

Title:

Where There's Smoke, There's Flavor Smoking Foods On Gas Grills

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Summary:

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Article Body:

Today's grillers are hungrier than ever for more flavorful foods, as evidenced by the steady increase in the sales of wood chips and wood chunks over the last several years (according to the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association).

"When you add particular kinds of wood smoke to your food, you are taking advantage of a technique that most people associate with charcoal. Actually, it's just about as easy to control wood smoke with a gas grill, and the results are fantastic," says Chef Jamie Purviance, author of "Weber's Real Grilling."

As one of the country's top grilling and barbecue experts, Purviance offers consumers useful tips when smoking meats, fish and vegetables on gas grills:

Choosing a Smoking Flavor. "The world of barbecue has its traditional pairings of certain woods with certain meats, like hickory with pork and mesquite with beef. Those traditions wouldn't last if they didn't taste great, but keep in mind that there are many flavors of wood and foods, other than pork and beef, that improve with a touch of smoke," says Purviance. Purviance suggests smoking with hardwoods provided they are sold dry and untreated. Avoid softwoods, like pine and fir, because they are too resinous for smoking.

According to Purviance, hardwood chips and chunks fall into three categories of flavor intensity: pungent (mesquite, hickory and pecan), moderate (oak, maple and alder) and mild (apple, cherry and pear). "Beef, lamb and pork handle the pungent woods really well," he adds. "For the moderate woods, I like fish, pork and poultry. It's amazing what a handful or two of oak chips can do for chicken pieces. Very quickly they pick up a deep wood-fired flavor without any

bitterness. The mild woods have an even sweeter, fruitier quality, which works beautifully with chicken and also with vegetables."

Prepping the Wood. Not quite ready for grilling, wood chips should be soaked in water for at least 30 minutes; chunks need at least a one-hour soak. Soaking ensures that chips/chunks will smolder rather than simply burn. Thoroughly drain and loosely fill the gas grill's smoker box, such as the one featured on some Weber Summit® grills, and leave enough room for air to circulate.

On the Rocks. Even without a smoking attachment, you can still enjoy the diverse, rich flavors imparted by smoking. Simply place presoaked wood chips in a foil pan, cover with aluminum foil, and poke enough holes in the foil to allow the smoke to escape. Once the grill is preheated, place the foil pan directly on the bars or lava rocks over the lit burner. Place the cooking grates on top, turn the burners on high, and close the lid. Begin cooking when the grill is fully smoking.

Smoking Sense. Whenever smoking your foods, Purviance offers this last reminder: Meats and vegetables will taste best if the smoke is kept inside the grill. So don't peek too much. Keep the lid down when grilling with wood. And, for safety, always allow the wood to cool completely before disposing it.