

2 UNIQUE



KELLI LEWTON

For a 'reel' treat try grilled fish

Summer has swept in fast, hot and furious this year. Barbecuing and grilling seem to be the preferred cooking methods. We are putting everything on the grill from pizza to whole turkeys and loving it. Many people are grilling fish, seafood and shellfish. These jewels of the sea offer a fun and scrumptious change from hot dogs, hamburgers and steaks.

Seafood consumption has risen 25 percent in the past 10 years, according to industry figures. With this increased demand for a large variety of fresh fish, aquaculture is becoming more and more prevalent. Salmon, oysters, mussels, tilapia and abalone are just a few of the species being successfully farmed.

Color and cut of fish

The color and cut of fish is almost always a sign of flavor intensity and texture. Most all, pearly white fish are milder tasting, flaky and tender. Darker fleshed fish such as mahi-mahi, bluefish, tuna, swordfish and salmon, are better suited to the grill.

Buying and storing

One of my favorite kitchen proverbs is — "In cooking, as in all the arts, simplicity is the sign of perfection." Cuisine is when things taste like themselves. (Curnosky).

Buying whole fish is always a good bet. The less fish is processed and handled, the better.

The surface of the fish should be shiny and sparkling, have almost a sheen, and be taut to the touch. Don't be afraid to ask the person you buy your fish from to allow you to touch and smell your future dinner for freshness.

Fish should be stiff which indicates it has been recently caught.

A fresh sea or water product will have no odor, except the smell of sea or a fresh pond.

The grills should be red. Avoid any product that appears to have a white film or slime.

Check for any bruises or lacerations, which indicates mishandling. Fillets should appear to have a tight grain, those with gaps indicate age or mishandling.

Look to see if the fish is stored or presented on ice. At home, store fish on ice in a perforated vessel, such as a colander, cover with wax paper or plastic and top with more ice.

Grilling

Darker fleshed fillets, and steaks, approximately 1- to 1 1/2-inches thick, are your best bet.

Build a hot fire or preheat gas grill 10 minutes with cover down before grilling.

Brush steaks or fillets with a little olive oil before placing on clean hot grates. Mix herbs and spices with brushing oil.

Allow 6 1/2 to 8 minutes cooking time per inch of thickness, which is the standard rule of thumb, for proper cooking of fish.

A little Dijon style mustard brushed on about 3 minutes before end of cooking time will add a little zip to salmon or trout.

Try brushing a little hoisin or soy sauce on your next tuna or halibut steak.

A little pesto or chili rub half way through grilling time will add immense flavor.

Chef Kelli L. Lewton is owner of 2 Unique Caterers and Event Planners in Bloomfield Hills. A graduate of Schoolcraft College's Culinary Arts program, Kelli is a part-time instructor at the college. Look for her column in Taste on the second Sunday of the month. See recipes inside.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- Men who are rolling in dough

Put some

into your summer

BY PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

Outdoor cooking is the way I get my husband, Andrew, involved in the meal, without making a mess, in my kitchen. However, since we are approaching Father's Day, this is a great time for all of us to review a few grilling basics.

We recently came across a cookbook from 1942, called "Grill and Skillet." It is fascinating to read how barbecuing has changed over the years, and yet how the basic cooking methods have remained the same.

The booklet, published by AAA Michigan, says that the first outdoor cook in Michigan was probably a Mound Builder who squatted over the coals of his fire and turned out medium-rare muskrat. Then came Native Americans, followed by Grosseliers and Radisson, the first explorers of Lake Superior country back in 1659.

"The first thing to be kept in mind in this outdoor cooking is that it should be simple — no elaborate dishes," says The Old AAA Traveler. "And you won't need elaborate dishes, for there's always an appetite in the open air."

Isn't that the truth! Camping, hiking, fishing or other outdoor activities can make for hearty appetites.

To grill or barbecue

Although many people use the words interchangeably, there is a difference between grilling and barbecuing.

The main idea behind grilling is to cook hot and fast. It is exactly like broiling except the heat source is on the bottom not the top. You want to get a nice, slightly charred seared crust on the food exterior while cooking the interior to the desired degree of doneness. Grilling tends to dry out food. This is why grilled food is sometimes served with a sauce or dressing.

The first rule of barbecuing is "low and slow." The temperature at the surface of the meat should be 200°F to 275°F. It is always best to check the temperature with a food thermometer, rather than your eyes or by touch.

True barbecuing usually involves indirect cooking with smoke. The meat may take from three to 24 hours to cook. For me, tasty barbecued food gets baked in a spicy sauce.

Whichever method you decide to use, here are some ideas that sizzle!

■ Oil the grates. Using some vegetable oil or meat fat.

■ Trim off the rim or collar of fat on steaks and chops before grilling to reduce the risk of flame fire up.

■ Make a few cuts around the exterior of the meat so it doesn't curl up under the high heat.

■ Avoid excessively thick cuts of meat. Anything more than 1 1/2 inches thick may not cook thor-

oughly inside before burning on the outside.

■ Baste the food with oil during cooking. Apply barbecue sauce only during the last 12 to 20 minutes of cooking.

■ Cook over glowing coals covered with ash. Try this test to see whether your coals are hot enough. Carefully put your hand a couple of inches above the hot coals and about where your rack sits. If you can hold your hand there for about two seconds ("one Mississippi, two Mississippi") then the coals are about perfect.

■ Cook fish fillets skin side up first to help retain moisture and flavor.

■ Cook chicken and other poultry bone side down. The bones will transfer heat to the flesh above and provide insulation. Finish cooking on the fleshy side, but to keep the skin from sticking, make sure to lower the heat.

■ When grilling sausage, don't get the grill too hot or the casing may burst and you'll lose flavor. Always use tongs so as not to puncture the casing.

■ When grilling, after the initial searing, bank the coals to one side. On a gas grill, move the meat, lower the heat or turn off one of the burners. The food is now bathing in heat but away from direct flame.

■ Some foods, such as ribs, can be precooked before grilling. Here are two methods:

In the oven: Place ribs on a rack in a shallow roasting pan with 1/2-inch of water. Cover with foil and bake at 300°F for 2 1/2 hours.

On the stove: Fill a large pot with water. Bring water to a boil and add liquid smoke. Add ribs to water and cover. Turn down heat and let simmer for 35 minutes.

Veggies and fruits

There are lots of other wonderful foods to grill besides meat, fish and poultry. These include asparagus, corn-on-the-cob (husk on; remove silk first), eggplant (sliced), peppers, mushrooms, tomatoes, onions, apples, pears, pineapple, papaya, and bananas (skin on, remove at the table).

Be sure to cut fruits and vegetables into large enough chunks so they don't fall through the grill grate. You can also use skewers or specially designed grill pans. These are great for fish and small portions of meat too.

It's time to hit the deck (or patio) and light up the barbecue!

Peggy Martinelli-Everts, R.D., a Clarkston resident, is a registered dietitian and director of clinical operations for HDS Services, a Farmington-Hills based food service and hospitality management and consulting company, specializing in food service management for hospitals, long-term care facilities, businesses, private clubs and private schools.

See recipes inside

Rub some flavor into meats for grilling

Rubs are used to accent the natural flavor of meat. The best time to apply a rub is 30 minutes to two hours before cooking. Combine ingredients and blend well. Place ingredients on a cutting board or large pan and press the meat firmly into them. Work ingredients into both sides of the meat with the heel of your palm or the flat side of a cleaver.

BBQ RUB

(Yield 20 oz.)
1 cup paprika
1/4 cup ground cumin
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup chili powder
1/4 cup salt
1/4 cup black pepper
2 tablespoons cayenne pepper

TANGY RUB

(Yield 8 oz.)
1/4 cup ground allspice
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup onion powder
2 tablespoons salt
2 tablespoons nutmeg
2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons thyme
1 teaspoon ground cloves

FIREHOUSE RUB

(Yield 16 oz.)
3/4 cup paprika
1/4 cup black pepper
1/4 cup celery salt
1/4 cup sugar
2 tablespoons onion powder
2 tablespoons dry mustard
2 teaspoons cayenne pepper
2 teaspoons lemon pepper
Pastes are great for basting meat on the grill.

HERB PASTE

(Yield 1 1/2 cups)
1 1/2 cups fresh herbs (such as basil, cilantro, rosemary, thyme or a combination of same)
3 tablespoons chopped garlic
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup olive oil

Combine herbs in food processor. Add remaining ingredients and puree to a paste. Store in an airtight container in the refrigerator.

Recipes from Garden Food Service

Toss up a main dish salad to stay cool as a cucumber

MAIN DISH MIRACLE



MURIEL G. WAGNER

has masculine appeal because steak is a major ingredient. You may be able to pass along the chore of cooking the steak to the outdoor chef at your house.

If this plan doesn't work, a large heavy skillet, like my friendly black iron fry pan, is ideal for top of the stove cooking. Spray the pan with non-stick spray and heat over high heat until quite hot. Sear the steak about 6 minutes on each side. Check for doneness. Remove the steak from the skillet and let it stand a few minutes to "set" the juices before you slice the meat.

The cut of meat that I use is beef eye

of round — not tender cut by a long shot. But it is the lowest in fat and saturated fat of any of the steak cuts. A lemon juice marinade helps tenderize the meat and adds flavor. Thin slices cut across the grain also enhance the perception of tenderness.

You probably already know that fat, but it is the lowest in fat and saturated fat of any of the steak cuts. A lemon juice marinade helps tenderize the meat and adds flavor. Thin slices cut across the grain also enhance the perception of tenderness.

I used a "curly" cucumber because these are usually not waxed. They are available at many produce markets throughout the area. The peel is included for extra fiber and flavor. Head lettuce is mostly water and low in fiber. Try romaine, leaf lettuce, spinach or a blend instead. You might even spike the flavor with some of the more peppery greens, such as arugula, watercress or nasturtium leaves. Enhance the flavor further by using freshly grated Parmesan cheese instead of the ready-grated canned variety.

I like to serve this salad with warm slices of garlic bread. You, no doubt, have your favorite reduced-fat version.

EATING YOUNGER'S STEAK SALAD ITALIANO

1/2 cup reduced-sodium beef bouillon
2 teaspoons garlic (3-4 cloves), chopped
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
3/4 cup fresh lemon juice (approximately three lemons)
8 oz. beef eye of round
1 pint cherry tomatoes, washed and halved
1 curly cucumber, washed and sliced
2 tablespoons fresh basil, chopped
1 red bell pepper, washed and cut into strips
1 small red onion, washed, peeled and sliced thinly
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
4 cups romaine or other salad greens, washed and dried

Combine bouillon, garlic, oil, Worcestershire sauce and lemon juice. Refrigerate half of mixture. Pour remainder over steak in plastic bag. Marinate in refrigerator for 6 hours or overnight. Turn bag at least twice. Grill or broil steak, basting with marinade. Discard remaining marinade. Slice steak thinly. Toss vegetables with remaining (refrigerated) half of marinade. Add steak. Toss briefly to distribute steak. Serves 4.

Nutrition facts: Calories 192; fat, 5.5 g; saturated fat, 2.1 g; cholesterol, 52 mg; sodium, 165 mg.

Food exchanges: 2 lean meat, 3 vegetables.

Look for Main Dish Miracle on the second Sunday of the month in Taste. Muriel G. Wagner is a registered dietitian and nutrition therapist with an office in Southfield. She publishes "Eating Younger," a quarterly newsletter with recipes and nutrition tips. To subscribe, send a check for \$12.00 to "Eating Younger," P.O. Box 8902, Farmington Hills, Mich., 48039.