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Every year about this time I receive a well traveled email from at least one friend about men and grilling. In a nut shell, the story recounts the division of labor that exists between men and women at a summer cook-out. Women invite the guests, plan the menu, do the shopping, fix the appetizers, make the barbecue sauce, potato salad and coleslaw, bake the brownies, set the table and arrange the flowers. On the other hand, midway through the party, men grab the perfectly marinated meat, tongs and a long handled fork, take a leisurely stroll over to the grill and cook. Depending on how you like your steak, they're done in about ten minutes.

Now I know that lots of men do more than periodically work the grill. Some do a lot more. So if this particular division of labor doesn't sound familiar, thank your lucky stars. Still and all, in households far and wide, cooking inside is women's work and the grill is a male-only domain. Myth or reality, it's widely believed that all men love to grill.



I've done a bit of research on the subject. The commonly-held but not necessarily proven theory suggests that grilling attracts men because fire is involved. And fire equals danger. Any task where there is even a remote chance that a large tree or the garage could burn down, well, that is a task just begging for a manly man. As far as I'm concerned, it's a good story and I'm sticking to it. Let the men get all stinky from the smoky grill. I'm busy enough getting everything else on the table. Over the years most if not all of my male friends and family have graciously jumped in to take a turn or two at the grill. So far it's worked out pretty well. I have yet to lose a single tree or garage.

Knowing that there is strength in numbers, I generally look for a few volunteers. There may be a fleeting moment of hesitation but, before you know it, most if not all the men drift over to the grill. It's a great ice-breaker and gives them a chance to swap stories and lies, talk sports and do a little male bonding. Whether you have a new in-law or your party includes a shy friend, hand them a beer, a pair of tongs and a rack of ribs. They will fit in just fine with the rest of the grill masters. Before you know it everyone will be best buddies.

But, and that's a big BUT, before you hand over the tongs, a few words of warning:

Many, dare I say most, men have an uncanny desire to play with their food. It doesn't matter whether it is chicken, chops, beef or fish; they can't stop themselves from poking, prodding and haphazardly flipping. Don't let them. With each poke, a bit of the juices escape. The more they poke, the tougher and drier your dinner will get until you might as well serve an old shoe. To get a good sear, flip the meat or fish once and only once. (There are a few exceptions to this one flip rule but not enough to worry about. At least not until your manly man decides to cook a twelve pound rib roast or twenty pound turkey on the grill. Then again, maybe you can convince him to wait until fall and cook it inside!)

And finally, if you use a gas grill, never, ever assume that your manly helpers will think to turn it off when they have finished cooking.

Enjoy a wonderful summer full of cook-outs with family, friends and manly men,

Have a wonderful summer and bon appétit!



Tandoori Chicken

Add a little Indian spice to your next cookout with Tandoori Chicken. Enjoy!

Serves 4

2 tablespoons olive oil
 1/2 onion, roughly chopped
 3-4 cloves garlic
 1 inch piece ginger, roughly chopped
 1 teaspoon chopped jalapeno pepper
 1 tablespoon paprika
 2 teaspoons curry powder
 1 teaspoon cumin
 1 teaspoon ground coriander
 1 teaspoon salt
 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
 Grated zest of 1 lime
 1/2 cup plain yogurt
 About 1 1/2 pounds skinless, boneless chicken breast
 Garnish: cilantro leaves and lime wedges

In a blender or small food processor, combine the oil, onion, garlic, ginger and jalapeno and process until smooth. Add the spices, lime zest and yogurt and process until smooth and well-combined. Let the mixture sit for 15-30 minutes to combine the flavors.

Put the chicken in a bowl, add the yogurt marinade and turn to coat evenly. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours or overnight, turning occasionally.

Pre-heat the grill to medium high.

Reduce the heat to medium and grill until the chicken is cooked through, about 3-5 minutes per side or until it registers 160 degrees on an instant read thermometer. Don't overcook!

Remove from the grill, let the chicken rest for 5-10 minutes and slice. Serve garnished with cilantro leaves and lime wedges.



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