

taste buds

chef Larry Janes

Ready, set, lets go grill

A good barbecue — complete with a game of softball, an afternoon nap in the shade and maybe a cooling dip in the pool is what I'm practicing for. I figure that by the Fourth of July, I'll be in great shape — having had all that practice. (And I'm not talking softball here folks!)

Just about any food tastes great against a backdrop of fresh air and sunshine. Simple grilled burgers and tube steaks can be as tasty and loving as a hearty casserole that has simmered all afternoon.

So get those potatoes simmering for potato salad. Shape the burgers and marinate the chicken. Soak the corn and make sure there's plenty of mustard, ketchup and relish in the fridge for together, they all spell summertime!

The good thing about barbecue food is that almost all the preparation work is done ahead; grilling is the only last minute cooking you need to consider. Ah, but before the coals are lit and/or the propane is turned on, a few basics to ensure a truly pleasurable and memorable summer of barbecuing. (Yes, those who play hard have to work hard, if just for a little while!)

To begin, if you own a regular charcoal-type grill or kettle-grill and like me, set it away with virtually no cleaning, only to be greeted with great globs of gunk adhering to the grid, sides, top, handle and innards, get out the oven-cleaning mitts and get to work.

To make the job a little easier, the grid rack can be easily cleaned by placing it in a large plastic garbage bag to which a quart of full-strength ammonia has been added. Secure with a twist tie and lay flat in the sun for 2 hours. Remove the grid and hose off. The ammonia really cuts the grease and fat build-up and a strong hose usually removes most stubborn gunk. If need be, a quick swish with the wire brush will surely go the trick.

While the grid is baking in the bag, I remove any excess ashes with the shop-vac and then spray the interior with oven cleaner. An old long-handled toilet brush works great for light scouring. The exterior and lid gets a good wash with a good grease-cutting detergent. Then, after a final hose-down rinse and a short dry on a sunny day, I oil the wheels for easy gliding, rub some vegetable oil into the wood handles and spray the grid with a light coating of non-stick spray.

Gas grills can follow the same procedures but the burners should be removed and thoroughly cleaned to prevent clogging. Use small wooden skewers to clean the holes and always do a test run before cooking. Use an oven thermometer to make sure internal heat reaches at least 365° with the lid closed for 5 minutes. This will prevent any possibility of having to turn those beautiful steaks into tartare.

Of course, while all this happening, it is mandatory that the deer have a complete stock of necessary thirst quenchers. Yours truly always looks at the task and decides on a scale of one to 10 how difficult it will be. This allows me to compensate with the barbeques sliding scale of toughness. If the grill is in really bad shape, the Molson Gold might get pre-empted by a Margarita. Gee, I'll never forget the year we bought the grill and I had to assemble it, that was Southern Comfort Manhattan afternoon!

Once the grill is set, check the tools of the trade. Can opener with functioning church-key. Check Corkscrew. Check. (For cooking wines, of course) Cooler, cleaned with drainhole unplugged. Check. Pastry brush. (Brand new) Check. (After last year's Margarita afternoon, the plastic bristles of the oil brush melted on to the 22 lb. Butterball turkey. (This year, camelhair. Check.)

Tongs. Longhandle. Check. (No more singed, hairless arms) Metal Spatula, longhandle. Check. Dings, flattened out. Spitfork, longhandle. Check. New this year, I used last years to clean out my gutters.

Elbow length barbecue mitt. Contrary to what Timex says, it cannot take a baking and keep on ticking. Check. Spray bottle. Check. New this year. Ruined 9 lbs. of ribs when I used a Windex bottle by mistake. (Tied one of those cute little chais around it and fastened it to my barbecue so the kids won't get it)

For once in my life I had the foresight to purchase 50 lbs. of charcoal last fall at closeout prices. I'll drink to that. Now all I need is Sears to come out and fix my automatic ice maker and I'll be ready come Memorial Day weekend.

Can't wait? Try out these test recipes and let me know your secrets. I'll compile them and do an update for the Fourth of July.

Bon Appetit!

CHEDDAR BURGERS

Makes 8

- 2 lbs. ground chuck
- 8 oz. sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- 1 egg, beaten
- 3 tsp. Worcestershire
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

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Barbecues signal summer



photos by BILL BRUESLER/staff photographer

Livonia resident Ed Farhat takes advantage of recent good weather for a great day of barbecuing. Memorial Day typically marks the start of the barbecue season, which runs until the chilly fall winds begin.

American hobby goes state-of-art

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

'Tis the season for barbecue and what has been wrought is truly joyous.

Gone are the days of seasoned chicken charred on the outside and raw in the middle, or juicy steak laced with the taste of starter fluid.

Behold, barbecues featuring built-in gourmet centers complete with ice buckets and stereos, and state-of-the-art flavoring bars that conduct heat uniformly, assuring succulent results.

Barbecue, once a simple form of cookery requiring little more than coals, starter fluid and a bit of experience, has evolved into a hi-tech, multi-million dollar industry, according to Peter Stuart, co-owner of Federal Fireplace and BBQ Company in Southfield.

Barbecuing today is a serious culinary endeavor containing a myriad of possibilities.

And for novices who learned the hard way that it takes more than beginners' luck to produce tasty barbecue fare, the new innovations are more than welcome.

THERE ARE three primary types of barbecue — charcoal, gas and smoke.

Charcoal, the traditional method that was perfected by early man and continues to be the primary means of cooking in many poor countries, evokes fantasies of warm dreamy evenings, thick steaks and tall glasses of foamy beer.

While Texans possess a flair for cutting 55-gallon drums in half to build customized grills for Texas-sized crowds of hundreds, most Michiganders opt for more traditional means and simply buy their grills, based upon the thousands of barbecues that are sold by local dealers each year.

Most of the charcoal grills sold in Michigan are made by Weber, Stuart said. Weber manufactures grills in dozens of sizes, beginning with the smallest called a tailgater.

Tailgaters, little more than an 8-inch grill and a hood, are small and light enough to be carried by hand. They are great for beginning chefs who aren't serious about barbecue

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— Peter Stuart,
Federal Fireplace and BBQ
Company

cookery, campouts or mobile parties like their descriptive name. They cost around \$20.

KETTLE GRILLS, accounting for 99 percent of all Weber grills sold in Michigan, according to Stuart, start at about \$70 for a basic kettle with a standard 17-inch grill and a hood. Hoods are important to barbecue roasts and turkeys that require slow cooking.

Kettles continue upward in price to over \$300 for deluxe models. But other than coming equipped with an adjustable grill, heat indicator and ash pan, the primary difference in these more expensive models is size. Some are large enough to cook an entire pig or a side of beef, Stuart said.

Rotisseries for ribs, tumble baskets for shell fish, and shish kebabs are extras and must be purchased separately.

Chips used in charcoal grills have also become something of a specialty. In addition to the familiar hickory and mesquite, there is alder, oak and cherry, or for the more innovative chef, grape vine and corn cob.

The dated match and starter fluid that is known to leave a foul taste on food has been replaced with electric lighters, chimneys or self-lighting coils.

GAS GRILLS are where it's at in the barbecue industry, according to area dealers like John Johnston of Jimmies Rustics in Birmingham and Jim Abramovich of Town N Country Hardware in Garden City.

Gas grills account for an enormous spurt of growth in the industry during the past six years and for hi-tech innovations that boggle the culinary mind.

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Tasty recipes reap outdoor flavor

Where to go to find barbecue equipment, 2B

By Janice Brunson
staff writer

So you want to ape J.R. Ewing and impress the folks out on the ranch with your barbecuing acumen.

Chances are, the ranch is a patio and the barbecue is a somewhat more modest version than the \$1,500 South Fork model Ewing purportedly uses.

No matter. Results can be just as memorable, a special dining experience enjoyed in the splendor of your own yard.

To begin, according to area dealers in the business, barbecuing should never be attempted indoors or in any enclosed area like a garage. However, barbecues should be protected, particularly against wind.

The whole idea of barbecuing is to get out of the kitchen. Cookery hints, recipes and

menu ideas are endless, with all kinds of unique and imaginative possibilities. Hold onto your coals, or pants, for a sample of the unusual possibilities.

RICOTTA CHICKEN

Because of the time required in barbecuing, this recipe must be used with a gas grill that bastes in reverse or a charcoal grill with a cooking grid, a porcelain-enamelled plate that prevents direct contact between food and coals.

- 1 whole chicken (2½ to 3 lbs.)
- 12 ozs. ricotta cheese
- ¼ cups grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 egg
- 1 tsp. dried basil leaves
- ¼ tsp. dried tarragon leaves
- 2 tsp. minced parsley
- 1 large olive oil, minced
- Olive or vegetable oil

- ¼ tsp. dried basil leaves
- ¼ tsp. dried tarragon leaves
- Paprika

Cut chicken completely through breast bone; cut off wing tips and discard. Place chicken, skin side up, on counter; press down on chicken with palms of hands to "pop" bones so that chicken will lie flat. Loosen skin over top of chicken and drumsticks using sharp paring knife and fingers, starting at neck edge. Be careful not to tear or cut the skin. Mix ricotta and Parmesan cheese, egg, 1 tsp. basil, ¼ tsp. tarragon, the parsley and garlic. Carefully spoon cheese mixture under skin of chicken, pressing with fingers to distribute evenly over the chicken and drumsticks. Brush chicken lightly with oil; sprinkle with ¼ tsp. basil, ¼ tsp. tarragon and paprika. Place chicken, skin side up, on grill, cover and cook until chicken legs move easily and skin is well browned; let stand 10 minutes. Cut into quarters, cutting lengthwise and crosswise. Reassemble chicken on serving platter.

CHIMICHURRI SAUCE

Sauce with a western-Mexican flair for traditional barbecuing on any type or size of grill. If using charcoal, let coals burn at least 15-30 minutes before cooking. For additional flavor, experiment with flavored chips.

This sauce is excellent on meats of all kinds, including steak, sausage, pork chops or fish. Especially tasty on tuna steaks.

- 1 cup olive oil
- ¼ cup malt vinegar
- ¼ cup minced parsley or cilantro
- ¼ cup minced onion
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp. dried oregano leaves
- 2 bay leaves
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper

Mix all ingredients. Lightly score meat.

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Minimize your risk of grilling up cancer

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

Cooking outdoors or on the kitchen stove, any browning of meat leads to the formation of carcinogens, said a leading health expert.

A well-done barbecued steak is said to have the same cancer-causing chemicals as 600 cigarettes. That's the bad news.

The good news is that there are ways to minimize the risk.

"When you cook meat, use very lean cuts," advises Dr. John Weisburger, preventive medicine specialist with the American Health Foundation, of Valhalla, New York.

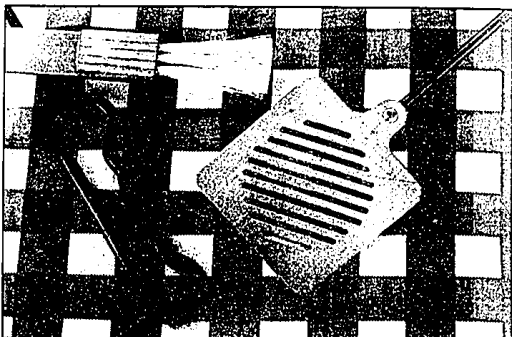
Weisburger was keynote speaker at 120 scientists from around the world met recently in Dearborn to discuss cancer-causing chemicals.

"There are some carcinogens in the environment that lead to cancer," he said. "Fat leads to (the promotion of) bioactive in the gut."

This deadly combination is responsible for America's high rate of breast, colon and pancreatic cancer, Weisburger said.

"Barbecuing is no worse than using the frying pan or broiler — any form of browning leads to the presence of carcinogens," he said.

Weisburger offered these nutritional tips: • Cut fat intake. The American diet gets 40 to 45 percent of its calories from fat, he said. In Japan, where the rate is 10 to 15 percent, there is very low incidence of breast, colon and pancreatic cancer.



Barbecuing basics include tools such as the spatula and a pastry brush for loading food with that tasty sauce while cooking. Utensils furnished by Cornwell Pool and Patio, Plymouth.

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