**Home Page:**

Barbecue in New Orleans has always been a work in progress. The same could be said of the restaurants that have carried our local barbecue scene firmly into the realm of respectability.

Ten years ago, New Orleans wasn't exactly a barbecue backwater, but it boasted just a handful of solid options for this great southern culinary expression. When it comes to food, particularly southern food, New Orleans is used to ranking higher than that.

Thing is, New Orleans doesn't reside in what you would call Barbecue Country. We don't have the deep traditions for smoked meat that fuels tourism in Texas, Tennessee and the Carolinas. We have different culinary traditions, much of them having to do with cooking things that used to swim.

Today, however, New Orleans does have some really good barbecue, more so than ever before, and much of the credit for that goes to serious barbecue craftsmen who have grown in both stature and skill before our very eyes. The kinks, however, do still need to be worked out and it is my job to do just that. My job is to go to barbeque restaurants and make good barbeque pitmasters better.

**Reviews:**

Home:

If you don’t already know, my job is to go to barbeque restaurants in New Orleans and make good barbeque pitmasters better in six weeks. I travel all over New Orleans looking for the people who need my help the most. In some cases, the pitmasters really do their best work and turn out some barbecue that’s ten times better than what it was. Other times, they just don’t get anywhere. The students that turn out the best of the best, though, are given the title of awarded pitmaster. Here is where you get to hear those stories, as well as hear about which restaurants are the best to go to get your barbecue fix, what tools are best for getting that barbecue cooked, and just some great tips for making any good pitmaster, better.

Helped Restaurants:

Rustik Jones

The first pitmaster I ever worked with was a man named Rustik Jones. He could cook any rack of ribs to perfection, but his brisket and salmon, were a flop. I would work with him for several hours in a day teaching him how to make a brisket work, but it just wouldn’t click. The Salmon he got better at within the first week, but the brisket, we were still working on by week four. Finally, in the last week of cooking, I looked at him and said, “Rustik, I don’t know what to do with you. Every other piece of your barbecue is good, you baste it right, use the right rubs, and even keep the right temperature the whole time. Why is it that you can’t cook a good brisket?” Rustik just shrugged and said, “No idea.” That week he closed his restaurant and devoted all his time to making briskets. I, of course, had to play judge and instructor. After chowing my way through enough meat to make a carnivore sick, Rustik pulled out the final brisket of our career together, and I knew; It was exactly what I had been trying to teach him how to do for the past two months.

“How’d you do it?” I asked him.

“I picked out my own damn meat,” he said.

Beaver Drearier

Beaver Drearier is the owner and pitmaster of The Pig’s Drearier in downtown New Orleans. When I cam across his restaurant, I thought I had stepped into hog heaven. There were beautiful smells of smoked meats and spicy sausages coming from the kitchen. When I got my sausage and smoked ham though, I was not impressed. It was over spiced, the meat was tough, and the ham barely tasted as if it had been smoked at all. When I started working with Beaver, he showed no competency at all when handling the meats. We had to start from square one. By the end of week two, he could pick out the right meat for the job (I learned to teach this as step one after working with Rustik Jones). At week four, he could marinade, baste or rub down his meats to perfection. Week six, we were still working on not opening the grill before the meat was ready. After some thought, I decided to extend my time with him to help him out on this particular subject. Finally, by the time three months had rolled around, he was capable of making decent barbecue.

I have visited since I first helped Beaver make decent barbecue and he has improved exponentially. I would recommend his restaurant to anyone I know. It’s also fun to go just so you can say you’ve been to The Pig’s Drearier and watch the funny looks you’ll get.

Simeon Jet

Simeon Jet is a pitmaster from South Carolina bringing his best to New Orleans. He is the owner of Hog Heaven. The little restaurant lies on the outskirts of town and boasts heaps of different kinds of wood for all kinds of smoking. When I came across him, he could cook the best darn meat you ever put in your mouth, but never, ever, ever, I mean never, could you eat any rubs or sauces he put on his meats. Almost all of them tasted like a chemical experiment gone wrong. The worst part was that when I pointed this out to him, he said that’s how it was supposed to taste and he challenged me to a cook-off. I hemmed and hawed and told him it wouldn’t be fair, but, in the end, I graciously accepted. The next week, we had a barbecue show down in which several of Simeon’s family members came to help and many of my previous students came to judge. The meat was laid in front of the judges and not thirty minutes later, Simeon’s sauces and rubs were deemed disgusting. He stopped off in a huff. A few weeks later, though, I got a call. Simeon’s business was running into the ground and he needed the help, bad. Everyone was referring him to me, so he sucked up his pride and called. I will forever respect him for doing such a thing.

I started teaching him not twenty four hours after that and barely even a week later, he had the best friggin’ barbecue I’ve ever tasted laid down on the tables for all to admire, and eat.

Coming Soon: Robbert Nobbin’s Pitmaster Skills or Scares?

Reviews:

Blue Oak BBQ

 Inside Chickie Wah Wah, 2828 Canal St., New Orleans, 504.822.2583

New Orleans has a rich recent history of serious barbecue flowering inside (or very near) established drinking establishments. Blue Oak, which occupies the small kitchen inside Chickie Wah Wah music club, is at this moment the best of the species. It is particularly adept at marrying the barbecue and bar snack traditions. So go ahead: Order the nachos.

Best 'cue: Beef brisket, smoked housemade sausage, smoked chicken wings.

Best sides: Roasted Brussels sprouts, ginger-sesame slaw.

Hillbilly Bar-B-Q

 2317 Hickory Ave., Harahan, 504.738.1508

Hillbilly was born as a take-out joint inside a cinderblock structure tucked behind a River Ridge bar. In 2011, Kentucky-native Larry Wyatt moved his operation into a markedly more commodious space attached to the Kamp bar in Harahan. His barbecue is as good as ever.

Best 'cue: Beef brisket, chicken, pull pork sandwich

Best sides: Corn salad, cole slaw

The Joint

 701 Mazant St., New Orleans, 504.949.3232

In 2004, Pete and Jenny Breen opened the Joint on Poland Avenue, where it grew into an increasingly inviting if cramped outpost for barbecue. Since moving to Mazant Street in 2012, The Joint has become the best all-around barbecue restaurant in New Orleans. You still have to order at the cash register, but there is table service after that, and the menu, which is solid from top-to-bottom, is now abetted by a full bar. Keep your eyes open for the smoked pastrami, a mid-week special that sells out quickly.

Best 'cue: Pork ribs, beef brisket, smoked sausage sandwich

Best sides: Cole slaw, macaroni and cheese

LA 23 BBQ

9661 Louisiana 23, Belle Chasse, 504.657.3693

LA 23 BBQ backs up to the railroad tracks and levee across the highway from the entrance to the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in Belle Chasse, accounting for the high percentage of customers who arrive in uniform. You might mistake the place for a snowball stand – it's that small – if not for the smoker positioned in front and the chopped hardwood stacked against a nearby shed. Bobby Monsted lll and Aaron Gelfand opened the place after passing the location innumerable times on their way to work as fishing guides in Venice. The Texas-style barbecue is served during lunch only for as long as supplies last, so go early. It would be depressing to miss out on anything LA 23 has to offer. The partners plan to open a bigger restaurant in the same spot in late 2015, early 2016.

Best 'cue: smoked chicken, pork ribs, beef brisket

Best sides: Macaroni and cheese, coleslaw, barbecue beans

McClure's Barbecue

4800 Magazine St., New Orleans, 504.301.2367

By the narrow standards of the barbecue joint form, McClure's covers a lot of ground. It features sauces from all corners of the Barbecue Nation (including Nola East!), tacos, a country take on chicken Cordon Bleu and one of the best cheeseburgers in New Orleans. The smoked meat is still the primary reason to visit. And by the time you read this, you will likely be able to get it at a second location inside the new Nola Brewing Tap Room.

Best 'cue: Pork ribs, beef brisket, smoked sausage sandwich

Best sides: Collard greens, macaroni and cheese

NOLA Smokehouse

739 Jackson Ave., New Orleans, 504.418.2591

Rob Bechtold, a former executive sous chef at K-Paul's, brings a chefly obsession for detail to his bare-bones barbecue place in the Irish Channel. The thin layers of char encasing the sinewy, free-range and natural meats – the pork ribs and brisket as well as the pork butts he pulls apart for sandwiches and platters -- contain worlds of flavor themselves, and the relatively small selection of sides are well crafted. Smoked prime rib nights are set to resume in the fall.

Best 'cue: Burnt ends, pulled pork, smoked sausage

Best sides: Sweet corn spoonbread, barbecue beans

Papa's Backyard Bar-B-Q

2848 Slidell Ave., Slidell, 985.288.5011

Ronald Robinson's Slidell barbecue restaurant doubles as a memorial to his son Ronald Jr., who died in 2010. (See video below). The meat, cooked crisp and fragrant in an indoor, wood-fired smoker, is a fine and poignant tribute. And the meat isn't the only reason to seek out this unassuming, strip mall restaurant off the main drag. The chunky bread pudding, made from sandwich buns, stuffed with chocolate chips and served under a warm rum sauce, should land on your list of favorites.

Best 'cue: Ribs, pulled pork sandwich, smoked chicken wings

Best sides/desserts: Red beans and rice, candied yams, bread pudding

Walker's Southern Style BBQ

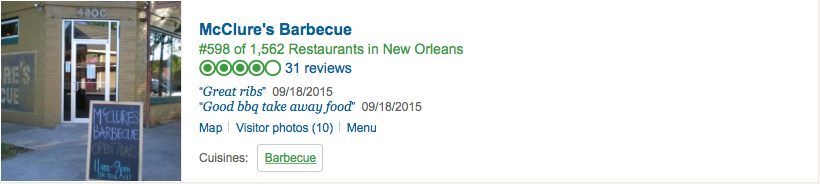
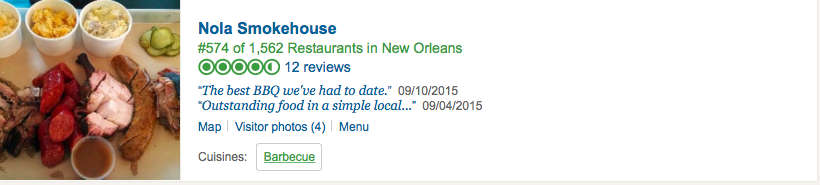
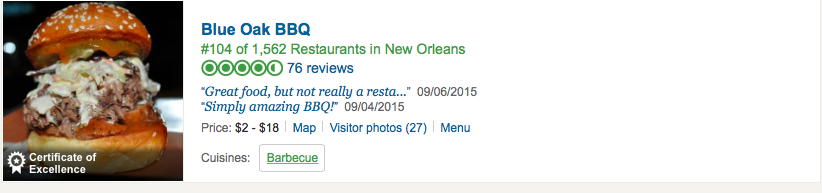
 10828 Hayne Blvd., New Orleans, 504.241.8227

Walker's is home of the cochon de lait po-boy sold at Jazz Fest, which is to say the sandwich that essentially put what might be called "Louisiana-style barbecue" on the map in New Orleans. That great sandwich is essentially pulled pork by another name, and the rest of the smoked meat at this lunch-only barbecue restaurant lives up to its high standard.

Best 'cue: Beef brisket, pork ribs, cochon de lait po-boy

Best sides: Baked beans, mustard greens

Restaurant Ratings:



**Recipes:**

Home:

Barbecue isn’t just a hobby; it’s a way of life. Those of us who cook are loyal to our respective styles, but what about those of us who want to step out of the box to try something new, or who just want to get started in barbecue? Well then, here are a few recipes to get you started. Not only will you be able to learn a few barbecue recipes, but you’ll also get a few easy-to-make recipes for the weekdays when you don’t have time to cook low an’ slow. To top it off, I’ll be including some tips on how to best cook your barbecue and what tools are the best for the job.

Recipes:

Oct 2, 2015

Chicken Apple Sausages with Apple Juice Glaze and Red Sauerkraut

Recipe by Jamie Purviance

Serves: 4 // Prep time: 15 minutes, plus 20 to 30 minutes for the glaze | Grilling time: 8 to 10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

GLAZE

3 cups natural apple juice

½ teaspoon spicy brown mustard (not whole-grain mustard)

SAUERKRAUT

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

⅔ cup cider vinegar

½ teaspoon kosher salt

½ teaspoon caraway seed

½ teaspoon yellow mustard seed

4 teaspoons granulated sugar

½ head red cabbage, about 1 pound, shredded

1 Granny Smith apple, about 7 ounces, peeled, cored, cut into bite-sized pieces

8 fully cooked chicken apple sausages, each cut lengthwise in half

1 Granny Smith apple, about 7 ounces, unpeeled, cored, cut crosswise into four ½-inch slices

Extra-virgin olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS

In a medium saucepan over high heat, bring the apple juice to a boil, stirring occasionally. Continue boiling until the juice is syrupy and reduced to about ⅓ cup, 20 to 30 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the mustard. Set aside. If the glaze hardens before you need to use it, gently reheat it (or keep it warm on a very low burner).

Meanwhile, prepare the sauerkraut. In a large sauté pan over medium-high heat, warm the oil. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the remaining sauerkraut ingredients, except the apple, cover, and cook for 5 minutes. Uncover, stir in the apple, replace lid, and cook for 5 minutes. Uncover, and cook until the sauerkraut is tender and the liquid has been absorbed, 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove from the heat.

Prepare the grill for direct cooking over medium heat (350° to 450°F).

Lightly brush the sausages with oil, and then grill over direct medium heat, with the lid closed, until heated through, about 6 minutes, turning and basing with the glaze two times (don’t use all of the glaze—you will need some to baste the apple slices). Remove from the grill and let rest for 3 to 5 minutes.

Lightly brush the apple slices on both sides with oil, and then grill over direct medium heat, with the lid closed, until slightly softened, 2 to 4 minutes, turning and basting with the glaze once. Serve the sausages warm with sauerkraut and apple slices.

Sep 18, 2015

Fontina Cheeseburgers with Lemon-Herb Mayonnaise

Recipe by Jamie Purviance

Rating: 5 stars

Serves: 4 // Prep time: 20 minutes | Grilling time: 8 to 10 minutes

INGREDIENTS

MAYO

1 cup mayonnaise

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh chives

1½ tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley

2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh thyme leaves

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon freshly grated lemon zest

1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

1½ pounds ground chuck (80% lean)

1 teaspoon kosher salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 large yellow onion, cut crosswise into four ½-inch-thick slices

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided

5 ounces Fontina cheese, thinly sliced

4 Hawaiian sweet sandwich buns, or other soft sandwich buns, split

4 large leaves butter lettuce

INSTRUCTIONS

In a small bowl whisk the mayo ingredients. Cover and refrigerate.

Mix the ground chuck, salt, and pepper, and then gently form four patties of equal size, each about ¾ inch thick. With your thumb or the back of a spoon, make a shallow indentation about 1 inch wide in the center of the patties to prevent them from forming a dome as they cook. Cover and refrigerate the patties until ready to grill.

Prepare the grill for direct cooking over medium-high heat (400° to 500°F).

Lightly brush the onion slices on both sides with oil, and brush the cut side of the buns with oil. Grill the onion slices and the patties over direct medium-high heat, with the lid closed, until the onions are lightly charred on both sides and the patties are cooked to medium doneness (160°F), 8 to 10 minutes, turning once. During the last 30 seconds to 1 minute of grilling time, place the cheese on the patties to melt, and toast the buns, cut side down, over direct heat.

Build each burger on a bun with mayo, a patty, onions, and a lettuce leaf. Serve warm.

Apr 3, 2015

Moroccan-Spiced Leg of Lamb with Herb Butter

Recipe by Jamie Purviance

Serves: 8 to 10 // Prep time: 30 minutes | Marinating time: 2 to 4 hours | Grilling time: 35 to 50 minutes | Special equipment: instant-read thermometer

INGREDIENTS

BUTTER

½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh Italian parsley leaves

2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh mint leaves

2 large garlic cloves, minced

½ teaspoon kosher salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

MARINADE

⅔ cup extra-virgin olive oil

½ cup finely chopped fresh Italian parsley leaves and tender stems

⅓ cup fresh lemon juice

1½ tablespoons kosher salt

1½ tablespoons paprika

2 teaspoons ground cardamom

4 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1½ teaspoons ground cumin

1½ teaspoons ground ginger

1½ teaspoons ground turmeric

1 boneless leg of lamb, about 5 pounds, butterflied and trimmed of excess fat

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine the butter ingredients. Set aside.

Whisk the marinade ingredients. Reserve and set aside one-half of the marinade to use for basting the lamb on the grill. Pour the remaining marinade into a large, resealable plastic bag. Place the lamb inside the bag, press the air out, and seal tightly. Turn the bag to distribute the marinade, place in a bowl, and refrigerate for 2 to 4 hours, turning occasionally. Remove the lamb from the bag and discard the marinade. Allow the lamb to stand at room temperature for 15 to 30 minutes before grilling.

Prepare the grill for direct and indirect cooking over medium heat (350° to 450°F).

Grill the lamb, fat side down, over direct medium heat, with the lid closed, until nicely marked, 10 to 12 minutes. Turn the lamb over and grill for 5 minutes more, basting the lamb with the reserved marinade. Then move the lamb over indirect medium heat and grill, fat side up, with the lid closed, until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the lamb registers 125° to 130°F for medium rare, 20 to 30 minutes more, basting occasionally with the reserved marinade. Remove from the grill and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes.

Cut the lamb across the grain into thin slices. Melt the herb butter, and then drizzle it over the lamb. Serve right away.

Sep 11, 2015

Mustard and Herb-Crusted Pork Tenderloins with Red Grapes

Recipe by Jamie Purviance

Serves: 4 to 6 // Prep time: 20 minutes | Grilling time: 15 to 20 minutes | Special equipment: instant-read thermometer

INGREDIENTS

PASTE

½ cup finely chopped fresh Italian parsley leaves

3 tablespoons stone-ground Dijon mustard

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary leaves

1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh thyme leaves

1 small garlic clove, minced

2 teaspoons kosher salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 pork tenderloins, each 1 to 1¼ pounds, trimmed of excess fat and silver skin

MARINADE

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1 tablespoon olive oil

1½ teaspoons finely chopped fresh thyme leaves

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes

1 pound small red grapes (still on the stem)\*

Rosemary sprigs (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

Combine the paste ingredients, and then rub the paste all over the pork tenderloins. Allow the pork to stand at room temperature for 15 to 30 minutes before grilling.

Prepare the grill for direct cooking over medium heat (350° to 450°F).

In a medium bowl whisk the marinade ingredients. If the grapes are in one large, dense clump, cut them apart into smaller bunches for more uniform grilling. Add the grapes to the bowl and turn to coat them with the marinade.

Grill the pork over direct medium heat, with the lid closed, until the outsides are evenly seared and an instant-read thermometer inserted into the center reads 145˚F, 15 to 20 minutes, turning two or three times. During the last 8 to 10 minutes of grilling time, lift the grapes from the vinegar mixture, reserving the marinade, and grill them over direct medium heat, until lightly charred and just beginning to burst, turning once. Remove the pork and the grapes from the grill. Let the pork rest for 3 to 5 minutes.

Using kitchen shears, snip the grapes into small clusters for easier serving. Return the grapes to the marinade and gently stir to coat with any residual marinade. Cut the pork crosswise into ½-inch slices and drizzle with any accumulated juices. Serve warm with the grapes, and garnished with rosemary sprigs if desired. Note: Choose small grapes, as the larger ones take much longer to grill and end up a bit mushy.

Neely's Wet BBQ Ribs

Total Time:

10 hr 25 min

Prep:

25 min

Inactive:

4 hr

Cook:

6 hr

Yield:4 servings

Level:Easy

Ingredients

Sauce:

32 ounces ketchup

16 ounces water

6 ounces brown sugar

6 ounces white sugar

1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper

1 tablespoon onion powder

1 tablespoon dry mustard powder

2 ounces lemon juice

2 ounces Worcestershire sauce

8 ounces apple cider vinegar

2 ounces light corn syrup

3 to 4 pounds spare ribs

2 ounces Neely's Seasoning Mix, recipe follows

Neely's Seasoning Mix:

4 ounces paprika

2 ounces sugar

1 teaspoon onion powder

ADD CHECKED ITEMS TO GROCERY LIST

Directions

Watch how to make this recipe.

Sauce:

Combine all of the sauce ingredients in a stockpot or large Dutch oven. Bring to a boil over high heat, stirring frequently to prevent sticking. Reduce temperature to low and simmer, uncovered, for at least 30 minutes. Meanwhile, trim the spare ribs, removing the upper brisket bone and any excess fat; this will produce a St. Louis-style rib. Rinse the ribs and season with Neely's Seasoning, and then cover and refrigerate for 4 to 12 hours.

Indirect cooking in a barbecue pit is recommended to prevent burning. Cook at 250 degrees F (curled side of ribs facing up) for the first 3 hours, and then increase the temperature to 300 degrees F for the final 3 hours. Baste the ribs only during the last 30 minutes of cooking to prevent sauce from burning.

Neely's Seasoning Mix:

Mix all ingredients together in a bowl.

Pat's Smoked Pork Chops

Total Time:

4 hr 25 min

Prep:

15 min

Inactive:

3 hr

Cook:

1 hr 10 min

Yield:4 servings

Level:Easy

Ingredients

4 tablespoon salt

2 tablespoons freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons dark brown sugar

2 tablespoons ground thyme

2 tablespoons onion powder

1 tablespoon cayenne pepper

4 center cut, bone-in pork chops

Special equipment: applewood chips, soaked for 1 hour

Buttermilk BBQ Sauce:

1 cup apple cider

1 tablespoon brown sugar

1/2 cup Neely's BBQ sauce, or store-bought BBQ sauce

1 tablespoon buttermilk

ADD CHECKED ITEMS TO GROCERY LIST

Directions

Watch how to make this recipe.

Mix salt, black pepper, brown sugar, thyme, onion powder and cayenne together in a small bowl. Rub pork chops with the spice mixture. Wrap and place in refrigerator for a few hours.

Set up your grill/smoker for indirect heat at 275 degrees F., using charcoal and add a handful of the soaked apple wood chips onto the coals.

Place pork chops on the grill. Close grill and maintain a temperature of 275 degrees F, adding more charcoal and chips, as necessary. Let smoke for 1 hour and 10 minutes, until the pork chops are firm to the touch. Transfer to serving plates and serve with the BBQ sauce.

Buttermilk BBQ Sauce:

In a medium saucepan over medium-low heat, add the apple cider and brown sugar and stir to combine. Allow to reduce for 25 minutes. Reduce the heat to low, pour in the BBQ sauce and stir well. Once sauce has warmed, turn off the heat. Add buttermilk and stir to incorporate. Serve over pork chops.

Recipe courtesy of The Neelys

Sweet Cola Ribs

Total Time:

15 hr 10 min

Prep:

15 min

Inactive:

12 hr

Cook:

2 hr 55 min

Yield:4 servings

Level:Easy

Ingredients

Sweet Cola Barbecue Sauce:

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 medium onion, finely chopped

3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

2 cups ketchup

1 can cola

1/2 cup apple cider vinegar

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1/2 tablespoon fresh ground black pepper

1/2 tablespoon onion powder

1/2 tablespoon ground mustard

1/2 tablespoon lemon juice

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

Dry Rub:

2 tablespoons salt

2 tablespoons brown sugar

2 teaspoons garlic powder

2 teaspoons onion powder

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon chili powder

1 teaspoon black pepper

2 racks pork spare ribs (about 3 pound each)

Directions

Watch how to make this recipe.

For the sauce:

In a medium saucepan, over medium heat, add oil. Once heated, add the onion and garlic and saute until tender. Add all the remaining sauce ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a simmer and cook uncovered, stirring frequently, for 1 hour 15 minutes.

For the dry rub:

Whisk all dry ingredients together in a small bowl. This can be stored up to 6 months in an airtight container.

For the ribs:

Rinse and dry ribs. Place on a clean cutting board, pull off the membrane and trim the ribs of excess fat. Liberally season both sides of the ribs with rub. Wrap ribs with plastic wrap and refrigerate 4 to 12 hours so flavors can permeate.

Preheat grill to 250 degrees F. using hickory and charcoal. Set up your grill for indirect heat.

Place ribs, meatier side down, on the grill away from the coals. Close grill cover. Cook the pork ribs for 1 hour 15 minutes; flipping several times for even cook. \*Coat ribs with Sweet Cola Barbecue Sauce and cook for another 20 minutes.

\*Reserve some of the sauce for dipping when the ribs are served.

Recipe courtesy of The Neelys

Texas Brisket

Total Time:

9 hr 50 min

Prep:

20 min

Inactive:

30 min

Cook:

9 hr

Yield:4 to 6 servings

Level:Easy

Ingredients

6 pounds beef brisket

1 tablespoon yellow mustard

1/4 cup dark brown sugar

3/4 cup paprika

2 tablespoons chipotle chili powder

1/4 cup black pepper

2 tablespoons garlic powder

1/4 cup salt

2 tablespoons onion powder

1 tablespoon cayenne pepper

ADD CHECKED ITEMS TO GROCERY LIST

Directions

Trim the fat cap on the brisket to about 1/4 to 1/8 of an inch. Coat the brisket with a light coating of the yellow mustard. Mix the sugar and spices together to form the rub for the brisket. Apply the rub to both sides of the meat.

Place the brisket in a preheated 194 to 205 degree F smoker until the meat reaches an internal temperature of 185 to 195 degrees F, about 1 1/2 hours per pound. Once the internal temperature is reached, remove the brisket from the smoker and allow it to rest for at least 30 minutes before slicing.

HOME COOK RECIPE: A viewer or guest of the show, who may not be a professional cook, provided this recipe. The Food Network Kitchen have not tested this recipe and therefore cannot make representation as to the results.

Recipe courtesy of Del King

Twisted Mac and Cheese

2 cups cavatappi pasta (any pasta works)

1/3 cup whole milk

4 Oz Velveeta

1/2 cup shredded cheddar

1/2 cup shredded Monterey jack

1/8 tsp. ground cayenne pepper

1/8 tsp. ground black pepper

1/4 cup diced roasted red bell pepper

2 tsp. seasoned breadcrumbs (Italian style)

2 tsp. grated Parmesan

1/4 tsp. finely minced parsley

1. Use a large saucepan to cook pasta following the directions on the package, then drain

2. Combine milk, Velveeta, cheddar cheese, jack cheese, cayenne pepper, and black pepper in the same saucepan, and heat over low heat for about 10 minutes until cheese is melted and sauce is smooth. Add pasta and roasted pepper to the pan, and then toss to coat pasta.

3. Combine the breadcrumbs, Parmesan and parsley in small bowl.

4. Pour pasta into a serving bowl and then sprinkle Parmesan breadcrumbs over the top.

Serves 4

Chili

The award winning, chili recipe. Belly up to a pot of rich and meaty Chili that's low in fat and high in fiber. Good taste and good for you, too.

2 pounds Ground beef

1 Can tomato sauce -- (29 ounces)

1 Can kidney beans w/liquid -- (29 ounces)

1 Can pinto beans w/liquid -- (29 ounces)

1 medium Onion -- diced

2 Green chili -- diced

1 Rib celery -- diced

3 medium Tomatoes -- chopped

2 teaspoons Cumin powder

3 tablespoons Chili powder

1 1/2teaspoons Black pepper

2 teaspoons Salt

2 cups Water

Brown the beef and drain the fat off. Crumble the cooked beef into pea size pieces. In a large pot, combine the beef plus the remaining ingredients and bring to a simmer over low heat. Cook stirring every 15 minutes for 2-3 hours.

Blue Crab Dip

8 oz. cream cheese - softened

2 dashes dry mustard

2 splashes Tabasco sauce

3 Tbls. heavy whipping cream

1/2 tsp. Old Bay Seasoning

2 tsps. White wine

1 Tbls. grated Parmesan cheese

2 tsps. Shrimp base

2 tsps. Diced onion

2 tsps. Diced red bell pepper

2 tsps. Diced green bell pepper

2 tsps. Diced Roma tomatoes

2 tsps. Diced green onion

5 1/3 oz. canned crabmeat - drained

1 Tbls. grated Parmesan cheese - for garnish

Tortilla chips

-Fold together all ingredients, except Parmesan for garnish and tortilla chips.

-Spread evenly into ovenproof baking dish.

-Microwave on medium power for 4 minutes.

-Transfer to oven and broil until top is slightly browned.

-Garnish with Parmesan and serve with tortilla chips for dipping.

Serves: 4

Champagne Sangria

Ingredients:

1 Granny Smith apple diced

1 Red Delicious apple diced

1 Bartlett pear diced

1 Sliced orange

2 Sliced limes

1-cup simple syrup (equal amounts sugar and water heated until sugar is dissolved)

3/4 pints orange juice

3/4 cup brandy

3/4 cup triple sec

Directions:

Combine all ingredients and gently mix. Place in a container and refrigerate. Serve base with equal parts Sparkling wine or Champagne

Cheeseburger in paradise

28 ounces fresh USDA choice beef chuck, diced

2 tablespoons kosher salt

1 tablespoon ground black pepper

1/2 tablespoon garlic salt

1/2 tablespoon onion salt

1-teaspoon celery salt

8 slices American cheese - 1 slice

If any other kind of cheese

4 sesame hamburger buns, toasted

8 leaves iceberg lettuce

4 slices tomato, 1/4-inch thick

4 slices red onion, 1/4-inch thick

4 toothpicks

4 pickle spears

2 pounds Idaho potatoes, peeled, cut into fries

and fried until golden brown

Using a meat grinder with a 3/8-inch plate, grind the meat. Change to a 1/8-inch plate, and grind a second time. Shape the ground meat into 4 (7-ounce) patties. In a mixing bowl, combine the kosher salt, pepper, garlic salt, onion salt and celery salt. Mix well. Place burger on a hot grill and season with the seasoning salt. Cook the burgers halfway to desired temperature and flip over and finish cooking.

Place cheese on the burger when it is 3/4 of the way cooked and allow to melt. Place bottom bun on plate. Place burger on bottom bun. Place lettuce, tomato and onion on top of the burger. Cover with top bun and secure with a wooden pick. Place pickle next to the burger. Place fries on the plate.

Yield: 4 servings

Bread Dip mix

1 tablespoon crushed red pepper

1-tablespoon black pepper

1 tablespoon dried oregano

1 tablespoon dried rosemary

1 tablespoon dried basil

1 tablespoon dried parsley

1-tablespoon garlic powder

1 tablespoon minced garlic

1-teaspoon salt

Grind together

To use, put 1 tablespoon of mixture in a small bowl. Pour extra virgin olive oil over and mix together. Dip warm sourdough French bread into the mixture.

Perfect Margarita

Source: Jimmy Buffett's Margaretville Restaurants

Crushed ice

3 wedges lime

2 ounces gold tequila (Cuervo 1800)

1/2 ounce tequila (Cuervo white)

1 1/4 ounces Rose's Lime Juice

1/2 ounce triple sec (Bols)

1 splash orange Curacao (Bols)

Put all ingredients except the 3 lime wedges into a shaker. Squeeze 2 of the lime wedges into the shaker. SHAKE WELL! Rim outside of glass only with lime. Salt only the outside of the glass. Add fresh crushed ice to glass. Strain mixture over ice. Squeeze remaining lime wedge in glass.

Benihana Fried Rice

1cup rice, uncooked

5 tablespoons butter

1 cup onion, chopped

1 cup carrot, chopped

2⁄3 cup green onion, chopped

3 tablespoons sesame seeds

5 eggs

5 tablespoons soy sauce

salt

pepper

SERVINGS 8UNITS US

Chicken Fried Rice

1/2 teaspoon onion, chopped

1/3 teaspoon carrots, chopped

1/3 teaspoon green onions

4 ounces rice, steamed

3 pinches salt

7 teaspoons cream butter

1 egg

1/2 teaspoon oil

1 ounce chicken, cooked

1/4 teaspoon sesame seeds

3 pinches pepper

1 teaspoon soy sauce

Scramble eggs and chop after cooking. chop onion, green onion and carrots until done and mix with chopped scrambled egg and chicken. Break off chunks of steamed rice and mix with vegetable, egg and chicken mixture. Add sesame seeds and salt and pepper. Stir in cream butter and soy sauce into the mixture.

Bourbon Steak

2 tenderloin steaks (1 1/2 inches thick)

2 tablespoons bourbon

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1/4 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper

Salt to taste

Combine bourbon, brown sugar and pepper; rub over steaks. Preheat grill.

Place steaks on grill and cook for 13 minutes (rare) to 17 minutes (medium), turning once. Season to taste with salt and serve.

Makes 2 servings.

Spicy Shrimp

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

1/4 teaspoon onion powder

1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

1/4 teaspoon chili powder

1/4 teaspoon granulated sugar

1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper

1 dash ground allspice

6 large shrimp, thawed if frozen

fresh lemon juice

1 tablespoon butter, melted

minced fresh parsley

1. Get the grill very hot with the highest heat setting possible. If you’re using a charcoal grill, they’re ready as soon as the coals are covered in white ash.

2. Mix together the salt, garlic powder, onion powder, black pepper, chili powder, sugar, cayenne pepper and allspice in a small bowl.

3. If the shrimp still have their shells on, remove them, leaving a small bit at the tail.

4. Remove the black vein running down the back of the shrimp.

5. Run a skewer through the middle of the shrimp (not lengthwise).

6. Continue to do this with each shrimp until you have 6 on each skewer. The shrimp should be nestled together with each other.

7. Lay the shrimp on a plate and squeeze fresh lemon juice onto them.

8. Liberally brush the shrimp with melted butter.

9. lightly sprinkle the seasoning over the shrimp, being careful to not use too much.

10. Place the shrimp on the grill with the seasoning side down.

11. Brush more melted butter on the shrimp as it cooks on the grill and sprinkle this side with the seasoning as well.

12. Cook for approximately 3 minutes and flip.

13. Cook for an additional 2 to 3 minutes or until nicely browned.

14. Remove the shrimp from the grill and serve them on or off the skewers.

15. Sprinkle lightly with fresh parsley.

16. Server with remoulade sauce.

Cobb Salad

Salad Ingredients:

1/2 head iceberg lettuce

1/2 bunch watercress

1 small bunch curly endive

1/2 head romaine lettuce

2 Tablespoons chives, minced

2 medium tomatoes, peeled, seeded, diced

1 whole boneless skinless chicken breast, cooked and diced

6 bacon slices, cooked and diced

1 avocado, peeled and diced

3 hard-boiled eggs, diced

1/2 cup Roquefort cheese, crumbled

French Dressing Ingredients:

1/4 cup water

1/4 cup red wine vinegar

1/4 teaspoon sugar

1 1/2 teaspoons lemon juice

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce

3/4 teaspoon dry mustard

1/2 garlic clove, minced

1/4 cup olive oil

3/4 cup vegetable oil

Directions:

Chop lettuce, watercress, endive and romaine in very fine pieces. Mix in 1 large wide bowl or 6 individual wide shallow bowls. Add chives.

Arrange tomatoes, chicken, bacon, avocado and eggs in narrow strips or wedges across top of greens. Sprinkle with cheese. Chill.

Meanwhile, to make dressing, combine water, vinegar, sugar, lemon juice, salt, pepper, Worcestershire, mustard, garlic and oils. Chill.

At serving time, shake dressing well. At table, pour 1/2 cup dressing over salad and toss. Pass remaining dressing at table.

BBQ Tips & Tricks:

23 BBQ and Grilling Tips and Tricks You Need to Know

It doesn’t matter if it’s Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, or the dead of a blizzard-plagued winter…Millions of meat lovers across North America are now venturing outdoors to grill succulent pork, beef, chicken, and other delicious types of animal flesh. Mmmmm! The following is a list of handy tips to ensure in your grilling and BBQ successes.

1. Wash everything after handling raw meat, and don’t reuse the plate that you used for uncooked meat.

2. Have a spray bottle full of water nearby your grill in cause of flare-ups.

3. Using charcoal briquettes for your grill’s heat? Then light the coals about 30 minutes before to cooking. If you’re using lighter fluid, make sure the fire is completely out before slapping the meat on the grill, or else you’ll have the nasty fuel taste in your meat (believe me, I know this from experience). At this time, the charcoal should be mostly an ash-gray color with a little bit of glowing red underneath.

4. Using a smoker? Light the charcoal with a chimney starter. It’s relatively quick to get some hot coals going and you won’t have to fret about getting nasty lighter fluid fumes in your smoker.

5. If you’re a charcoal fan, first line the inside bottom of your cooker with a couple of sheets of aluminum foil before you put your briquettes in. This will give you a quicker and easier clean-up of the gray coals and ash once you’re done barbecuing. The only downside to this is that the opening holes in the bottom of your cooker will get covered up. So when you first light your fire, make sure it gets plenty of oxygen to stay lit longer, thereby giving you hotter and longer-lasting coals.

6. If using a smoker, minimize the amount of times you open it. I know you’re anxious to see how the meat is doing, but opening it frequently will keep the smoker below the necessary heat levels. The old adage says, “if you’re looking, it ain’t cooking”.

7. Cooking chicken? If you intend to eat the skin, rub the outside with a little butter or oil and then lightly season it. It’ll give the chicken a nice, crispy, savory skin. Not eating the skin? Don’t season the outside, as it can’t penetrate the skin.

8. Although thick bands of fat may be undesirable, try to pick a steak with thin specks and strands of fat in between the muscle tissue. At cooking time, these small bits of fat will melt (in a process called marbling) and make the meat juicier.

9. Leaner steak cuts possess more flavor but will be a little tougher if cooked past medium.

10. Don’t leave the meat out in room temperature for longer than one hour. This will make bacteria grow at an exponential rate, plus it will make the meat less fresh. If you need to thaw out meat, do so overnight or all day in the refrigerator.

11. Don’t pierce your meat with a fork or prongs. The juices will escape, making the meat drier and less flavorful. Use a spatula or tongs to move and flip your food.

12. Get a dutch oven or a large pot (depending on the amount of stuff you grill) with a lid when transporting your cooked meats inside. It will help keep your barbecue moist, juicy, and warm until it’s time to chow down.

13. Quick and easy way to grill large vegetables such as potatoes and ears of corn: coat heavily in butter, sprinkle on some seasoned salt, wrap securely in aluminum foil, and throw it on the grill.

14. To reduce the amount of browning or blackening of meat, only apply barbecue or other tomato-based sauces containing sugars during the last 10 or so minutes of grilling.

15. Lots of people like steaks rare, but don’t do the same for your hamburger. More bacteria is present in ground beef, so cook until it’s well done and no pink is in the middle. If in doubt, grab a meat thermometer and make sure the temperature reaches no less than 160 degrees in the burger’s center.

16. Don’t reply solely on BBQ sauce to flavor your meat. Experiment with different types of marinades, seasonings and rubs to give your food unique and delicious tastes.

17. Got a regular grill that cooks hot and fast but want a little smoke flavoring? First, only line charcoals on the bottom of one side of the grill. Then, place some hickory or mesquite wood chips on top of the hot coals for extra flavoring. Place your meat on the side of the grill away from the coals (indirect heat), and keep the lid closed as much as possible. This will increase cooking times quite a bit, but it will be worth it. In fact, this added smokey taste may be so good you may even decide to forgo the barbecue sauce next time you do this.

18. Marinades tenderize meat (and addition to giving them some wild flavoring). If it all possible, marinade overnight; but if you can’t, try to give at least an hour of the meat soaking in the marinade sauce.

19. Don’t add any salt until the meat is cooked to prevent it from getting dry and tough, as the salt will draw away moisture.

20. Tired of the same-old BBQ sauce? Test out some new sauces you might have never thought of using, such as teriyaki, hot sauce, chipotle, Caribbean “jerk”-style sauce, and others. Add a little bourbon, rum, beer, or wine to your standby sauce. Mix in some honey, brown sugar, or paprika. Put in lemon juice, chopped onions, red peppers or chile peppers to perk things up.

21. Use these cooking times for grilled fish: Salmon fillets, 6 – 8 minutes per side; Salmon or halibut steaks, 5 minutes per side; Trout fillets, 4 minutes per side; Small whole fish, 7 minutes per side; and Large fish, 15 minutes per side. If your whole fish are stuffed, give it a few extra minutes per side.

Use these general cooking times for grilled chicken: Breasts and wings, 15 – 20 minutes; Thighs and legs, 30 minutes; Chicken halves, 40 – 45 minutes; Whole chicken, 75 – 90 minutes. On individual chicken pieces, apply sauce and turn every 5 minutes. Whole birds, grill breast-side down and turn over after 45 minutes. Half birds, cook skin-side down for 5 minutes and then flip over and grill for remaining amount of time. If you’re in doubt as to whether or not the chicken is done, the center of the meat should read 170 to 175 degrees on your meat thermometer.

22. Keep your grill grate clean with a stiff wire brush or a piece of crumpled-up foil (with a subsequent wipe with a dry paper towel). When it’s time for cooking, grab the grate with an oven mitt and clean it after the grill heats up after started your fire and also after you’re done grilling. Dip a folded paper towel in oil and apply to the bars of the grate. This is to ensure your meat won’t stick to the grill AND you’ll get awesome-looking grill marks.

23. Remember, it takes a bit of an adventurous spirit and a whole lotta trial and error before you get really good at barbecuing. Experiment with different kinds and cuts of meat, flavorings and seasonings, types of grills and smokers, and cooking methods. You just might stumble upon something you really like. Happy grilling!

Gadgets:

The array of different tools manufacturers claim you need to make good barbecue is astounding. In reality tough, it only comes down to a few good tools. Here are the best manufacturers of those tools plus reviews of a couple other gadgets that you may find or think you need in your kitchen.

Tongs

Good tongs are great multitaskers. You can use them to transfer raw chicken from a plate to the grill, turn delicate veggies or plate a rack of ribs once they’re cooked to perfection. Our favorite are the 16-inch locking tongs that come in the $20 OXO Good Grips 2-Piece Grilling Tools Set. We don’t usually recommend sets, but both the tongs and spatula that come in this one beat a range of single tools in our tests. We like these tongs because of their excellent construction and delicately scalloped heads, long reach and grippy handles that feel good in a bare hand or a grilling glove.

If you don’t want to buy the set, we also recommend the OXO Good Grips 16” Locking Tongs, which are basically identical to our main pick, but they don’t have the large hanging loop that the ones in the set do. But at $15, they only cost five bucks less than the set.

At 16 inches, the OXO tongs are long, but not too long. They’ll keep your hand clear of the grill’s searing heat and the occasional flare-up. We’ve used a number of shorter grilling tongs in the past, and the OXO’s few extra inches are a welcome feature in dealing with high grilling temperatures. They’re made of thick, heat-resistant 430-grade stainless steel. That’s the same stuff that many mid-to-high-priced gas grills burners are constructed out of, so it’s a good bet that it’ll stand up to the heat of your grill’s cooking surface. They’re also easier to hold than any other model we’ve tried, thanks to grippy silicone accents on the handle and rolled-steel construction, which keeps them from bending under heavy loads.

The tips of the tongs boast wide, gently-tapering heads with a scallop pattern along their sides perfect for picking up delicate fare. But they’re also sturdy enough to handle thick cuts of steak. The spring strength is on par with the better tongs we’ve tested; it’s easy to compress and smartly snaps back into place when you let go of the tongs.

After about six months of being run through a dishwasher on a regular basis, the OXO tongs have shown less wear than other tongs we’ve tested. The metal ring makes them very easy to hang. Other tongs have similar lock mechanisms, but we haven’t found any that feel as sturdy as the OXO’s.

The OXO Good Grips 2-Piece Grilling Tools Set just came out this year, so we haven’t seen any editorial recommendations for it. But Amazon users give it 4.5 stars. Lisa McManus, the executive editor of equipment testing at America’s Test Kitchen, highly recommends OXO Good Grips 16” Locking Tongs for grilling. Expert Meathead Goldwyn told us that these are his go-to tongs. (He did tell us that the locking mechanism in his broke, but he cooks over a grill more than the average person would, and the tongs can be replaced with OXO’s lifetime satisfaction guarantee.) Men’s Health and Good Housekeeping also heap praise on them. They are the best selling tongs in Amazon’s Home and Kitchen Department, with 572 five-star reviews out of a total of 685 reviews.

The competition

We were disappointed by the tongs that come with Cuisinart’s CGS-134 3-Piece Grilling Tool Set with Grill Glove. The steel feels less sturdy, and the heads of the tongs don’t line up when the handles are compressed, making it difficult to grasp small objects and easy to tear the skin of a sausage or chicken. The low-quality vinyl-and-metal handles don’t offer enough grippiness for control. They also can’t be locked closed for storage.

Although we like the intuitive locking mechanism and sturdy, grippy handles on the tongs that come as part of the Weber Style 6707 2-Piece Stainless Steel Barbecue Tool Set, the scalloped heads on the tongs have sharp, angular edges, so they punctured sausage skin. The D-shaped tong heads are also a little more awkward than the symmetrical heads on our pick. We found the spring inside of the 6707s to be pretty weak, so the tool was slow to respond when we released pressure on it.

The tongs in the Cave Tools BBQ Grill Tools Set come with a small metal ring to keep them closed for storage but lack a locking mechanism. While we liked the large heads on the tongs, the heads are more like a slotted spoon and fork, which made it difficult to pick up smaller pieces of food. Also, the stainless-steel handles offer no grip.

Steven Raichlen’s Best of BBQ Forged Stainless steel tongs cost $17, and they’re two inches longer than the 16” OXO Good Grips Locking Tongs. But we’ve found that as the arms on your tongs get longer, your food gets heavier when you lift it.

OXO’s 18-inch set of Stainless Steel Barbecue Tongs are also too long and lack a locking mechanism.

Weber’s cheaper $14 Weber 6610 Original Tongs have handles that aren’t as thick or as well-made as the OXO’s, and the curve at the end of the heads makes them kind of ill-suited for getting underneath of a piece of meat on the grill.

Pass on the Outset Stainless Steel Locking Tongs. They’re too long at 17½ inches, and the locking mechanism on them felt a little flimsy. We were able to bend it slightly with a minimal amount of fingertip pressure.

Don’t bother with the freakishly large tong heads on GrillPro’s 40240 16-inch Stainless Steel Tong/Turner Combination or their flimsy construction.

The Cuisinart CIT-201 Folding Grill Tongs cost the same as our main pick and fold up for easy storage. But they’re an inch shorter, don’t lock, and have a predominantly plastic body.

The Weber Style 6441 Professional-Grade Chef’s Tongs cost three bucks less than the 16-inch OXO Good Grips Locking Tongs do, but their heads are cupped so it’s awkward to pick things up with them.

The tongs that come in this Coleman Three-Piece BBQ Tool Set are flimsy, short, and have no lock.

While these Brinkman Stainless Steel Grilling Tongs look like a steal at $7, when we tried them, their wooden handles felt cheap. The tips of the tongs are deeply recessed, making them great for picking up salad but crap for dealing with food on your grill.

The Messermeister 16-inch Stainless Steel Locking Tongs cost $9. We found that they were made of flimsier steel than our OXO pick was and had heads that slipped in and out of alignment when we attempted to pick up smaller objects off our grilling surface. More troubling than this, the stainless steel of the tongs appeared to tarnish after a single run through the dishwasher.

Spatula

Burgers and fish don’t deal too well with being compressed by tongs. That’s where a good spatula comes in handy. Our favorite is the one that comes in the $20 OXO Good Grips 2-piece Grilling Tools Set. As with the tongs in this set, the spatula performed better in our tests than ten other models we tried, thanks to its strong, flexible construction, a long, comfortable handle, and a wide head with both a beveled edge for sliding under food and a serrated one for cutting grub as you grill.

The Two-Piece Grilling Set spatula is made of tough 430-grade stainless steel, making it strong, relatively light, and capable of taking the abuse of high temperatures or a dishwasher. The stainless steel head flexes slightly, just enough to wedge it under a piece of chicken stuck on the grill. But it’s also sturdy enough to handle the weight of heavier cuts. The shaft of the tool is folded into a ‘C’ shape, providing the tool with a little more durability without weighing the tool down. The stainless steel does take on water stains and fingerprints easily, though. The spatula’s 16-inch length is ideal for flipping burgers at the back of the grill without getting your hands too close to the heat. While other spatulas have serrated edges, they weren’t as effective as the OXO’s.

OXO’s Good Grips Two-Piece Grilling Set is so new that we weren’t able to find any editorial reviews on them. At Amazon, the $20 set has a 4.5-star rating, but at the time this guide was written, only 14 people had reviewed the hardware.

The competition

Our previous pick, the $11 OXO Good Grips Stainless Steel Barbecue Turner, is being discontinued. If you can find it in stores or online, we think it’s great.

The spatula that comes with Cuisinart’s $19 CGS-134 3-piece Grilling Tool Set with Grill Glove is terrible. The metal shaft and head bent when we lifted a six-pound box (we were simulating lifting a heavy roast). You don’t want that.

We liked the full-tang construction of the Weber Style 6707 2-piece Stainless Steel Barbecue Tool Set’s spatula. In testing, we found that its head was well angled and just flexible enough to slide nicely over a grill grate without forcing you to get your arm too close to the heat. Unfortunately, there’s no beveling at the end of the spatula head, so it was difficult to slide it under food. The handle, although adequate, doesn’t match the secure grip of our main pick.

The Weber 6620 Original Spatula’s head didn’t glide underneath burgers as easily as the OXO spatula did, and it didn’t feel quite as sturdy. We were able to bend it a little further than we could the OXO hardware, and after our abuse, the spatula’s rubber handle wobbled more than it did before. The Weber also doesn’t have serrated edge.

While the spatula that comes with Cave Tools BBQ Grill Tools Set is made from strong, flexible stainless steel, the slick, polished stainless steel handle also offers no grip.

The Update International 7.5” Square-end Spatula was at one time mislabeled as the top-selling barbecue turner, but it is wicked short with a wooden handle. It’s really better for indoor griddling.

This $9 Kingsford Memphis Spatula doesn’t have a cutting edge either, and while it has a full tang design, we could move the handle around on the spatula’s stainless steel body with minimal effort.

The Mr. Bar-B-Q 02820X Skyline Series Spatula is a short-handled, flimsy metal bag of hurt with a head that was difficult to get underneath food.

We picked up the Napoleon 70010 Professional Spatula for $20 ($19 on Amazon) and found that while we liked its wide serrated head, its metal handle wasn’t comfortable to hold when you’re handling heavier cuts of meat. Also, it’s the same price as our favorite two-piece set, so it doesn’t feel like a great deal.

And this Cuisinart 16-inch CIT-200 Folding Grill Spatula goes for $15, but it’s mostly made from plastic, and honestly, there’s no need for your grilling tools to fold down like that. We didn’t even bother calling it in.

Instant-probe thermometer

Although there are less precise ways of determining the doneness of steak or pork chops, for best accuracy you’ll want a thermometer. When asked, both of our experts agreed that the only real way to tell if your meat is cooked is by checking the internal temperature with an instant-read thermometer. Based on dozen of hours of research and testing for our guide to instant-read thermometers—as well as the input of our grilling experts—we highly recommend the $30 ThermoWorks ThermoPop Digital Thermometer.

Cheaper thermometers take 10, 15, or even 20 seconds to take accurate readings, but the ThermoPop gets you there in seven or less. Its probe is so precise that it reads within two degrees Fahrenheit up to 248°F, and within four degrees up to 572°F—high enough for anything you’ll cook on your grill or in your kitchen. That accuracy is due to the thermocouple sensor inside the long, thin probe. Generally, you’d have to spend at least twice the price for a thermocouple sensor, as you would for the much-revered $96 Thermapen. Cheaper models are nowhere near as accurate because they don’t have this technology. So the ThermoPop strikes a great balance of performance and price.

The ThermoPop is particularly suited for outdoor cooking, thanks to its large, brightly-lit LCD display that’s easy to read in the dark. The numbers on the screen rotate with the push of a button, so you can take readings from any angle. It’s highly rated for dirt and water resistance with an IP66 rating. Most instant-read thermometers have IP65 ratings, meaning they’re less water resistant. Should anything go wrong with the hardware, the ThermoPop is protected by a one-year limited warranty.

As an added bonus, the ThermoPop comes with a laminated guide to cooking temperatures. The guide covers every level of doneness for beef, pork, chicken, lamb, and seafood.

A lot of trusted sources love the ThermoPop. J. Kenji López-Alt, managing culinary director of food site Serious Eats, wrote it up as “the best inexpensive thermometer on the market.” A Newsweek reviewer found the ThermoPop “no sloppy seconds” and “a bargain at that price.” Good Housekeeping tested the ThermoPop for a travel cooking gear round-up, citing it as “super accurate.” Many cooking, (fancy) coffee, and barbecue blogs also endorse the ThermoPop, though most were also provided free models as part of an outreach program. And with 258 reviews as of this writing, the ThermoPop is averaging a 4.8-star Amazon rating.

If you’d prefer a probe thermometer for slow-cooking roasts like brisket, we like the ThermoWorks Chef Alarm ($59). It’s not cheap, but the probe and cord will withstand up to 700° (most probe thermometers only withstand up to 400°). It has an IP65 rating, so it’s slightly less water-resistant than the ThermoPop. We’ve been longterm testing the Chef Alarm, using it roughly once a week for the past year, and it’s proven very durable. It receives 4.8 average stars over 424 Amazon user reviews.

The competition

Our previous pick, the $16 ThermoWorks RT600C, came recommended by, among others, Buffalo chef James D. Roberts, who bumps things and can’t afford to break a $100 thermometer; serious barbecue nerd Chuck Falzone; and Cook’s Illustrated, in a tie with the CDN DTQ450X. Its thin probe is useful, as are the splash-proof buttons. Negatives: The range is only to 302° Fahrenheit, the automatic shut-off is at one hour, and it lacks a clip to protect or pocket the probe.

Grill brush

A wire grill brush keeps the remnants of last week’s burnt-on grease from flavoring this week’s meal. For $8 at Home Depot or $7 from Amazon, the 18-inch Weber 6464 Bamboo Grill Brush will help you scour through the toughest grease, carbon, and grime. It’s less expensive than other similar grill brushes, and in three years of testing, many brushes we have yet to find one that works as well for as little money as the Weber 6464.

This brush is well-built and feels sturdier than the plastic or aluminum-and-steel wire handled brushes that we’ve tested. Its thick, beefy bamboo handle is easy to get a hold of. And the brush’s tough stainless steel bristles are anchored deep in the bamboo handle, so the chances of losing a bristle and finding it in your food are minimal. Its 18” reach, which is about two or three inches longer than most of the other grill brushes we’ve tested, is perfect for getting leverage on grill grates. And we found that the steel grill scraper, attached to the tip of the brush, worked well in tests on iron, stainless steel, and cast aluminum cooking grates of varying thicknesses.

We only found one editorial review for the Weber 6464 Bamboo Grill Brush, and it came from AmazingRibs.com’s editor-in-chief Craig ‘Meathead’ Goldwyn. He likes the metal scraper on the end of the brush head. It receives a 4.1-star rating on Amazon.

While the Amazon reviews for this grill brush are largely positive, some reviewers say they wish that it was longer lasting. We’ve used this brush for close to three years, grilling at least once or twice a week, and have only recently come to feel that it’s time to replace it. Given that it costs under ten bucks, we think that’s a pretty good run for the money.

Some user reviewers also mention that they’d like if the notched metal bar on the head of the brush were a little bit wider. We largely have to disagree with this, as a larger scraping head would make it difficult to clean the bars on some denser grill grates.

Finally, don’t use this brush on porcelain-coated grill grates. You’ll want to use a softer, brass bristled brush. We haven’t found a brass-bristled brush that we like yet, but we’re looking.

The competition

You can get a shorter 12-inch variant of the Weber 6464 18-inch Bamboo Grill Brush for a dollar less on Home Depot and Amazon’s sites, but we think that the extra six inches of reach and leverage you get for that extra buck is worth it, especially if you’re the type to neglect cleaning grates right after cooking on them.

We tested the $18 USA Kitchen Elite BBQ Grill Brush. It’s the bestselling grill brush in Amazon’s Cooking Equipment Accessories category, with a five-star rating from 491 customer reviews. Although it comes with a large, wide scouring head mounted on a sturdy 18-inch-long wire-and-plastic handle, it lacks a scraper of the sort that comes built into our main pick. After one use, we noticed that a number of the brush’s wire strands were pulling free from the head.

The Mr. Grill 18-inch Extra Strong Solid Oak Handle grill brush comes with a brass bristled head, making it a good choice for scrubbing down porcelain-coated grill grates that can sometimes be scratched by stainless steel. Its handle and shaft felt just as strong as our main pick and it only costs $8. Unfortunately, the brass bristles failed to scour much food from the steel grate of my portable grill even after allowing the debris to roast over hot charcoal for 15 minutes. It lacks the scraper head that our winning Weber brush has. So while its bristles might be gentle on the surface of your porcelain-coated grill grates, it’s likely too gentle to remove caked-on grease and food.

The Char-Broil 3385049 Brush Hawg Grill Brush with Replaceable Head sells for just a little over $12 on Amazon, but it’s not worth it. The brush’s plastic handle wasn’t as sturdy as the Weber 6464’s. Also, while replacement heads for the Brush Hawg cost $7 per two-pack, which makes it cheaper than buying a whole new Weber 6464, the bristles don’t go very deep into the plastic, which makes me worry about them winding up in food—an issue reported by a number of Amazon users.

We tested the $6 Rubbermaid G100 BBQ Brush with Steel Scraper, but can’t recommend it. There’s tons of other grill brushes out there that look just like it too, made by companies like Grill Zone, GrillPro and Brinkman, but they don’t last long, and just like with the Char-Broil Brush Hawg, the handles of these plastic brushes just can’t seem to keep hold of the bristles as well as a classic wooden-handled brush.

There are also T-headed brushes like Weber’s $16 6425 wire-handled T-Brush to consider but you should pass. The T-head design works great, but the bristles typically aren’t held in place by a few twists of metal wire rather than being glued in. They come out pretty easily.

We considered testing the $23 Grill Daddy Pro Grill Brush, which sounded like an awesome idea, in theory. It’s a grill brush that’s got a built-in water reservoir that pours water over your hot grill grates as you scrub them. However, we found a large number of complaints on Amazon and around the web about its water reservoir leaking after only a few uses.

There are a gazillion grill brushes out there that look and work the same as our winner the 18-inch Weber 6464 Bamboo Grill Brush, many of which can be found at your local hardware store. If it’s cheap and it looks sturdy, give it a try.

Grilling gloves

Our experts agree that the best way to go for grilling is to pick up a set of suede or split-leather welding gloves. To protect your hands from a grill’s searing heat, invest in a pair of US Forge 400 Welding Gloves. Made of thick heat-and-liquid-resistant split leather, they offer superior protection against contact with hot metal, steaming-hot barbecue sauce, and heat than a Nomex or silicone glove—or standard kitchen oven mitt—can afford. And priced at $13 from Amazon, they’re a steal.

These gloves have been our pick for the past three years. For this year’s update, in addition to using our gloves over the fires of a blazing charcoal grill, we also conducted a controlled test over one of the 2600-watt 8-inch coil elements of an electric range. After cranking the burner to its maximum setting, we checked its temperature with an infrared thermometer. It produced a maximum surface temperature of 620°F, approximately the same as the heat generated by the coals in a charcoal grill a few minutes after they’ve been poured out of a chimney starter.

Donning each of the four gloves we chose for testing this year, I held my hand roughly three inches above the coil element and timed how long it took before I felt an an uncomfortable level of heat. The shells of the gloves included in the test were made of a variety of materials including cotton, Nomex, Kevlar, silicone, Aramid, and split leather. Of the four gloves tested, we found that the leatherUS Forge Gloves provided the greatest amount of protection against the heat of the coil element, allowing me to keep my hand above the heat source for 29 seconds before it become painful. What’s more, the three other gloves we tested, despite having exteriors made with Nomex and Aramid, began to smolder, even before the heat became uncomfortable. The US Forge gloves, on the other hand (puns!), came away unscathed.

A thick top-grain leather exterior, soft cotton interior, and durable locked stitching will help these gloves stand up to years of occasional abuse. They’re also fire-resistant and comfortable. The cotton liner provides some additional heat protection, protects your hands from the glove’s stitching, and helps to wick away sweat. While any number of welding gloves offer similar features, we didn’t find any that were as inexpensive and as widely available through multiple outlets such as Sears, NewEgg, Amazon, and welding speciality shops as the US Forge gloves.

“I think silicone is guaranteed up to 500 or 550 degrees Fahrenheit,” says Steven Raichlen. “But typically when you’re direct grilling, or if you’re heating something on the grill, you’re going to be up above 600 to 700 degrees. So for me, I never trust the silicone. For me, I like welder’s gloves or suede gloves.”

Like Craig ‘Meathead’ Goldwyn of AmazingRibs.com has pointed out to us, you can wash a pair of suede or leather gloves by washing your hands with the gloves still on, sending them through the washing machine or, if you’re feeling lazy, simply wait for them to dry and then brush dried grease and sauces off of them. You can get away with both of these cleaning methods with any split leather glove, but get sauce on a pair of Nomex or other fire-resistant fabric glove? Good luck getting the stain out without scrubbing them or putting them through the washing machine a few times.

The US Forge 400 Welding Gloves are one of the most popular sets of welding gloves on Amazon and boast an average rating of 4.6 stars, with 307 five-star ratings out of a total of 412 Amazon user reviews.

These gloves only come in one size. Some Amazon reviewers say they are either too big or too small, but most users don’t seem to have a problem with the size.

A few Amazon reviewers also complain that they’re not great for use with a grill. But without fail, all of these gripes come from individuals who seemingly expect the gloves to be heatproof, not heat-resistant. One reviewer was disappointed that he was only able to hold a scorching hot metal basket that had been on the grill for a mere 15 seconds before feeling heat. That’s not what these things are made for.

Despite these complaints, after using and abusing these gloves with high heat, dirty grill parts, and washing them under a tap with dish soap for close to three years and then subjecting them to this year’s coil element heat test, we feel comfortable in saying that if you use them like a responsible, reasonable individual, they’ll keep you safe.

The competition

We tested the $8 Weber 6472 Barbecue Mitt. It’s long enough to nearly cover my whole forearm, and with its cotton shell and polyester twill exterior, it took second place in our coil element heat test, shielding me from discomfort for 15 seconds and beginning to smoulder at 21 seconds. But being a mitt, it lacks our main pick’s dexterity, and as it’s made of 100 percent cotton, it allows liquids through, which could mess with its thermal protection. We’d be comfortable using it in the kitchen to take a roast out of the oven, but it’s less than ideal as a grilling glove.

The two gloves in Weber’s $30 6669 Premium Barbecue Glove Set come in a number of sizes and fit snugly, so they offer enough control to handle knives or a pair of tongs. Silicone grips also provide more control when you’re holding tools. But we found they offer minimal thermal protection. In our coil element heat test, we felt the heat through these gloves almost immediately. We had the same experience working with them over the grill.

I had high hopes for the $48 San Jamar KT0218 Kool-Tek Nomex Conventional Temperature Protection Oven Mitt, which is our favorite for kitchen use. It’s constructed from Nomex, Kevlar, and cotton and promises intermittent heat resistance for temperatures up to 550°F for 30 seconds at a time. Granted, that’s 70°F lower than what my coil element test allowed for, but in short bursts over the heat of a grill, the San Jamar mitt should be fine, right? Wrong. We were only able to wear it above the element for five seconds before we began to feel the heat and at the nine second mark, the mitt began to smoulder. Lesson learned. Also, it comes in one size, so far as we can tell, and it’s so big that we had serious issues holding on to any of the tools we were testing while wearing them.

If the lack of editorial on our winning gloves bothers you, you could go with a set of Ove’ Glove Hot Surface Handlers. Consumer Reports’ Theresa Panetta found that these took twice as long to ignite when held over an open flame. So that’s cool. Sweethome editor Christine Cyr Clisset has been testing them and tells me that it is possible to use them to pick up tinfoil packets off of hot charcoal. They also happen to be the top rated oven mitt on Amazon, with 377 five star reviews out of a total of 500. But I’d rather get the US Forge 400s because the Ove’ Gloves are made from Nomex and Kevlar, both materials that are woven and therefore subject to pulls and tears

Basting brush

When you’re looking for a basting brush, forgo traditional hair and cotton mop-style brushes. No matter how well you wash them, either by hand or in a dishwasher, you’ll never get all of the sauce out of them, and that means that they’ll wind up contaminated with food matter to some extent.

Of dozens of silicone basting brushes we found and the four we called in for testing this year, we like the $12 OXO Good Grips Large Silicone Basting Brush best. In our testing, its thick, tri-layered, 2¼-by-1½-inch silicone brush head sopped up and spread more sauce over a greater area than any of the competition.

In order to determine how much sauce each basting brush we were testing could hold, we weighed each brush on a kitchen scale before and after its bristles were laden down with barbecue sauce. The OXO brush weighed 144 grams while dry and 163 grams when saturated with barbecue sauce—a 19 gram difference. By comparison, Elizabeth Karmel’s Super Silicone BBQ Grill Basting Brush with Long Angled Handle and Removable Head held 10 grams of sauce and the Weber 6661 Original Silicone Basting Brush held 9 grams. The OXO brush also felt more durable than the two other brushes that made it into our final testing round; in fact it was a good 50 grams heavier dry than any of the competition.

In addition to holding the most sauce, the brush also delivered the most sauce. After dunking each of our test brushes, we drew a line of sauce on a cutting board, stopping when the sauce was depleted from one side of the brush head and then continuing with the other side. The line of sauce produced by the OXO hardware was not only longer than the other two brushes I tested against it but, at 2½ inches wide, compared to the other brushes’ 1¾-inch width, it was also significantly wider.

The 14-inch OXO brush is an inch longer than the aforementioned Weber 6661 and and inch shorter than the Elizabeth Karmel brush. Like all silicone basting brushes, it’s rated to withstand temperatures up to 600°F, making it perfect for use with a grill. Its silicone-covered handle provides additional grip so you can comfortably use it while wearing a grilling glove and its slightly tipped head makes brushing marinade or sauce on a cut of meat at the back of a grilling surface slightly easier than a traditional straight brush can.

We didn’t find a single editorial review for the OXO Good Grips Large Silicone Basting Brush from a trusted source. However, Cook’s Illustrated loves the OXO Good Grips Silicone Pastry Brush, which uses an identical, albeit smaller, bristle configuration. The OXO Good Grips Large Silicone Basting Brush also did well with Amazon shoppers. The brush has a 4.6-out-of-5-star rating, from a total of 41 customers.

A few Amazon users complain about this brush’s bristles falling off after a few dozen uses, but they’re in the minority. All the same, I attempted to pull the brush’s silicone bristles free, but was unable to do so. We’ll continue to use this brush longterm and will update you if we have any issues with it.

The competition

The $10 Elizabeth Karmel’s Super Silicone BBQ Grill Basting Brush with Long Angled Handle and Removable Head was our pick for a grilling basting brush for the past two years. However, it was only able to hold nine grams of sauce compared to the OXO brush’s 19 grams.

The $9 Weber 6661 Original Silicone Basting Brush is a well-built brush, but it could only hold on to 10 grams of sauce at a time, nine less than our main pick. And with a head that was only 1¼ inches wide, it wasn’t able to match the coverage that our main pick could manage in a single pass.

The Weber 6701 Style Silicone Basting Brush feels pretty shoddy. Its silicone head was easily pulled from the stainless steel handle and fell apart upon further examination. We dismissed it without testing.

Charcoal Chimney

Lighting a charcoal grill with a chimney starter rapidly brings your charcoal up to cooking temperature without any nasty-tasting lighter fluid, makes it easy to place the charcoal in your grill’s bed for direct and indirect cooking, and can be used to measure how much charcoal you’re using. We recommend the $15 Weber 7416 Rapidfire Chimney Starter.

There are many similar products out there made by companies like Charcoal Companion, Steven Raichlen, Char-Griller, and Broil King. They all work, to one degree or another, but none of them are as well-vented to allow air to circulate through your coals for faster ignition. The Weber 7416 is also constructed from thicker aluminized steel that’ll keep the outer layer of metal on the chimney from peeling under intense heater for longer. (I had this problem with a $7 no-name chimney starter from a local specialty shop, and it turned to a rusted mess after just one summer.) That thicker steel also provides better shielding from heat and sparks when the time comes to pour your hot charcoal. Its heat-resistant plastic handle also makes pouring the coals into the grill much easier (but seriously, wear gloves when you do.)

We’ve used a number of chimney starters over the years and the Weber 7416 provides far better balance than others. Despite its heavy-duty construction, the weight of the coals and the starter never feels like a strain, and it’s relatively easy to pour the coals. That’s not the case with the other ones we’ve used. The cylinder holds enough briquettes to prep the company’s 22.5” Kettle Grill. Meathead said that when you’re using Kingsford charcoal this translates into about 80 briquettes.

The Weber 7416 is far and away the most popular chimney starter sold on Amazon. It has a 4.8 star average rating, with 88% of 2,620 awarding it five stars. No other chimney starter on the site can even come close to matching this score. The next most popular chimney starter on Amazon is an older Weber version (although it’s no longer available) that has nearly as many positive reviews as the Weber 7416.

You can also use your charcoal chimney to cook small, thin cuts of meat or fish. Doing so saves you the trouble of having to fill your grill with coals if you’re only cooking for one or two people, making for less to clean up. Just ignite the charcoal briquettes in your chimney, wait for them to turn white with ash, place a grate on top of the chimney to use as a cooking surface, and you’re good to go. Meathead Goldwyn does it; because the heat and fire from the charcoal inside of it is focused and shooting straight up through the tube, it’s like cooking on a miniature jet engine. Meathead says he and his wife can cook a steak over the coals in a chimney starter within a few minutes.

And if you have a smaller, portable grill, such as the Weber Smokey Joe Premium, consider picking up the smaller Weber 7447 Compact Rapidfire Chimney Starter instead. It’s sized to hold just enough charcoal briquettes for a portable grill, but is made of the same materials as our larger main pick. I’ve been using one for years when I cook on the beach or while camping. It never fails to get my charcoal up to temperature in a timely manner.

The competition

Although we haven’t tried the $17 Char-Broil 3184803 Sure Fire Canister Style Charcoal Starter we think it looks like the chimney Darth Vader would use to start his grill at Galactic Empire company picnics. Many people that bought it on Amazon complained that the chimney’s coating started to peel off after only using it a few times, so we passed on testing.

The same can be said for the $17 Charcoal Companion Silver Chimney Charcoal Starter. It costs more than the Weber chimney does, and many user reviews complain about the hardware’s durability. Plus, it hasn’t been reviewed many times on Amazon, especially in comparison to the Weber hardware, and the reviews that exist are less than enthusiastic.

What about a grilling fork?

After speaking with our experts we found that you don’t need a special grilling fork. For flipping and grabbing meat and veggies, use tongs. When it comes to grilling, a fork can actually harm your food.

As grilling cookbook author Steven Raichlen explains,“I don’t normally recommend a BBQ fork, because it’s too easy to abuse it by stabbing the meat. Look, a steak is not going to puncture like a water balloon, but… if you poke it repeatedly, it’s going to let some of the blood and juices out.” When we asked him if there were any situations where using a fork was preferable over using a set of grilling tongs, he told us that of the 4,000 recipes that he’s collected, cooked, and written about, only one requires you use a grilling fork: provoleta asada. It’s an Argentinian dish that involves throwing a huge chunk of cheese on a grill. In order to turn the melted cheese over, you need a fork to pry it free of the grill grates.

Over at Amazing Ribs, our guest expert, Meathead Goldwyn, talks about what happens when you stab your meat with a fork. He doesn’t feel that you lose a whole lot of the juices from a piece of meat when puncture it with a fork, but he reinforces the fact that poking at your meat to access whether or not it’s cooked doesn’t work.

The Garlic Press: I had a garlic press once, but only because it was stolen during a supply-raid on a parent’s kitchen (they never use all that stuff anyway). I probably used it twice before breaking it by trying to use it to squeeze a lime for a mojito or something. If you need to chop up garlic really tiny-like, just man up and smash it with the side of a wide-blade knife. Remove the skin from the pile of garlic mush, and then keep chopping until your house smells like a restaurant in North Beach/Little Italy. Pat yourself on the back for all your hard work with a couple swigs of Carlo Rossi jug wine.

I have no respect for your lazy drinking habits.

Elaborate Wine Opening Device: Are you a cater waiter? Do you open more than five bottles of wine a night, on a regular basis? Then you don’t need some fancy rabbit to open your wine for you. Half the Napa tasting rooms aren’t even so lazily pretentious that they need to scramble to open a bottle of vino in under 4 seconds. Take some pleasure in opening your wine bottle and pulling out that cork. Alternatively: just drink Carlo Rossi Jug wine with a screwcap or use a shoe.

Are we stuck in the 80's again?

Electric Can Opener: More than anything else, this one just says: “I’m lazy!” And it makes your kitchen feel like you live at your grandmother’s house. Besides, you’re going to want all the arm strength you can get from opening cans so you can more easily lift and open entire jugs of Carlo Rossi Wine.

Would you rather be able to melt sugar or WELD STEEL?

Culinary Torch: I have a hard time believing that anyone loves Creme Brulee so much that they make it at home often enough to justify spending over $30 on a miniature propane torch. If you’re really going to do this with the flamethrowers in the kitchen, go get yourself a real propane torch which will come in handy when you need to solder some copper pipes yourself. You will, of course, want to reward yourself with a couple swigs from that jug of Carlo Rossi wine.

It's just a colander inside a bucket.

Salad Spinner: This is a tricky one, because everyone knows salad is good for you and we could probably all eat more salad. But having one of these on your counter is like yelling “LOOK AT ME, I’M SO HEALTHY. I EAT SALAD.” which has the effect of making you seem desperate. Just wash your baby spinach mix out in the sink and toss it in the spaghetti strainer like everyone else. The 10 bucks you saved on this thing can easily be put towards a couple of jugs of Carlo Rossi wine which will balance out your crazy salad habit.

How to Pick Out Your Sides:

Please bear in mind that organic fruits and vegetables may not look as colorful or smooth as inorganically grown ones but they often taste better. As a general rule, try to avoid those that have any blemishes in them.

Below are some of the common fruits and vegetables you use every day and the tips to ensure that you are picking up the good ones.

Apples

Always look for bright colored apples. Avoid bruises or blemishes

Bananas

Good bananas will be firm and yellow and they will not have any dark bruises. If a banana has any bruises, it is likely to get spoiled quickly when compared to other fruits.

Beets

Good Beets will have a firm and round shape. Other qualities to look for while selecting this are smooth surface and rich red or gold flesh color. Always try to choose the slender main root.

Broccoli

They should have dark green florets and should be crisp. There should be no yellow flowers.

Carrots

Always choose well-shaped, smooth, firm and bright. Don’t pick up the ones with splits or wilting.

Cauliflower

Check whether there are any dark spots. If they have black spots then avoid those cauliflowers. Try to pick the ones with firm white heads.

Celery

Pick up the celery with light green crisp leaves.

Cherries

Dark sweet cherries are deep red and some are almost black. One of the bad things about cherries is that they bruise easily. Because of this you should ensure that you consume them as quickly as possible. The fresh varieties come to the market in the May to August time period.

Corn

Choose the one with fresh husks, bright color and silk ends. They should be plump but not mature.

Cranberries

Deep burgundy color indicates ripeness. Avoid blemishes. Bright color indicates that it is unripe. Cranberries can be frozen for up to one month. We get fresh cranberries during the October to December period.

Cucumbers

Cucumbers will be having green to white green color when ripe. Shriveled ends yield bitter, tough taste and texture.

Garlic

Select the Plump ones with firm bulbs.

Lemons and limes

For more juice, choose smooth skin and a thin peel that gives easily to hand pressure. For zest or slicing, choose firm, rough skinned fruit. Avoid the limes with yellow spots.

Onions

Choose brittle paper skin. There should not be any soft or moldy spots. Sprouting or woody center indicates spoilage. Onions should be stored in a dry place at room temperature other wise there is a chance of them getting spoiled fast.

Parsley

Choose the ones that are fresh looking and not wilted. Trim and inch of the stem bottoms and store the bunched parsley in a glass of water in the refrigerator to keep it fresh.

Pears

Select the ones that are ripe and store them in closed paper bags at room temperature with no light. Color depends on variety.

Peas

Always remember that the peas are sweetest when plump. Choose full pods and pale green color. Fresh peas are available from February to September period.

Raspberries

Berries mold rapidly and crush easily. Prepare and use within a 24-hour period. Fresh raspberries are available from May to January.

Strawberries

Select the ones that have a deep bright color with full green caps.

Tomatoes

Color can vary depending on variety. Choose tomatoes that appear firm, plump, well shaped and smooth. They should not have any blemishes. To ripen them evenly, place in a closed paper bag.

**Classes:**

Home:

Do you want to know how to cook barbecue? Are you thinking about showing off to your buds next summer at a cookout? Then sign on up for classes, with me, Brisket Bob. I’m an award winning pitmaster who helps out other pitmasters for a living. I offer classes for every level of knowledge and almost any work schedule. Those who do the best in the class, will get the chance to win a bottle of my best tasting BBQ sauce. The only requirement is that you cannot be the owner of a barbecue restaurant. If this is case and you’re still interested in learning about barbecue, simply email me at [brisketbob@barbecue.com](mailto:brisketbob@barbecue.com) and I will get back to you within 24 hours.

Class Times:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| October | | | | | | | |
|  | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
| 8-11 am | Beginner’s-1 |  | Beginner’s-1 |  |  |  |  |
| 12-3 pm |  | Intermediate-2 |  | Expert-1 | Intermediate-2 | Exper-1 | Beginner’s-2 |
| 4-7pm | Intermediate-1 |  | Intermediate-1 |  |  |  |  |
| 7-10pm |  | Beginners-2 |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Class Sign Ups:

**Contest:**

How good is your barbeque? Pretty good? Then send in a recipe to enter and win our contest of best pitmaster in New Orleans. Submit your sizzling hot or ultra-cool recipes for a chance to win 3 great prizes.

Prizes

Three winners will be chosen. The grand prize is a $25 gift certificate to amazon.com. The 2 runners up each win a $10 gift certificate to Amazon.com.

Recipe Contest Rules and Guidelines

1. Each recipe must be submitted between July 1st 2010 and midnight July 31st 2010.

2. Each recipe must contain at least one of Whole Food’s signature ingredients.

3. All the ingredients must be available at Whole Food’s.

4. Recipes must be your own creation and all submissions to the site become property of Whole Food’s Fan.com

5. Submitters must be 21 years or older and reside the United States.

Entries will be judged on creativity, taste, and general appeal.