

Pepper-Lime Dipping Sauce (Tuk Meric)

Start to finish: 10 minutes

Makes about ½ cup

IN CAMBODIA, the tangy, salty, peppery dipping sauce called tuk meric typically is paired with the beef stir-fry loc lac, but we find that it goes equally well with simply seasoned and grilled steak or shrimp (see recipes below), as well as chicken and vegetables. Toasting the peppercorns in a dry skillet until lightly smoking brings out their pleasantly sharp flavor, enhances their spicy aroma and slightly crisps their texture.

Don't use preground pepper, even if coarsely ground. Start with whole peppercorns and make sure they are fresh, then use a mortar and pestle to coarsely crack them. Pulsing in a spice grinder works, too, but yields an inconsistent texture.

— COURTNEY HILL

- ¼ cup black peppercorns, coarsely cracked
- ¼ cup lime juice
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons packed light brown sugar

▪ **In a small skillet** over medium, toast the peppercorns, stirring often, until fragrant and lightly smoking, 2 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl. Add the lime juice, salt and sugar, then whisk until the sugar and salt dissolve.

Grilled Cilantro-Lime Skirt Steak

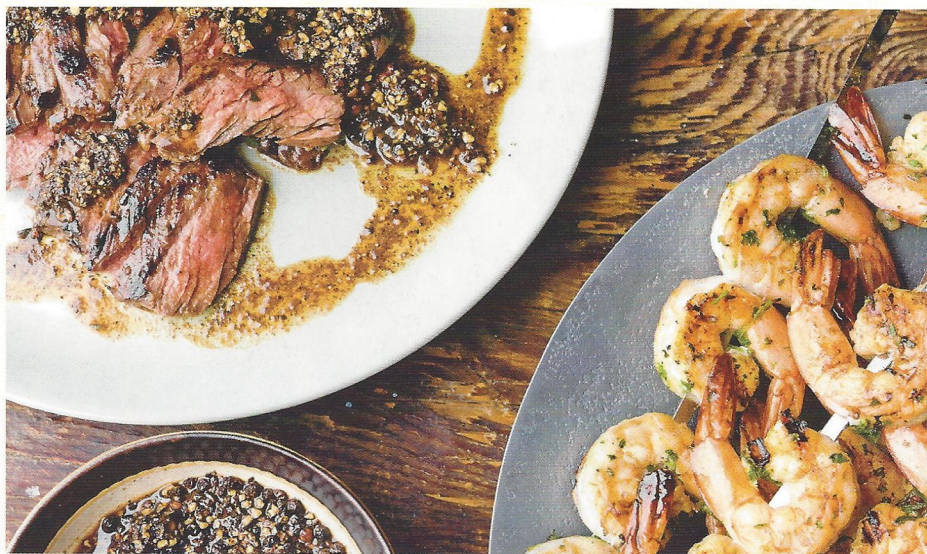
Start to finish: 20 minutes, plus grill prep

Servings: 4

CILANTRO, FISH SAUCE and lime zest team up to quickly flavor grilled skirt steak. The saltiness of the steak pairs perfectly with pepper-lime dipping sauce. Grate the zest from the same limes you will juice to make the pepper-lime sauce for serving.

Don't allow the skirt steak to marinate for longer than an hour. The fish sauce will make the meat too salty.

— COURTNEY HILL



Cambodia's pepper-lime sauce pairs as well with shrimp as it does with grilled skirt steak.

- ½ cup finely chopped fresh cilantro
- ¼ cup fish sauce
- 2 tablespoons grapeseed or other neutral oil
- 1 tablespoon grated lime zest
- 2 teaspoons packed light brown sugar
- 1½ pounds beef skirt steak, trimmed, patted dry and cut with the grain into 3 pieces

▪ **In a small bowl**, stir together the cilantro, fish sauce, oil, zest and sugar. Place the steak in a large baking dish and pour the cilantro mixture over the pieces, turning to coat. Refrigerate while preparing the grill.

▪ **Prepare a charcoal or gas grill** for high-heat cooking. For a charcoal grill, ignite a large chimney of coals, let burn until lightly ashed over, then distribute evenly over one side of the grill bed; open the bottom grill vents. For a gas grill, turn half the burners to high. Heat the grill, covered, for 5 to 10 minutes, then clean and oil the cooking grate.

▪ **When the grill is ready**, pat the steak dry with paper towels and place on the hot side of the grill. Cook, uncovered, until lightly charred on both sides and the center of the thickest

piece reaches 125°F for medium-rare, 4 to 6 minutes total, flipping once halfway through. Transfer to a plate and let rest for 10 minutes.

▪ **Cut the steak** with the grain into 2-inch-wide pieces, then thinly slice each piece on the diagonal against the grain. Serve with pepper-lime dipping sauce.

Grilled Shrimp Variation

SUBSTITUTE 1½ pounds extra-large shrimp (21-25 per pound), peeled, deveined and patted dry, for the beef. Skewering them in a C shape, thread the shrimp onto eight 8- to 10-inch metal skewers. Place the skewers in a large baking dish. Prepare the cilantro marinade as for the beef, then pour over the shrimp, turning them to coat. Refrigerate while preparing the grill as for the steak. Grill the skewers until the shrimp turn opaque and are lightly charred, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip and continue to cook until the shrimp are just opaque, another 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer the skewers to a serving plate and serve with the pepper-lime dipping sauce. ♦