

Cordon Bleu

FOOD

CRUMBED DELIGHTS

Cutlets Around the World



JULIE BANERJEE

From humble home kitchens to grand hotel tables, cutlets have found a special place in cuisines across the world. Though their shapes, ingredients and methods of preparation may differ, the idea remains wonderfully simple — a delicious mixture of meat, fish, vegetables or grains, shaped, coated and cooked until crisp and golden. Every country has given the cutlet its own character. From the elegant French croquette and the comforting British fish cake, to the famous Italian Cotoletta, Japanese Tonkatsu, Russian cutlet, Indian aloo and mutton cutlets, and many more, these little golden delights tell a story of tradition, creativity and local flavours. Some are crumbed and deep-fried, some are pan-fried, while others are baked or grilled. They may be served as appetisers, snacks, accompaniments or even as the centrepiece of a meal. What makes cutlets so universally loved is their versatility. A simple combination of ingredients can be transformed into something crisp on the outside, tender and flavourful within. Here are some of the many delicious ways different cultures have made cutlets.

CORDON BLEU

Switzerland/France | Serves 4

Chicken Cordon Bleu consists of tender chicken wrapped around ham and cheese, then breaded and cooked until golden. The combination of crisp coating, savoury ham and melted cheese makes it a classic international favourite.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 chicken breasts
- 4 slices smoked or cooked ham
- 4 slices Gruyère or any cheese slice
- Salt and black pepper to taste
- ½ cup plain flour
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 ½ cups breadcrumbs
- 3tbsp butter
- 2tbsp oil

METHOD

- Butterfly and flatten the chicken breasts to an even thickness.
- Season lightly with salt and pepper.
- Place a slice of ham and cheese on each breast.
- Fold so that there are no gaps and secure with toothpicks if necessary.
- Chill for 20 minutes.
- Coat in flour, egg and breadcrumbs.
- Heat butter and oil in a frying pan.
- Brown the chicken on all sides.
- Transfer to an oven at 180°C and cook until completely done and the cheese has melted.
- Rest for 5 minutes before slicing.
- My Tip: Chilling the rolled chicken before breading helps it retain its shape and prevents the cheese from escaping.

#To Serve

Slice diagonally and serve with a light cream sauce, buttered vegetables and a delicate green salad.



Weiner Schnitzel



Tonkatsu Pork Cutlet

TONKATSU

Japan | Serves 4

Tonkatsu is Japan's famous breaded pork cutlet. The use of panko breadcrumbs gives it an exceptionally light and crunchy crust, while the meat remains juicy and tender.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 pork loin chops, approximately 150-180g each
- Salt and black pepper
- ½ cup plain flour
- 2 eggs
- 1 ½ cups panko breadcrumbs
- Oil, for deep-frying

#For the Tonkatsu Sauce

- 4tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 2tbsp ketchup
- 1tbsp soy sauce
- 1tbsp honey
- ½tsp Dijon mustard

METHOD

- Trim excess fat from the pork and make a few shallow cuts through the connective tissue around the edges.
- Lightly pound the meat and season with salt and pepper.
- Coat each piece in flour, beaten egg and finally panko.
- Heat oil to approximately 170-175°C.
- Fry the pork until deep golden and cooked through, approximately 4-5 minutes.
- Drain on a wire rack and rest for a few minutes.
- Mix all the sauce ingredients together.

My Tip: Never press the panko onto the meat. The loose flakes create the characteristic light, craggy Japanese crust.

#To Serve

Slice the Tonkatsu into strips and serve with shredded cabbage, lemon wedges, steamed rice and Tonkatsu sauce.

WIENER SCHNITZEL

Austria | Serves 4

Wiener Schnitzel is one of Austria's most celebrated dishes. Traditionally made with veal, the meat is pounded very thin, coated in flour, egg and fine breadcrumbs, and fried until beautifully golden. The result should be exceptionally crisp outside and tender within.

INGREDIENTS

- 4 chicken breasts, approximately 150 g each
- ½ cup plain flour
- 2 eggs beaten
- 1 cup fine breadcrumbs
- Salt and freshly ground black peppe
- 100 g clarified butter or butter
- 2tbsp vegetable oil
- Lemon wedges, to serve
- Chopped parsley, for garnish

METHOD

- Place each chicken breast between two sheets of cling film and gently pound until approximately 3-4 mm thick.
- Season both sides with salt and pepper.
- Place flour, beaten eggs and breadcrumbs in three separate shallow dishes.
- Dip each breast first in flour, then egg and finally breadcrumbs. Do

* not press the breadcrumbs firmly onto the meat.
* Heat the clarified butter and oil in a large frying pan.
* Fry the schnitzels one at a time, gently moving the pan so that the hot fat washes over the surface. Cook for about 2-3 minutes on each side until puffed and golden.
* Drain briefly on kitchen paper.

My Tip: Do not press the breadcrumbs onto the meat. A loose coating produces the characteristic delicate, crisp crust.

#To Serve
Serve immediately with lemon wedges, parsley potatoes or a traditional Austrian potato salad. And a light green lettuce.

Austrian Potato Salad

INGREDIENTS
1kg potatoes boiled in enough water to cover the potatoes. Add 1tsp salt and boil for 25 minutes. Cut into roundels

#For the sauce
* 1 medium red onion cut into thin slices
* 3 sprigs parsley
* 5 sprigs chives chopped fine
* 1 cup chicken stock
* 2tbsp white wine vinegar
* ¼ cup olive oil
* ¾tsp Dijon mustard
* 2tsp sugar (powdered)
* *1tsp salt or according to taste*
* 1tsp black pepper
* Mix all the above ingredients well. Add the potatoes and then cover and rest for 30 minutes.

CHICKEN KYIV

Ukraine | Serves 4
Chicken Kyiv is a luxurious breaded chicken dish with a dramatic centre of garlic and herb butter. When cut open, the fragrant butter melts into the tender chicken, making it particularly impressive when served at the table.

INGREDIENTS
#For the chicken
* 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
* Salt and black pepper to taste
* ½ cup plain flour
* 2 eggs, beaten
* 1½ cups fine breadcrumbs
* Oil, for frying

#For the butter
* 120g unsalted butter, softened
* 4 cloves garlic, finely crushed
* 2tbsp chopped parsley
* 1tbsp chopped chives
* 1tsp lemon juice
* Salt and pepper to taste

METHOD
* Mix the softened butter with garlic, parsley, chives, lemon juice, salt and pepper.
* Shape the butter into four small logs and chill until firm. Use cling film for this.
* Carefully butterfly each chicken breast and gently pound it between sheets of cling film.
* Place a piece of chilled butter in the centre of each breast.
* Fold the chicken tightly around the butter, sealing all edges completely.
* Chill for 20-30 minutes.
* Coat each breast in flour, beaten egg and breadcrumbs. For extra security, repeat the egg and breadcrumb coating.
* Heat oil and fry until golden.
* The oil should be hot when putting the chicken. Then cook on medium till golden
* Rest for 5 minutes before serving.

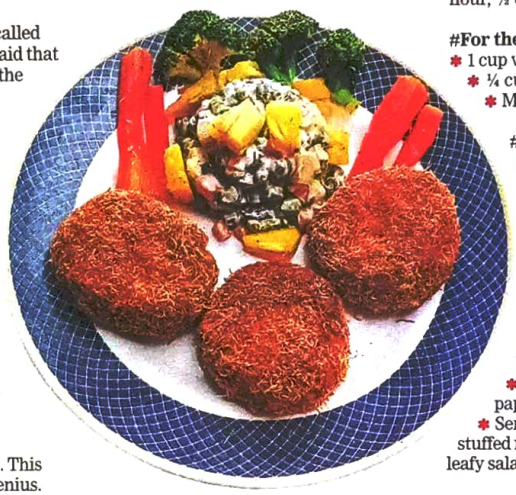
My Tip: The butter must be completely enclosed. Any opening will allow the butter to escape during cooking.

#To Serve
Serve with pommes purée, buttered vegetables or a crisp green salad.


Chicken Kyiv

RUSSIAN CUTLETS

Russia | Serves 4
This cutlet in Russia is called Pozharsky Cutlet. It is said that a lady owned a hotel by the name of Pozharsky in Russia. To make it popular she announced that Pozharsky is a prince of Russia and that the cutlet was specially made for him. And so this humble cutlet became very popular. The essence of this cutlet is that the meat is cooked. In India, the Memonis brought this cutlet and combined Indian ingredients with some continental techniques. This combination is sheer genius.


Russian Cutlets

INGREDIENTS
* Ginger garlic green chilli paste
* 1-inch ginger grated
* 3 cloves large garlic
* 4 green chillies
* ¼tsp salt
* Grind all the above ingredients and keep aside

#For cooking the chicken
1tbsp oil
* Prepared ginger garlic paste.
* 320g chicken breast cut into medium cubes
* 2 medium carrots grated
* 6-7 French beans finely chopped
* 1 cup water

#For Russian cutlet
* ¼ cup processed cheese grated
* 1½tbsp finely chopped coriander leaves
* 2 green chillies finely chopped
* 2tsp black peppercorns crushed
* 1 medium potato boiled and grated
* 2 eggs boiled and grated
* ¼ cup white sauce
* 1 egg yolk

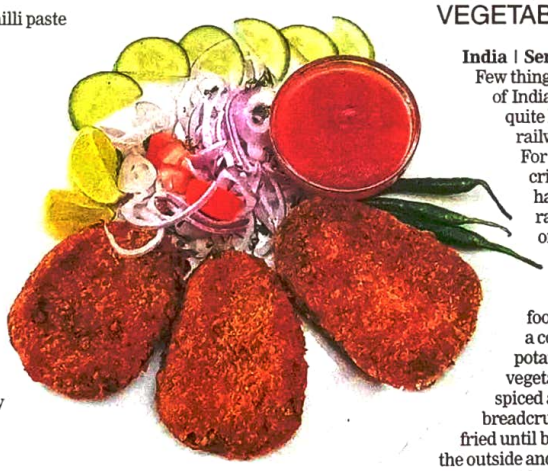
#For the white sauce: Panada
* 3tbsp butter
* 1½tbsp all-purpose flour
* ¼ cup chicken stock
* 1tbsp milk
* 1tsp melted butter

METHOD
* In a shallow non-stick pan add butter and let melt over low heat.
* Add flour and cook over medium heat, stirring all the time.
* Remove from heat and gradually stir in chicken stock and milk. Heat the mixture to a boil and stir for 1 minute. Remove from heat.
* Add a little melted butter and mix well. Transfer to a bowl and keep aside to cool in the refrigerator.

#For cooking the chicken
* In a shallow non-stick pan add oil. Once hot add ginger, garlic and green chilli paste. Saute well.
* Add the chicken, carrot and French beans and saute well.
* Add water and let cook until the chicken is tender.
* Now strain the chicken and keep the stock in a bowl for further use.
* Remove the chicken from the vegetables and shred it finely with hands.
* Mash the veggies lightly. Now mix the chicken and the veggies. Keep in a bowl.
* Now add cheese, coriander leaves, green chillies, black pepper, grated potato, grated boiled egg, salt to taste, prepared white sauce (panada) and egg yolk. Mix everything well.
* Divide the Russian cutlet mixture into equal portions and using your palm, make a ball and then flatten slightly to resemble a disc.
* Make the Slurry: Mix 1/3 cup flour, ½ cup water, salt to taste.

#For the coating
* 1 cup vermicelli crushed
* ¼ cup breadcrumbs
* Mix the above ingredients

#For frying
* Coat the cutlet with dry flour.
* Then dip into the slurry.
* Then cover with vermicelli mixture.
* Heat oil in a *kadai*; once hot make the flame medium and add the cutlets and fry till golden brown.
* Remove on absorbent paper.
* Serve with a Russian salad, stuffed mushrooms or a green leafy salad. As you wish.


Indian Railway Vegetable Cutlet

INDIAN RAILWAY VEGETABLE CUTLET

India | Serves 15
Few things evoke the romance of Indian train journeys quite like the humble railway vegetable cutlet. For generations, these crisp, golden cutlets have been served at railway stations and on long-distance trains, becoming a much-loved part of India's travel and food culture. Made with a comforting mixture of potatoes and seasonal vegetables, delicately spiced and coated in breadcrumbs, the cutlet is fried until beautifully crisp on the outside and flavourful within. Often served with tomato ketchup or green chutney, it makes a simple yet satisfying snack, specially if had between two slices of buttered bread.

For me, the railway vegetable cutlet is more than just a recipe; it brings back memories of train journeys, station platforms, steel trays, steaming cups of tea and the excitement of opening a railway food packet to discover that familiar golden cutlet inside. It is a small taste of nostalgia that has travelled across generations and continues to hold a special place in the heart of Indian cuisine.

INGREDIENTS
#For the cutlet mixture
* 2tbsp oil
* ½tsp cumin seeds
* 1tsp ginger grated
* 2-3 green chillies chopped finely
* A pinch of asafoetida (hing)
* 1 carrot chopped very finely
* 1 medium size beetroot chopped finely
* 1/3 cup French beans chopped very finely
* 1/3 cup green peas

Powdered Spices:
* ¼tsp turmeric powder (*haldi*)
* 2tsp coriander powder
* 1tsp *degi* mirch powder
* ¼tsp garam masala powder
* A pinch of black pepper powder
* Salt a pinch. Or according to taste
* 4-5 medium-size boiled potatoes
* 2tsp dry mango powder (*aamchoor*)
* A handful of fresh coriander leaves finely chopped

#For the crumbing
* 4tbsp refined flour
* 2tbsp cornflour
* A pinch of salt
* Water as required
* Breadcrumbs as required

METHOD
* Set a pan over high heat and once it gets hot add in the oil, cumin seeds, ginger, green chillies and hing, stir and cook briefly over high flame.
* Now add carrot, beetroot, French beans and green peas, stir and cook over high flame for 2-3 minutes.
* Now add all the powdered spices, salt, mix well and continue to cook on high flame for 1 minute.
* Once cooked, transfer the veggies into a large mixing bowl and let them cool down completely.
* Now mash the boiled potatoes.
* Now add cornflour, breadcrumbs, mashed potatoes, salt, dry mango powder and fresh coriander, mix all the ingredients well using your hands. You don't have to knead or mash the mixture.
* If you feel that there is not enough binding then you can add more breadcrumbs as required.
* Now take a small portion of the mixture and form into a roundel, once you have the round shape then press it with both your palm into a cutlet shape. Make a droplet type of shape.
* Now make the slurry for crumbing by adding flour, corn flour, salt and water as required while whisking continuously to form a semi-thin slurry.
* Now dip the cutlets in the slurry, then the breadcrumbs and fry till golden and crispy.
* Serve with tomato ketchup or green chutney, or between two slices of buttered bread.

Accompaniments for the cutlets depends on you. Russian salad, red cabbage slaw, mashed potatoes, sautéed vegetables, broccoli, French fries, stuffed capsicum, mushrooms, and lettuce salad go well with the cutlets.

Pictures: Pabitra Das

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