

SOUTH FLORIDA SunSentinel

Who serves the best fried chicken in South Florida? The votes are in, and the winner is ...



The Cook and the Cork's KFC (Korean Fried Chicken) dish consists of an organic boneless breast and thigh, with wasabi mashed potatoes, cucumber kimchee and Asian slaw. (Mike Stocker/South Florida Sun Sentinel)

We asked, and you answered ... by the flocks.

As part of our new Best of South Florida Dining feature, the Sun Sentinel this month asked readers to nominate restaurants that serve the best, crispiest, juiciest fried chicken in Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties.

In short order, we started receiving entries that ran the gamut from fast-food chains and grocery stores to casual eateries and high-end restaurants, and we narrowed the list to the top five vote-getters.

The finalists were (in no particular order):

- Fran's Chicken Haven, Boca Raton
- The Cook and The Cork, Coral Springs
- Publix Super Markets, various locations
- Joe's Stone Crab (Miami Beach)
- Harold's Shrimp & Chicken (Miami Beach)

And the winner is ... drum(stick) roll, please ... The Cook and The Cork in Coral Springs!

The details

Since opening the restaurant a decade ago at 9890 W. Sample Road, husband-and-wife co-owners Keith Blauschild (also the executive chef) and Dena Lowell Blauschild have been creating a mix of American and global flavors for their from-scratch menu. (The couple also run [Parkland Chef Catering](#), which they founded in 2006 to serve corporate and private clients.)

Readers raved about the restaurant's KFC dish (Korean Fried Chicken; \$28), an organic boneless breast and thigh, with wasabi mashed potatoes, cucumber kimchee and Asian slaw. Also on the menu are snacks, salads, small plates, entrees, vegetable sides and desserts that incorporate regional produce, seafood, meats and ingredients from all over the world. The drink list offers wine, sake, cocktails and craft beer.

Dena Lowell Blauschild said she hopes being named the best place for fried chicken will bring new diners in to try The Cook and The Cork. She said it has been a challenge to get people to venture west to visit their restaurant in the suburbs, but "we know they will be happy when they do!" "It's a wonderful feeling to be recognized and appreciated," she said. "We all work very hard and love what we do."



What makes it special

His fried chicken recipe has evolved since opening The Cook and The Cork, Keith Blauschild said, “and probably (over) most of my life, since graduating from The Culinary Institute of America.

“My quest for the perfect fried chicken doesn’t end,” he added. “Nothing satisfied my craving for crispy, juicy perfection like creating a better version and learning from it as I experimented.”

For this dish, he starts with Bell & Evans organic dark and light meat, without bones, and dips the pieces in a traditional

Southern-style buttermilk before dredging them in a flour-and-spice blend. Then, they’re fried until golden crispy.

“I like that we include boneless dark meat and white meat on the plate, so you can get the subtle differences of both cuts,” he said.

The inspiration came from a variety of coatings used on different styles of fried chicken — Japanese Karaage (potato starch), American Southern (wheat flour) and Korean (cornstarch and wheat flour blend).

“I use a combination of all these ingredients in the coating and serve it with my version of a hot honey, which is gochujang, fermented Korean soy paste, in a sweet syrup,” he said. “The fried chicken itself is not spicy. In fact, kids love it!”

In fact, many readers love it.

“It has crunch, heat, spice and sweetness — what a great combination,” reader Al Senter wrote in his nomination form.

Readers also commented on the sides, which Keith Blauschild said pay homage to Korean banchan (traditional small side dishes): wasabi-flavored mashed potatoes, crunchy cucumber kimchee and a rice wine vinegar-based slaw.

In his nomination, Rey More called the dish’s accompanying elements “a perfect complement” to the “perfect crispness and juiciness.”

The Cook and The Cork is at 9890 W. Sample Road, Coral Springs. For more information, call 954-227-2665, email RES@TheCookandCork.com or visit thecookandthecork.com.



Co-owner and executive chef Keith Blauschild displays the fried chicken dish that earned his restaurant, The Cook and The Cork in Coral Springs, recognition for the best fried chicken in South Florida. (Mike Stocker/South Florida Sun Sentinel)