



Jerk Chicken

From *America's Test Kitchen* Season 13: Spicing Up the Grill

WHY THIS RECIPE WORKS:

Traditional Jamaican jerk recipes rely on island ingredients for both marinade and cooking technique. Fortunately, we were able to achieve the characteristic spicy-sweet-fresh-smoky balance with the right combination of stateside staples. Keeping the marinade paste-like and cooking the meat first over indirect heat prevented the jerk flavors from dripping or peeling off during grilling. Enhancing our hickory chip packet with a few spice-cabinet ingredients allowed our jerk chicken recipe to mimic the unique smoke of authentic pimento wood.

Serves 4

For a milder dish, use one seeded chile. If you prefer your food very hot, use up to all three chiles including their seeds and ribs. Scotch bonnet chiles can be used in place of the habaneros. Wear gloves when working with the chiles.

INGREDIENTS

Jerk Marinade

- 1 1/2** tablespoons whole coriander seeds
- 1** tablespoon whole allspice berries
- 1** tablespoon whole peppercorns
- 1 - 3** habanero chiles, stemmed, quartered, and seeds and ribs reserved, if using
- 8** scallions, chopped
- 6** garlic cloves, peeled
- 3** tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2** tablespoons soy sauce
- 2** tablespoons finely grated lime zest (3 limes), plus lime wedges for serving
- 2** tablespoons yellow mustard
- 1** tablespoon dried thyme
- 1** tablespoon ground ginger
- 1** tablespoon packed brown sugar
- 2 1/4** teaspoons salt
- 2** teaspoons dried basil
- 1/2** teaspoon dried rosemary
- 1/2** teaspoon ground nutmeg

Chicken

- 3** pounds bone-in chicken pieces (split breasts cut in half, drumsticks, and/or thighs)
- 2** tablespoons whole allspice berries
- 2** tablespoons dried thyme
- 2** tablespoons dried rosemary
- 2** tablespoons water
- 1** cup wood chips, soaked in water for 15 minutes and drained

INSTRUCTIONS

1. FOR THE JERK MARINADE: Grind coriander seeds, allspice berries, and peppercorns in spice grinder or mortar and pestle until coarsely ground. Transfer spices to blender jar. Add habanero(s), scallions, garlic, oil, soy sauce, lime zest, mustard, thyme, ginger, brown sugar, salt, basil, rosemary, and nutmeg and process until smooth paste forms, 1 to 3 minutes, scraping down sides as necessary. Transfer marinade to gallon-size zipper-lock bag.

2. FOR THE CHICKEN: Place chicken pieces in bag with marinade and toss to coat; press out as much air as possible and seal bag. Let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes while preparing grill, flipping bag after 15 minutes. (Marinated chicken can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours.)

3. Combine allspice berries, thyme, rosemary, and water in bowl and set aside to moisten for 15 minutes. Using large piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil, wrap soaked chips and moistened allspice mixture in foil packet and cut several vent holes in top.

4A. FOR A CHARCOAL GRILL: Open bottom vent halfway. Arrange 1 quart unlit charcoal briquettes in single layer over half of grill. Light large chimney starter one-third filled with charcoal briquettes (2 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over unlit briquettes, keeping coals arranged over half of grill. Place wood chip packet on coals. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent halfway. Heat grill until hot and wood chips are smoking, about 5 minutes.

4B. FOR A GAS GRILL: Place wood chip packet over primary burner. Turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot and wood chips begin to smoke, 15 to 25 minutes. Turn primary burner to medium and turn off other burner(s).

5. Clean and oil cooking grate. Place chicken, with marinade clinging and skin side up, as far away from fire as possible, with thighs closest to fire and breasts furthest away. Cover (positioning lid vent over chicken if using charcoal) and cook for 30 minutes.

6. Move chicken, skin side down, to hotter side of grill; cook until browned and skin renders, 3 to 6 minutes. Using tongs, flip chicken pieces and cook until browned on second side and breasts register 160 degrees and thighs/drumsticks register 175 degrees, 5 to 12 minutes longer.

7. Transfer chicken to serving platter, tent loosely with foil, and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature with lime wedges.

TECHNIQUE

WOOD CHIP PACKET WITH A JAMAICAN ACCENT

The delicately fragrant, herby smoke of pimento wood is a fundamental element of jerk flavor. We weren't about to mail-order the hard-to-find timber every time we got a craving, but with a little help from our spice cabinet, we came up with a pretty close imitation.



Authentic Source

In Jamaica, the wood and leaves of the pimento (aka allspice) tree produce a distinctly sweet, fresh, herbal smoke.

HOME GROWN APPROACH**Homegrown Approach**

To replicate that profile, we add allspice berries, dried thyme, and rosemary to hickory chips.
