Smoke on Her Lips

Brown-Butter Chicken Bacon Ranch Farfalle



Smoke on Her Lips

Brown-Butter Chicken Bacon Ranch Farfalle

Golden-seared chicken, smoky bacon, and farfalle in brown-butter garlic ranch cream sauce with white cheddar and Parmesan.

Chicken & bacon

8 oz thick-cut smoked bacon, chopped

1 1/2 lb boneless, skinless chicken breasts

1 tsp smoked paprika; 1 tsp garlic powder

1/2 tsp onion powder; 1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper

1/4 tsp fine salt; 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper

2 tsp liquid smoke, for the chicken

1 tbsp neutral oil, only if needed

Pasta & sauce

16 oz dry farfalle

2 tsp fine salt, for approximately 4 quarts pasta water

3 tbsp unsalted butter

1 small shallot, finely diced (about 1/3 cup)

5 garlic cloves, minced; 1 tbsp all-purpose flour

3/4 cup low-sodium chicken broth; 1 1/2 cups half-and-half

2 tbsp dry ranch seasoning, divided (not dip mix)

2 tsp liquid smoke, for the sauce

1 tbsp Italian seasoning

1/2 tsp dried dill; 1/2 tsp freshly ground black pepper

4 oz white cheddar, freshly shredded; 2 oz Parmesan, freshly grated

1 tsp fresh lemon juice, plus up to 1 tsp more to taste

2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley; 2 tbsp sliced chives or scallion greens

1 cup reserved pasta water; use as needed

Method

1. Prepare the chicken

Slice 1 1/2 lb chicken breasts horizontally into cutlets approximately 1/2 inch thick. Pat dry. Season with 1 tsp smoked paprika, 1 tsp garlic powder, 1/2 tsp onion powder, 1/2 tsp black pepper, 1/4 tsp fine salt, and 1/4 tsp cayenne. Add 2 tsp liquid smoke to the chicken.

2. Render the bacon

Place 8 oz chopped bacon in a cold, wide skillet. Cook over medium-low heat for 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until crisp. Transfer to a paper-towel-lined plate. Reserve 2 tbsp bacon grease for the chicken; pour off the rest.

3. Sear the chicken

Heat the reserved 2 tbsp bacon grease over medium-high heat. Cook chicken in batches for approximately 3-5 minutes per side, until golden and the thickest part reaches 165 F. Add up to 1 tbsp neutral oil only if the pan becomes dry. Transfer to a plate, rest 5 minutes, then slice into bite-size pieces.

4. Cook the pasta

Bring approximately 4 quarts water to a boil with 2 tsp fine salt. Add 16 oz farfalle and cook until just al dente according to its package. Reserve 1 cup pasta water, then drain without rinsing. Time this so the pasta finishes near the sauce.

5. Build the brown-butter base

Pour off excess skillet grease, leaving a thin film and golden chicken fond. Remove blackened bits. Reduce heat to medium-low and add 3 tbsp unsalted butter. Stir until milk solids turn amber and smell toasted, approximately 2-4 minutes. Immediately add 1/3 cup diced shallot; cook 2-3 minutes, stirring. Add 5 minced garlic cloves; cook 30 seconds. Stir in 1 tbsp flour; cook 1 minute.

6. Make the ranch cream sauce

Slowly whisk in 3/4 cup low-sodium chicken broth, scraping up the fond. Gradually whisk in 1 1/2 cups half-and-half, then 1 1/2 tbsp ranch seasoning, 1/2 tsp dried dill, 1/2 tsp black pepper, 2 tsp liquid smoke, and 1 tbsp Italian seasoning. Gently simmer 3-5 minutes, stirring, until lightly thickened. Keep bubbling gentle.

7. Melt the cheeses

Turn heat to its lowest setting. Gradually stir in 4 oz shredded white cheddar and 2 oz grated Parmesan, a handful at a time, until smooth. If bubbling, take the pan off the heat before adding cheese. Taste before adding the remaining 1/2 tbsp ranch seasoning; use only if a stronger ranch finish is needed. Bacon, ranch seasoning, and cheese already contribute substantial salt.

8. Bring it together

Fold in the cooked pasta, sliced chicken, accumulated chicken juices, and half the cooked bacon. Add 1/4 cup reserved pasta water; toss gently over low heat for 1-2 minutes. Add more pasta water 2 tbsp at a time until the sauce generously coats the pasta and moves easily in the pan. Leave it slightly loose; it thickens as it stands.

9. Finish and serve

Remove from heat. Stir in 1 tsp lemon juice, 2 tbsp parsley, and 1 tbsp chives or scallion greens. Taste; add up to 1 tsp more lemon juice only if needed. Top with the remaining bacon and remaining 1 tbsp chives or scallion greens. Serve immediately.

Optional broccoli

Fold in 2 cups cooked, well-drained broccoli florets during Step 8.