The Best Italian-Style Fried Calamari

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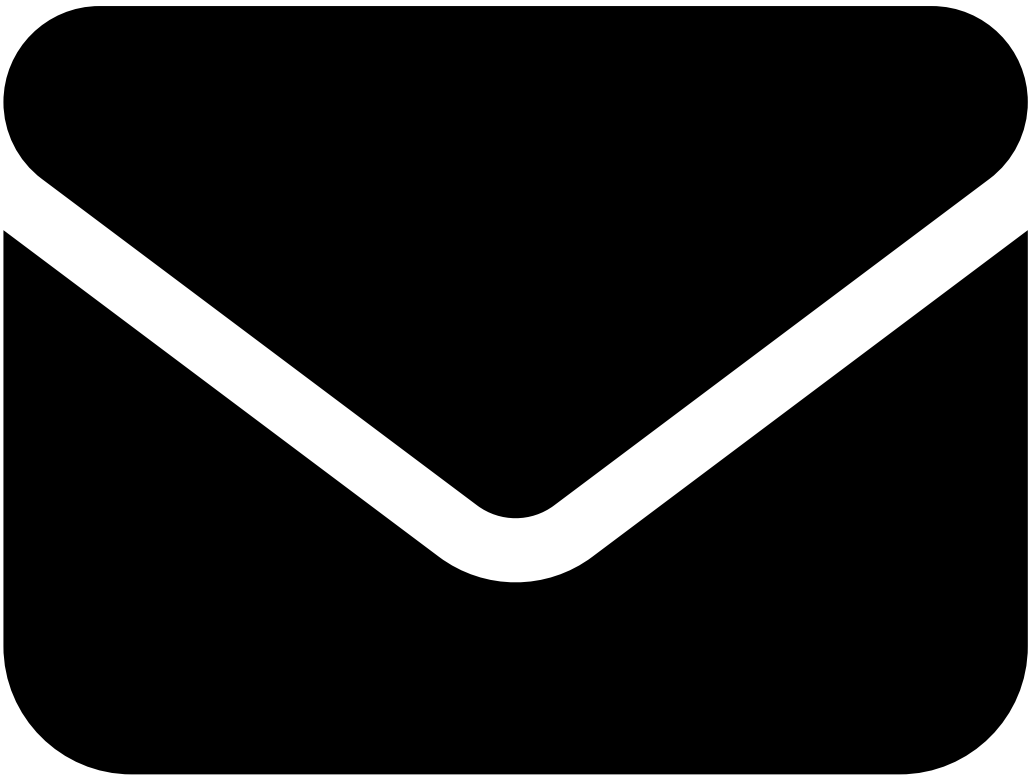




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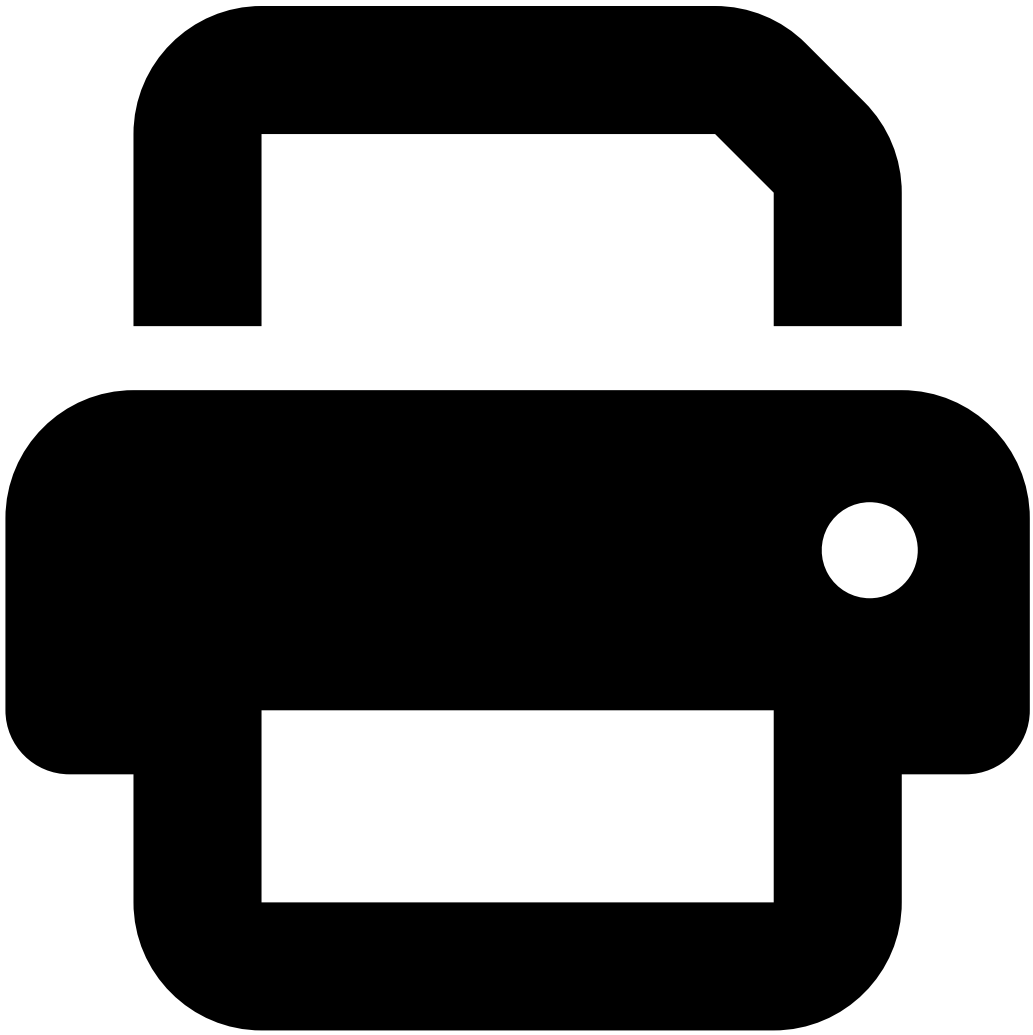

Growing up, fried calamari was a true family affair. My mama always bought whole squid and cleaned every single one by hand — separating the tentacles, pulling out the quill, and rinsing everything until it was spotless. I can still see her at the sink, humming while she worked, making sure each ring would fry up perfectly tender.

These days, we're lucky. Most grocery stores and fish markets sell **calamari already cleaned** — tubes and tentacles prepped and ready to slice. And while nothing beats the love and tradition of doing it the old-school way, I'll be the first to admit that buying it cleaned makes this recipe come together in minutes instead of an hour.

Fried calamari has also always been a cherished part of our **Feast of the Seven Fishes** celebration — that beloved Italian Christmas Eve tradition where the table overflows with seafood. Whether you make this dish once a year for the feast

or all year long for your family, this recipe brings that same crisp, golden bite we all grew up loving.

Whether you're using ready-to-cook calamari or honoring the way our mamas did it, this classic Italian fried calamari delivers that same crisp, golden bite we all grew up loving.

Things to know about this Best Italian-Style Fried Calamari

- **Dry calamari = crisp calamari.**
  Pat the rings and tentacles *really* well with paper towels. Any moisture will make the coating soggy and cause the oil to splatter.

- **The flour mix matters.**
  A 50/50 blend of all-purpose flour and semolina gives that classic Italian trattoria crunch. Semolina helps the coating stay light instead of heavy or bready.

- **Keep the oil hot.**
  The magic temperature is **350–365°F**. If the oil drops too low, the calamari absorbs oil and turns greasy. Fry in small batches to keep the heat consistent.

- **Fast frying keeps it tender.**
  Calamari only needs **1½–2 minutes** in the oil. Any longer and it becomes chewy. Pull it out the moment it turns light golden.

- **Season immediately.**
  Sprinkle with a little salt right after frying — it sticks better while the calamari is still hot.

- **Serve right away.**
  Fried calamari is best eaten fresh from the fryer. It doesn't stay crisp long, so have your lemon wedges and marinara ready before you start cooking.

- If you love this crispy Italian fried calamari, don’t miss my other seafood favorites!

  Try my **Shrimp Oreganata**, , and **Shrimp Stuffed Calamari Steaks** for more Italian coastal flavors. And if you make this recipe, tag me on Instagram—I love seeing your kitchen creations!

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This crispy fried calamari recipe delivers tender squid with a light, golden coating that's perfectly seasoned and irresistibly crunchy. Served with fresh lemon wedges and marinara sauce, it's an easy Italian seafood appetizer that's perfect for entertaining, holidays, or a restaurant-quality meal at home.

- 1½ pounds **calamari**, cleaned, **rings + tentacles**
- 1 cup **all-purpose flour**
- 1 cup **semolina flour**
- 1 tsp **kosher salt**, plus more for finishing
- 1 tsp **black pepper**
- ½ tsp **paprika** (optional, for color)
- 1 tsp **garlic powder**

- **Oil for frying** (peanut or light olive oil)
- **Lemon wedges**, for serving
- **Marinara**, for dipping

1. **Prep the calamari**

   Slice tubes into ½-inch rings. Pat rings **and tentacles** completely dry with paper towels.(Drying is key for crispness!)

2. **Make the coating**

   In a shallow bowl, whisk together: 1 cup all-purpose flour, 1 cup semolina flour, Salt, pepper, paprika, and garlic powder

3. **Heat the oil**

   Pour oil into a heavy pot or deep skillet about 2 inches deep.Heat to **350–365°F**.

4. **Coat the calamari**

   Toss the rings and tentacles in the flour–semolina mixture until lightly coated.Shake off excess.

5. **Fry in batches**

   Add calamari in small batches so the oil temperature stays stable.Fry **1½–2 minutes**—just until pale golden.(Over-frying = chewy.)

6. **Drain & season**

   Transfer to a paper towel–lined tray and sprinkle immediately with a pinch of salt.

7. **Serve**

   Enjoy hot with lemon wedges and marinara.

Appetizer
Italian
Best Fried Calamari Recipe