

Menu

Pickle-Brined Fried Chicken with Comeback Sauce
Stovetop Mac and Cheese • Sautéed Green Beans
Chocolate Caramel Graham Cracker Cookies

The Game Plan

The day before or early in the day:

(10 minutes hands on, plus marinating time of at least 1 hour and up to 24 hours)

- Marinate the chicken in the pickle brine for at least 1 hour and up to 6 hours. If you want to hold the chicken longer than 6 hours, pour off the pickle brine and replace it with buttermilk. The chicken can sit in the buttermilk for 24 hours.

Early in the day:

(About 40 minutes hands on, plus baking and cooling time, about 1 hour total)

- Make the Chocolate Caramel Graham Cracker Cookies.
- While the cookies bake, blanch the beans. (This isn't absolutely necessary, but I like to blanch the green beans ahead of time, so when it comes time to sauté them, they're already halfway cooked and they finish up quickly.) Trim and rinse the beans, cook them for 2 to 3 minutes (depending on how thick they are) in salted boiling water, then drain them and immediately dump them into a large bowl of salted ice water. Once they're cool, spread them out on a paper-towel-lined baking sheet to dry and leave them at room temperature until just before serving.
- Shred the Cheddar cheese for the Stovetop Mac and Cheese, and chill it until needed.
- Make the Comeback Sauce and chill it until needed.
- Clean up the kitchen and run the dishwasher.

1 hour before dinner:

(1 hour)

- Start the water boiling for the macaroni.
- While waiting for the water to boil, empty the dishwasher.
- Set the table.
- Make the mac and cheese. Cover the pot and move it to a back burner while cooking the chicken.
- Heat the oil for the chicken. While the oil heats, make the seasoned flour, and coat the chicken in buttermilk and flour to prepare it for frying.
- Fry the chicken in two batches. When all the chicken is done, set it aside while finishing the sides.
- Reheat the mac and cheese over medium low heat, adding a little more milk if needed to loosen the sauce.
- Heat a skillet over medium heat and add olive oil and butter. Sauté the green beans until crisp tender; season with salt and pepper.
- Start the dinner music.
- Light the candles.

After dinner:

(5 minutes)

- Clear the table. While your partner loads the dishwasher, arrange the cookies on a plate.

Note:

- *The hands-on work time estimates (in parentheses below the start times) are for one person doing it all, but some of these tasks can be shared or delegated, shortening the prep time.*