



EASY CHICKEN PARMESAN

MICHAEL FRANZESE

INTRODUCTION

Back in the kitchen, and this time we're making one of the greatest Italian-American classics: **Chicken Parmesan**. Now here's something most people don't know — Chicken Parmesan is not from Italy. It's an American-Italian invention. Ask for it in Rome and they'll look at you like you've lost your mind. It actually evolved from Eggplant Parmesan, which is Italian.

I've been making this dish my whole life, and the memories it brings back are priceless. My grandmother's kitchen, Sunday dinners, the smell of sauce simmering on the stove — it never gets old. This is the kind of meal that brings everyone to the table, stops every argument, and makes every worry disappear. That's the power of good food.

The whole dish takes **30 minutes**. I'm feeding my whole crew with it and they eat every last bite. Serve it with a side of spaghetti — because when there's sauce involved, there's always pasta. Don't order out. Make this at home for **less than \$30**. That's an offer you can't refuse.



[Link to the full cooking episode:](#)

INGREDIENTS

- **4 Organic Chicken Breasts** — Always use organic. it really does make a difference in taste and health.
- **All-Purpose Flour** — The secret weapon. Coats the chicken for that perfect golden crust.
- **4 Eggs (beaten)** — The binding layer between flour and breadcrumbs.
- **Italian Seasoned Breadcrumbs** — Pre-seasoned for extra flavor, no extra work needed.
- **Olive Oil (for frying)** — Organic Italian preferred. Heat to ~350°F before adding chicken.
- **2 Cans Mutti Whole Peeled Tomatoes** — Michael's top choice. Crush them right in the pot, no blender needed.
- **1 Whole Onion (unpeeled)** — Tony's secret trick: whole onion simmers in sauce for flavor without sweetness or bits.
- **Fresh Basil Leaves** — Add to sauce and as garnish. Nothing beats fresh.
- **Shredded Mozzarella Cheese** — Note: it's called Chicken Parmesan, but the cheese is mozzarella.
- **Grated Parmesan Cheese** — A sprinkle on top for extra richness.
- **Salt & Pepper** — Season to taste throughout.
- **1 lb Spaghetti (side dish)** — Cook al dente — never mushy. Don't call it noodles.
- **Italian or French Bread** — Warm at 300°F and serve alongside.



PART 1: THE SAUCE

A great Chicken Parmesan starts with a great sauce. Keep it simple, keep it light — the chicken and cheese are the stars.

1. Pour a thin layer of olive oil into a medium pot.
2. Open 2 cans of Mutti whole peeled tomatoes and crush them directly in the pot with a spoon. Old Italian way was to squeeze them by hand in a bowl — you can do that too, but we don't bother.
3. Drop in the whole unpeeled onion. This is Tony's trick — you get the onion flavor without the sweetness or the little bits floating around. Just take it out before you serve.
4. Add a few fresh basil leaves. You can do it now or later — doesn't matter. The smell alone will bring back memories.
5. Season with salt and pepper. Keep it simple.
6. Simmer on low heat for 20+ minutes while you prep the chicken.



PART 2: THE CHICKEN

1. Pound each breast thin — from the inside out toward the edges. Get it as thin as you can.
2. Set up your breading station: Bowl 1 — flour. Bowl 2 — beaten eggs. Bowl 3 — Italian breadcrumbs.
3. Coat each cutlet in flour first. Press it in and cover every inch.
4. Dip in the egg wash — fully coated on both sides.
5. Press into the breadcrumbs — both sides, uniform coverage, don't miss a spot.
6. Heat olive oil in a large pan to ~350°F. Test it with a breadcrumb — if it crackles immediately, you're ready.
7. Fry 2 to 3 minutes per side until deep golden brown. Don't move it around. Let it crust up.
8. Remove and place in a baking dish.



PART 3: ASSEMBLE & BAKE

1. Spoon sauce generously over each cutlet. Cover the whole thing. I like a lot of sauce — put it on to your liking.
2. Add a generous layer of shredded mozzarella on top. You can also use sliced fresh mozzarella if you prefer.
3. Add a light sprinkle of grated parmesan.
4. Bake at 350°F for 15 to 20 minutes — just until the cheese is melted and bubbly. The chicken is already cooked. Don't overbake it.
5. While it's in the oven, cook your spaghetti al dente. Salt the water so the pasta doesn't stick.
6. Drain the pasta and toss with remaining sauce.
7. Plate the chicken alongside the pasta. Garnish with fresh basil. Serve immediately with warm bread.



MICHAEL'S NOTES

- Total time: About 30 minutes start to finish. "The longest part is really just waiting for the sauce."
- Serves: 4 people — one cutlet each, with pasta on the side.
- Cost: "You can make it for 30 bucks, maximum. Maybe even less than that."
- The name is a lie: It's called Chicken Parmesan, but the cheese is mozzarella. "It's really Chicken Mozzarella. Came from Eggplant Parmesan. But we call it what we call it."
- Never ask for it in Italy: "They will look at you. They will say Americano. Don't do it."
- Don't overcook it: The oven step is only to melt the cheese. The chicken is already done. Pull it when the mozzarella is bubbly.
- Al dente is non-negotiable: "Don't overcook the pasta. If you overcook it, you're killing it. And don't call it noodles — that's for China, not Italy."
- Serve with: Warm Italian bread at 300°F, and a good red wine. Michael recommends his Areni.



WINE PAIRINGS

Here's how to pair each of those wines with the dish:



Areni (Red) - Michael's Top Pick

When there's a red sauce on the plate, Michael always reaches for a red — and the Areni is his first call. Bright cherry, wild berry, and a silky lightness that cuts right through the richness of the mozzarella and sauce. This is the parent grape of Pinot Noir — elegant, not heavy. It lifts the dish instead of competing with it.



Malbec - The Bold Choice

A fuller, darker companion for those who want more presence in the glass. Rich dark fruit, a touch of spice, and velvety smoothness that stands up to the heartiness of the breaded cutlet. Great choice if you like your wine to match the weight of the meal.



Cherry Wine - The Conversation Starter

Light and juicy with a playful sweetness that dances alongside the tomato. An unexpected match that earns its place at the table. "It's growing on me, I have to say it. I wasn't a big cherry guy — but this is good."

ENJOY!

Be safe, be healthy, follow my recipes, and you're going to eat well. May God bless each and every one of you.

