

Fried Calamari with Pickled Red Fresno Chili Peppers

Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients

Pickled red Fresno peppers:

6 red Fresno peppers
1 cup water
½ cup champagne vinegar
½ cup sugar

Fried calamari:

Vegetable oil, for frying
1 ½ lbs cleaned squid (bodies & tentacles)
2 cups all-purpose flour
1 lemon
Marinara sauce, to serve on the side

Directions

Pickled red Fresno peppers:

Cut the ends off each chili pepper. Insert a small paring knife into the pepper and use a circular motion to cut out the seeds, leaving the pepper's shape intact. Slice the peppers into rings, about 1/8" thick, and place them into a mixing bowl. In a saucepan, combine the water, vinegar, and sugar. Heat the mixture over medium-high heat until the sugar dissolves and the liquid comes to a simmer. Pour the pickling liquid over the peppers. Place a paper towel on top of the peppers and press down to keep all the pepper rings submerged in the liquid. Let sit for 1 hour. Transfer the peppers and the liquid to a container and refrigerate until cool. (Pickled vegetables will hold a long time in the fridge.)

Fried calamari:

Add enough vegetable oil to a small pot to fill it about 3-4" up. Heat the oil over medium heat until it reaches 350°F. Meanwhile, slice the bodies of the squid into ½" rings. Trim the tentacles so they are manageable. Season the squid well with salt



and pepper. Pour the flour into a large mixing bowl. Working in batches, toss the squid in the flour. Shake off any excess flour before carefully placing each piece of squid into the hot oil. Do not overcrowd the pot. Each piece of squid should have a good amount of space to fry. Let the squid fry until it is crispy and cooked through, about 1 minute. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the calamari to a paper-towel lined sheet tray. Season the calamari with salt immediately while each batch is still hot. Repeat this process until all the calamari is fried.

To serve:

Serve the fried calamari with a squeeze of lemon, a pinch of lemon zest, the pickled red Fresno peppers on top, and a side of warm marinara sauce for dipping.

Kayla's Notes

Do not cover the calamari while the rest of it fries. Covering it will essentially steam it, making the crispy exterior go to mush. Keep the calamari uncovered, and if you have to warm it before serving, remove the paper towels from the sheet tray and pop it in the oven for a minute or two, just enough time to heat through.