some olive oil. Take your breaded chicken and fry them on a medium heat in the olive oil, adding enough to shallow fry the chicken. This should take around 3 or 4 minutes per side. Just as the chicken is getting cooked on one side, add a good knob of butter to get a lovely golden brown finish on the crumb. Once the chicken is cooked through, keep it in the pan on a very low heat and spoon a tbsp of the tomato sauce per fillet. Top each one with a couple of slices of the mozzarella and pop under the grill for a couple of minutes. Whilst this is under the grill, take the ciabatta loaf and cut open. Add the pesto you have made to the mayonnaise and spread over the loaf. Now place the rocket on the bottom and spread the caramelised onions over the top. Once the mozzarella has started to bubble, place the chicken fillets on top of the rocket and onion. Sprinkle a few basil leaves on top and serve. Cut into 4 and enjoy with a side salad and/or some fries on the side.