

Take the dare, and cook fish on the grill

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test is to insert the tip of a small, sharp, paring knife into the thickest part of a fish fillet during cooking. Leave the tip of the knife in the fillet for approximately five seconds. Then withdraw it and carefully test by feeling the tip of the knife with your fingertips. When the fish feels hot to the touch, the fish is cooked.

Another way to gauge doneness is to gently press the fillet at its thickest part, and when the fish feels springy as opposed to slack, it is sufficiently cooked. Caution: this test should be done only by backyard chefs with considerable experience.

Perhaps the most exact method for determining doneness is to test the temperature of the fish with an instant-read thermometer (often called a meat/yeast thermometer used by most restaurants). The thermometer begins to measure the temperature of any food the moment it is inserted.

Fish is thoroughly cooked but still juicy and not yet at the flaky stage when the temperature reaches 125 degrees. Remember that fish (like

meat) continues to cook slightly after it is removed from the heat. If you have a recipe that calls for making a sauce or assembling the fish with other ingredients, count on several minutes of residual cooking time. Keep the fish covered with foil or a plate during this time.

GRILLING ADDS enormous flavor, particularly when oak, mesquite, apple or elder fuels the fire. In addition to great taste, fish takes on attractive markings from the grill which definitely adds to its eye appeal on the plate. Grilling cooks fish rapidly, so, right off the bat, save flatter fish such as sole, flounder or perch for indoor cooking.

Fillet of salmon, bluefish, tuna or seabass and steaks such as swordfish, salmon or shark are the top choices for grilling. Not to be outdone, however, are the firm-fleshed fish such as monkfish, scallops and lobster, which can easily be skewered with inexpensive bamboo skewers or metallic swords. As with most baking techniques, it's best to keep the sizes of the fillets, steaks or skewered chunks approximate so

that you can be assured of uniformity of doneness.

A well-oiled surface will help the backyard chef keep grilled fish from sticking to the grid. For this reason, most restaurants who excel in grilling will recommend that the hot grid be first rubbed with a dish towel lightly soaked in oil. Repeating this procedure before flipping the fish will ensure professional results with minimal effort.

Novices will appreciate the usefulness of a gadget called the fish grill which, simply put, is a pre-made wire cage that will hold the fillets, steaks or whatever and keep them from falling into the fiery depths below. Fish grills can be purchased at most barbecue shops and range in price from about \$10 to more than \$40 for deluxe versions.

Yours truly has experimented with these fish grills and finds them to be very helpful to the novice but, in all honesty, the grill and up being just one more item to wash after the feast, for the more advanced backyard chef. Thinner fillets fare better in these grills. Most steaks, especially firm ones like swordfish, tuna and

salmon do not require the use of a fish grill.

WHEN IT COMES to the positioning of coals and fire for cooking fish on the grill, opinions vary. Cindy Pawlcyn, one of California's hottest chefs, mounds the coals and hickory chips on one side of the barbecue, then arranges the fish over the other side. That way, she explains, the fish is cooked by the smoke rather than the direct heat over the coals. The delicate smoky flavor created by this method is unbeatable. "Chicken works well, too," she adds.

This backyard chef prefers to cook directly over gray, molten coals that have been started at least 40 minutes before. I position the grid about 6-8 inches above the coals and allow the grid to heat up for about 5 minutes before wiping with oil and beginning the grilling process. Techniques vary, and you are your own best judge as to how you like it. Fish, unlike red meats and poultry, can benefit greatly by incorporating a simple marinade before the cooking process begins. It is not necessary to marinate for long periods

of time. Usually 30-45 minutes will suffice.

In addition to imparting unique flavors from the marinade, brushing the fish during the cooking process will keep it incredibly juicy and tender, barring overcooking. For simpler tastes, a squeeze of fresh lemon or lime juice and a slathering of butter will do the same.

When it comes to preparing sauces for fish, this writer refuses to mask the delicate flavors achieved by grilling, with a heavy sauce. Sauces are great for indoor cooking, but you want to incorporate the goodness and simplicity of grilling. Therefore, I recommend that if a sauce is deemed necessary, it be light and delicate.

NEVER BATHE the freshly grilled fish in the sauce but simply arrange the sauce on a plate or platter and adorn the fish on top of the sauce so that it can be enjoyed with or without, depending on the diners wishes. Better yet, serve the sauce on the side and simply decorate the fish with a little fresh,

chopped dill, chives or garlic butter.

When it comes to necessary gadgets that are deemed a must for the backyard chef, it is recommended you keep a clean spray bottle within arm's reach at all times. Should a sudden flare-up occur, it can be quickly doused. When pressed for time, water can be used, but I enjoy combining a watery blend of broth and white wine. In addition, keep a long-handled spatula, tongs and a pastry brush handy. Long-handled forks should be kept for steaks and chicken, as constant prodding with a sharp fork will make for a less juicy fish.

Last but not least, never underestimate the usefulness of a long-armed insulated mitt that can reposition the grid or pick up red-hot skewers.

If you're thinking of breaking out the barbecue and utilizing it for more than burgers, steaks and poultry, you're in for a pleasant surprise when you attempt to grill fish. Look at it this way, the neighborhood cat population will be your friend for life.

SWORDFISH WITH GINGER, LEEK AND GARLIC

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter or margarine
3 medium leeks, cut into 1/2-inch-thick rounds
4 medium cloves garlic, minced
1-inch-piece fresh ginger, grated

salt and pepper to taste
oil
swordfish steaks

Prepare the grill. Melt butter in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add leeks, garlic and ginger and

cook until leeks are tender, stirring frequently, about 15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Coat grill rack with olive oil. Sprinkle fish with salt and pepper, brush with olive oil. Arrange on a grill and cook until just opaque, about 3 minutes per side.

Transfer fish to plates, serve with warm sauce.

GRILLED SALMON WITH DILL BUTTER

1/2 cup softened butter or margarine
1/2 cup firmly packed stemmed dill

sprigs
salmon steaks or fillets

Place the butter in a food processor with the fresh dill and process until smooth, about 15 seconds. Remove and set aside. Prepare grill and wipe with oil. Place salmon on the grill and cook to desired doneness. Just before serving, slather about 2 teaspoons of the dill butter onto each fish and allow to melt. Serve immediately.

SKEWERED TUNA CHUNKS WITH SESAME GINGER SAUCE
1 tablespoon sesame seeds, toasted

2 teaspoons peeled, grated ginger
2 tablespoons honey
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 1/2 pounds tuna steaks, cubed into 2-inch cubes
2 limes, cut into eighths
4 skewers

Combine sesame seeds with ginger, honey and soy sauce. Mix well, set aside. Skewer tuna chunks onto the skewers, alternating with lime wedges. Prepare grill and grill tuna over hot coals for 2 minutes on each side. Brush with sesame-ginger sauce throughout the cooking process.

cooking calendar

LIFESTYLE EXPO

Fluorine Mark of Weight Watchers will appear at 11 a.m. Friday on the main stage at the Retirement Lifestyle Expo '89 at the Cobo Conference/Exhibition Center in Detroit.

She will speak on "Whatever Your Age, Be the Best That You Can Be."

During the expo, Weight Watchers will offer cooking demonstrations at noon and 3 p.m. Friday-Saturday and

2:30 p.m. Sunday.

CHEF HARVE

Weight Watchers Chef Harve (Harvey Laphorn), who lost more than 200 pounds on the Weight

Watchers program, will be featured at the noon and 1 p.m. meetings

Wednesday at the Omni/Millender Fitness Center in Detroit. For more information call 559-9133.

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