

Crispy Fish Sandwich with Super Special Tartar Sauce

4 servings

To make this vegetarian, use a 14-ounce block of firm tofu in place of the fish. Before breading it, cut it into four equal planks, then place them on a rimmed baking sheet lined with a clean kitchen towel. Fold the towel over the tofu, then weight down with a cutting board or heavy skillet for 15 minutes to press out excess liquid. Proceed as directed with dredging and frying!

FOR THE SPECIAL TARTAR

1 cup sour cream
1 cup buttermilk, divided
¼ cup mayonnaise
6 cornichons
6 piparra peppers
2 tablespoons capers, drained (rinsed if salted)
1 teaspoon onion powder, plus more for seasoning fish
3 tablespoons furikake, plus more for seasoning fish
Kosher salt; freshly ground pepper
Green chile hot sauce, for seasoning

In a medium bowl, combine sour cream, ¼ cup buttermilk, and mayo and mix well to thoroughly combine (set aside the remaining ¾ cup buttermilk for dredging the fish). Cut the cornichons and peppers crosswise into thin rounds and roughly chop the capers; add to sour cream mixture. Add onion powder and furikake and stir to combine. Season with salt and plenty of pepper. Taste and adjust seasoning with hot sauce until you're pleased. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use (if you want to do this way ahead of time, the sauce will keep for 2–3 days).

FOR THE FISH AND ASSEMBLY

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 ½ cups panko
4 skinless flounder fillets (about 6 ounces each)
Kosher salt; freshly ground pepper
¾ cup neutral oil, such as peanut
4 soft sandwich rolls, split
1 small head iceberg lettuce

Place the flour, remaining ¾ cup buttermilk, and panko in three separate shallow dishes (pie plates or loaf pans work great, as do small rimmed baking sheets, or dinner plates with a lip). Set a cooling rack into a rimmed baking sheet. Season the fish fillets on both sides with salt and pepper, then with onion powder. Working with one fillet at a time, place fish into flour, pressing and turning to coat both sides, then pat off excess. Dip the fish in buttermilk, turning to coat both sides, then lift up and let excess drain off. Transfer fish to panko, pressing firmly to coat both sides and turning it back and forth to make sure fillet is evenly covered in breadcrumbs. Land the fish onto the cooling rack and repeat with the other 3 fillets.

Heat oil in a 10- or 12-inch cast-iron skillet over medium-high (if you don't have a cast-iron skillet, get one! Or use a Dutch oven or other large heavy skillet). The oil should be about ¼-inch deep; top off if needed. Check oil temperature after 3 or 4 minutes by dropping a pinch of breadcrumbs into skillet; if it bubbles energetically and floats right away, it's ready.

Gently slide fillets into skillet and cook, gently shaking skillet back and forth occasionally to make sure fish isn't sticking, until breadcrumbs are deep golden brown on underside, 3–4 minutes. Gently turn fish onto second side and cook until second side is crisp and brown, about 3 minutes more. Transfer fillets to cooling rack and season with furikake.

Lightly toast rolls. Cut iceberg crosswise into 4 ¼-inch slabs; season lettuce on both sides with salt and pepper. Spoon a little bit of tartar onto the bottom half of each roll. Top each with a fish fillet, then spoon a generous amount of sauce on top. Sandwich with top roll, then cut sandwiches in half.

FROM THE MARKET

Piparra peppers
Flounder
Soft rolls
Iceberg lettuce

SPIN IT

Any pickled pepper, such as pepperoncini or banana peppers, can replace the piparra
Trout, sole, cod, halibut, branzino, red snapper, or porgy can replace the flounder
Thick slices of milk bread, challah, or other white bread can replace the rolls
Romaine, Little Gems, Napa cabbage or savoy cabbage can replace the iceberg

AT HOME

Sour cream
Buttermilk
Mayonnaise
Cornichons
Capers
Onion powder
Furikake
Salt and pepper
Green chile hot sauce
MSG
All-purpose flour
Panko
Neutral oil

SPIN IT

Plain yogurt, creme fraiche, or alt-milk yogurt can replace the sourcream
Milk or non-dairy milk can replace the buttermilk
Use any type of pickle instead of cornichons; you need about 2 tablespoons chopped
If you don't have capers, double the amount of pickles
Garlic powder can be used instead of onion powder, or omit
Combine roasted seaweed snacks (cut into small piece) and toasted sesame seeds in place of furikake
Any hot sauce can be used
Any unseasoned breadcrumb can replace the Panko
Grapeseed, canola, vegetable, safflower, or any other neutral oil can be used instead of peanut oil