

Beer-Battered Oysters with Jalapeno Tartar Sauce

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This recipe makes more batter than required for the oysters – use it to fry up zucchini slices, onion rings, green tomatoes, or whatever else jumps in. (Yes, frying battered string cheese does make mozzarella sticks. We tried.) You can skimp on oil by using a smaller pot filled with less oil, but keep in mind that a bigger pot of oil will hold its temperature better, which means less time waiting for the oil to come back up to temperature between batches. You will also need to save a container for disposing of the oil. When the oil has cooled, pour it into the container and find out if your trash person takes it, or if you have to take it to the dump yourself. If you're in Seattle, put it on the sidewalk with a sign that says "FREE USED VEGETABLE OIL," and it should be gone within a few days.

Equipment: You will need a high-quality sugar or frying thermometer.

TIME: 30 minutes active time

MAKES: 4 servings, at least, many more if you fry other things

Vegetable oil for frying

1 cup all-purpose flour

1 cup cornstarch

2 teaspoons salt

1/2 teaspoon baking powder

Freshly ground pepper

11 ounces cold beer (such as a lager)

20 large shucked oysters, drained and blotted dry with paper towels

Tabasco sauce, to taste

Jalapeno Tartar Sauce, for dipping (recipe follows)

Fill a large, heavy soup pot *at least* 3" deep with the oil and heat to 375 degrees. (If you aren't worried about the cost of oil, fill 'er up to about 2" from the top. Then buy us some gas.)

While the oil heats, whisk the flour, cornstarch, salt, baking powder, and a good grinding of pepper in a large bowl until blended. (This is also a good time to make the tartar sauce and line a few plates with paper towels.) When the oil is at about 325 degrees, whisk the beer into the dry ingredients and stir until the bubbles dissipate. Season with a few shakes of Tabasco, and stir again.

When the oil is hot, dip two oysters at a time into the batter to coat completely and carefully drop them into the hot oil. Repeat with additional oysters, roughly six per batch. Fry for 1 to 2 minutes, or until the oysters are golden brown. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the oysters to a paper towel-lined plate to drain, and serve hot with tartar sauce. Repeat with the remaining oysters, allowing the oil to come back up to 375 degrees between batches. (You may need to regulate the heat up and down as you fry.)

Jalapeno Tartar Sauce

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1 tablespoon capers, chopped

1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 teaspoon lemon juice

4 to 12 pickled jalapeno pepper rings (at least 4 for flavor, 12 for healthy spice)

1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

2 tablespoons very finely chopped onion

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Whisk all the ingredients together in a small bowl until blended. Refrigerate until ready to serve.