

Grill the Perfect Hamburger



Choose the Best Meat and Make Good-Sized Patties

The fat-to-lean ratio of the meat is critical for a juicy burger; equal parts ground chuck and ground sirloin consistently deliver the best balance of flavor and fat. If you want a deeper, richer, beefier flavor, buy grass-fed beef. Gently shape the meat into patties just until they hold together, and make them thick enough so they will pick up a grill flavor without overcooking. They should weigh about 1/3 pound and measure 3/4 to 1 inch thick.



Prevent a “Swollen Belly”

Make an indentation in the center of each patty with your thumb. This prevents the “swollen belly” syndrome: burgers that are not as juicy as they should be and are puffed up and smaller than you intended.

Cool Down the Patties and Heat up the Fire

Chill your patties in the refrigerator—a half hour is good, and an hour is even better—before you grill them. They will hold together better over the fire and cook more evenly. A burger picks up caramelized flavor when it hits a sizzling-hot grill, so start with a hot fire. You can always adjust the heat afterward.



Don’t Press Burgers and Do Toast Buns

Never press down on a burger with a spatula when it is on the grill. All that does is push out all the flavorful juices. Give the buns a quick toasting on the grill—this simple step will help boost the burgers’ quality by a mile.



Don’t Overdo the Condiments

Let the burger shine. Try a slice of cheese, a little mayonnaise, mustard or ketchup, a tomato slice and thinly sliced onions; caramelize them if you have the time.

WILLIAMS-SONOMA TECHNIQUE CLASS

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The Grill Master: The Classics

Fire up flavor and take grilling to a whole new level with our expert tips and techniques that guarantee delicious results every time.

Grill the Perfect Steak

Aside from burgers and hot dogs, steaks hit the grill more often than just about anything else. Why? Because it’s just doggone good eating. Here are some tips on how to cook the perfect grilled steak



Buy Good Meat

Grass-fed and grass-finished beef tastes better and has a bolder flavor that holds up particularly well against the lick of the grill’s flames.

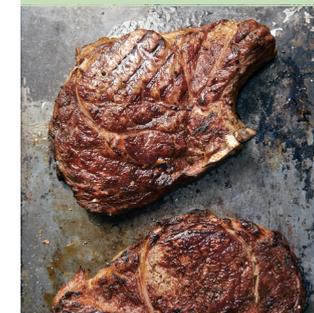
Steaks for the Grill

The best cuts for grilling come from the short loin, sirloin and rib sections. Other cuts, such as flank, skirt and hanger steaks, can also be grilled successfully, but usually need a marinade to make them tender.



Simple Seasoning

Sprinkle the steak liberally on both sides with salt and pepper when you take it out of the refrigerator, which helps it form a nice crust over the fire. Also, brush steaks on both sides with a little olive oil (not extra virgin). This facilitates the heat transfer, so you get an evenly browned crust and a delicious steak house flavor.



Timing Is Important

Professionals use touch to gauge doneness, and so can you. Touch your index finger to your cheek. When the meat feels this way, the steak is rare. Touch the tip of your nose; that firmness equates to medium. Your forehead is well done. But please don’t go there.

Let It Rest

If you cut into a piece of beef as soon as it comes off the grill, you will lose precious juices. Let most steaks rest for at least 5 minutes—10 minutes is even better—to give the juices time to redistribute evenly throughout the meat.

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The Ultimate Grilled Steak

In a small bowl, stir together the olive oil and herbs.

Trim off the excess fat from the steaks; reserve a 1-inch piece to grease the grill grate. Generously season the steaks with salt and pepper, gently pressing the seasonings into the meat. Place the steaks in a large baking dish, pour the herbed oil over the top and turn to coat well. Let stand for 10 to 15 minutes.

Prepare a hot fire in a grill. Using long tongs or a carving fork, grease the preheated grill grate with the reserved fat; it should smoke and sizzle immediately and begin to melt.

Remove the steaks from the marinade, letting the excess drip back into the dish; discard the marinade. Place the steaks directly over high heat, cover the grill and cook until the steaks are nicely grill-marked, 2 to 3 minutes. Turn the steaks over, cover the grill and cook until nicely grill-marked on the other side. Continue to turn and grill until cooked to your liking.

Transfer the steaks to a carving board, cover loosely with aluminum foil and let rest for 5 minutes. Cut away the rib bones and thickly slice the steaks. Season with salt and pepper and serve with your favorite steak sauce. Serves 4.

Tips on selecting steaks: On or off the bone, the rib steak (or rib-eye) is the first choice of grilling aficionados. The second choice for the ultimate grilled steak is the sirloin strip steak. Look for hormone-free prime or choice rancher's reserve beef, Black Angus or grass-fed beef. Stay away from prepackaged select beef displayed in plastic wrap in the supermarket case.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *On the Grill*, by Willie Cooper (Oxmoor House, 2009).

2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
3 to 4 Tbs. chopped fresh herbs, such as rosemary, sage, thyme and marjoram
2 bone-in rib or boneless rib-eye steaks, each 10 to 12 oz. and 1½ to 2 inches thick
Coarse salt and freshly cracked pepper, to taste

Grill the Perfect BBQ Chicken

Classic barbecued chicken doesn't begin with boneless, skinless chicken breasts. You have to have bones to develop great flavor. Nor do you want your chicken to be burnt on the outside and raw on the inside, which is what happens to too many cooks. Here is how to fix those problems and more.



Brine the Bird

Brining adds some flavor, but more importantly, it ensures a moist result. It also makes the timing a little less fussy.

Pat It Dry

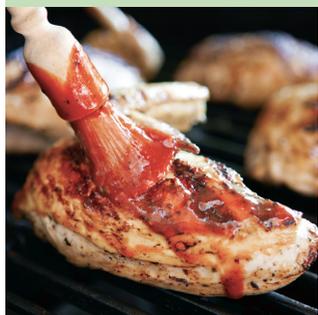
Don't forget this step before you throw the chicken on the grill. Patting the pieces dry with paper towels helps the surface caramelize, which is the slight charring that takes place once the meat hits the heat.

Use Two Heat Levels

The chicken gets a quick sear over direct heat, but most of the grilling is done over indirect heat. That lower heat helps to develop an intense barbecue flavor.

Sauce It Up

Using indirect heat allows you to brush the barbecue sauce on the chicken earlier without fear of the sauce burning. That extra brushing time means you'll end up with more of the signature tangy flavor of good barbecue.



Classic BBQ Chicken

To make the brine, in a large bowl, combine the water, salt, basil, coriander seeds, peppercorns, mustard seeds, garlic and bay leaves and stir until the salt dissolves. Use immediately.

Place the chicken pieces in a large sealable plastic bag and pour in the brine. Seal the bag closed, squish the brine around the chicken and refrigerate overnight.

At least 30 minutes before you plan to begin grilling, remove the chicken from the refrigerator and remove the pieces from the brine. Discard the brine. Rinse the chicken pieces briefly in cold water and pat dry with paper towels. Lightly sprinkle on all sides with pepper and garlic.

Prepare a grill for indirect grilling over medium heat; the internal grill temperature should be about 350°F. If using charcoal, bank the lit coals on either side of the grill bed, leaving a strip in the center without heat, and place a drip pan in the center. If using gas, preheat the burners, then turn off 1 or more of the burners to create a cooler zone. Brush and oil the grill grate.

Place the chicken pieces on the grill over the direct-heat area and sear, turning once, for 2 minutes per side. Move the chicken pieces to the indirect-heat area, cover the grill and cook for 30 minutes. Now, start brushing the chicken with the barbecue sauce, turning and brushing the pieces every 5 minutes, for about 15 minutes more. The chicken is ready when it is firm to the touch and the juices run clear when a thigh or breast is pierced with a knife tip.

Transfer the chicken pieces to a platter and serve immediately. Pass the remaining sauce at the table. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Grill Master*, by Fred Thompson (Weldon Owen, 2011).

For the basic poultry brine:
8 cups water
5 Tbs. kosher salt
2 Tbs. dried basil
2 Tbs. coriander seeds
1 Tbs. peppercorns
1 Tbs. yellow mustard seeds
1 tsp. granulated garlic
2 bay leaves

1 chicken, about 4 lb., neck and giblets removed, chicken cut into 4 pieces

Freshly ground pepper for sprinkling

Granulated garlic for sprinkling

2 cups of your favorite barbecue sauce



The Perfect Hamburger

Use your imagination to jazz up a classic hamburger any way you want. For an Asian twist, omit the Worcestershire sauce and salt, add a dash of soy sauce, and use chopped green onion instead of yellow onion. For a French-style hamburger, omit the Worcestershire sauce, halve the salt, and add 1 Tbs. each of crumbled blue cheese and chopped mushrooms along with a dash of red wine. For a Provençal flavor, omit the Worcestershire sauce, double the garlic, and add 1 Tbs. each of chopped dried tomatoes and pitted black olives. Vary the garnishes along with the seasonings. For health reasons, all ground meat should be cooked at least to the medium-well stage.

Prepare a medium-hot fire in a grill.

In a large bowl, mix together the beef, yellow onion, garlic, salt, pepper and Worcestershire sauce. Form the mixture into 4 patties, each ¾ inch thick.

Grill the hamburgers directly over medium-high heat, turning once, 3 to 5 minutes per side. Check for doneness by cutting into a hamburger near the center or testing with an instant-read thermometer. No pink should show on the inside, and the internal temperature should register at least 160°F on an instant-read thermometer. If making cheeseburgers, place a slice of cheese on top of each hamburger during the last 3 minutes of cooking.

During the last 2 to 3 minutes of cooking, toast the hamburger buns, cut side down, on the grill. Serve the hamburgers on the buns with tomato, white onion, lettuce, dill pickle and condiments. Serves 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma Collection Series, *Grilling*, by Denis Kelly (Simon & Schuster, 2002).

1 lb. ground chuck or ground lean beef
2 Tbs. finely chopped yellow onion
1 tsp. minced garlic
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. freshly ground pepper
1 or 2 dashes of Worcestershire sauce
4 slices cheddar or Swiss cheese (optional)
4 hamburger buns, split
Sliced tomato for serving

Sliced sweet white onion, such as Maui, Vidalia or Walla Walla, for serving

Torn lettuce for serving
Sliced dill pickle for serving

Ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard or other condiments of your choice for serving