

June 24, 2012

# The Grill Master: Fish & Seafood

Whether you fancy cedar-planked grilled lobster with drawn butter, seafood kabobs or grilled wild salmon, seafood is ideal for summertime entertaining. It's quick and easy to prepare—plus healthful and delicious.

## Secrets to Great Grilling: Seafood

Firm-fleshed, thickly cut fish, such as tuna, salmon, swordfish, halibut, grouper and sea bass, cook best on the grill. Shellfish, such as lobster, shrimp, scallops, oysters and mussels, also benefit from a light charring on a grill.

## Seafood for the Grill

- When cut into chunks, hearty fish, along with whole shrimp and scallops, are also good for kabobs.
- Use a hinged basket for delicate sole and trout fillets. Place the fillets on a bed of sliced citrus to prevent the fish from sticking to the grill grate.
- Stuff whole fish with herbs, citrus slices or other aromatics for extra flavor and moisture while grilling.
- Grill salmon on a cedar plank for an intriguing smoky note.

## Shopping for Seafood

- Whole fish should have clear eyes; bright, intact scales and skin; and red, moist gills. They should also be gutted, cleaned and scaled before being placed in the display case. Fillets and steaks should look moist and bright and have a fresh, clean scent.
- Choose firm, sweet-smelling fresh shrimp that are still in the shell when possible. (Most “fresh” shrimp have been previously frozen on the fishing boat, then thawed.)
- Look for creamy white or slightly pink scallops with a mild scent. The best are sold as “dry,” meaning they have not been treated with a solution to help them absorb more water.
- Purchase live lobsters—the feistier the better. Male lobsters will have slightly larger claws, while females have slightly bigger tails.
- Oysters and mussels should have a mild, sweet smell, and their shells should be closed tightly and feel heavy with water. Never buy oysters or mussels that remain open when touched.
- All seafood should be kept very cold, preferably on a bed of ice set over a perforated pan, until the moment it's grilled.

Visit [williams-sonoma.com](http://williams-sonoma.com) to search our extensive recipe collection, find menus and tips for entertaining, and browse an expanded selection of products in every category.

## Preparing Seafood for Grilling

- Trim off excess skin from fish fillets or steaks and remove any small bones with needle-nose pliers.
- Refresh frozen shrimp before cooking by soaking in cold salted water for 10 to 15 minutes, then rinse well. Shell shrimp by pulling off the heads, if present. Carefully pull off the legs on the inside curve of the shrimp. Peel off the shell, beginning at the head end of the shrimp. Devein shrimp after shelling by cutting along the back of the shrimp with a small knife. Gently lift and scrape away the dark vein, if present, with the knife tip, then rinse the shrimp under cold running water. Drain the shrimp on paper towels before proceeding with the recipe.
- Rinse scallops and, if present, remove the small tendon attached to the side.
- Cut lobsters in half lengthwise, exposing the tail meat, and remove the grain sac and white intestinal veins.
- Scrub oysters with a stiff brush and rinse well before shucking. Use a folded cloth to cushion the oyster in your palm and protect your hand from the shucking knife. To shuck, grasp the oyster so the flat top shell faces up. Holding an oyster knife in your other hand, insert its tip into the oyster's hinge. Twist the knife sharply to break the hinge. Run the knife carefully along the inside surface of the top shell, severing the muscle that grips it but being careful not to cut the oyster or to spill its liquor. Discard the top shell. Carefully cut the muscle under the oyster to loosen it from the shell.
- Scrub the grit off the shells of fresh mussels with a stiff-bristled brush, then remove the beards, if needed, by pulling or cutting them off just before cooking. Discard any mussels that feel light, as they are likely dead, or any that are heavy with sand.

## Testing Fish for Doneness

- Fish is done when the tip of a small, sharp knife can easily separate the flesh into broad flakes. Unless you are deliberately cooking to rare or medium-rare, as with tuna, the fish should be still moist at its center and the flesh should be just opaque and easy to flake. If the flesh is already flaking without being prodded, the fish is overdone.

## Testing Shellfish for Doneness

- Lobsters are done when their shells turn bright red and the flesh becomes creamy white with no trace of translucence.
- Shrimp are done when the shells just turn bright and the flesh is just opaque. Take care not to overcook shrimp, which can become dry and rubbery.
- Scallops should feel slightly firm when lightly pressed with your fingers, and the flesh should be moist and just opaque when done.
- Oysters and mussels are done as soon as the shells pop open; always discard any that fail to open.



## Shellfish and Vegetable Skewers

*Cooking the shellfish on one set of skewers and the vegetables on another ensures perfect doneness for both. Grilling over an open fire accentuates the sweetness of the shellfish and vegetables.*

If using wooden skewers, soak 12 skewers in water to cover for at least 30 minutes.

In a small bowl, combine the garlic, thyme, bay leaves, a pinch of pepper and the olive oil. Set the flavored oil aside.

Thread a shrimp onto a skewer so that it forms a C-shape. Thread a scallop horizontally onto the skewer. Repeat to add 1 more shrimp and 1 more scallop onto the skewer. Assemble 5 additional skewers in the same manner. Lay the skewers in a shallow dish and drizzle with about 2 Tbs. of the flavored oil. Squeeze the lemon half over all and turn to coat evenly.

Thread alternating pieces of the zucchini, bell peppers, onion and cherry tomatoes onto the remaining 6 skewers. Lay the skewers in a separate shallow dish, sprinkle with the salt and a pinch of pepper, and brush with about half of the remaining flavored oil.

Prepare a medium-hot fire in a grill. Lightly brush the grill grate with canola oil.

Lay the skewers across the hottest part of the fire. Cook, turning once, until the shrimp are opaque throughout and the scallops show dark brown grill marks (it's fine if the scallops are slightly translucent in the centers), about 3 minutes per side. Cook the vegetables until the zucchini is tender and nicely marked with medium-brown grill marks, about 3 minutes per side.

Transfer the skewers to a platter, brush the vegetables with the remaining flavored oil and serve immediately. Serves 3 or 4.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Fish for Dinner* (Weldon Owen, 2009).

2 garlic cloves, crushed  
1 fresh thyme sprig  
2 bay leaves  
Freshly ground pepper, to taste  
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil  
12 large shrimp, peeled and deveined  
12 jumbo scallops  
½ lemon  
2 zucchini, cut into ½-inch rounds  
2 yellow bell peppers, cut into ¾-inch squares  
1 yellow onion, cut into 1-inch squares  
1 lb. cherry tomatoes, stemmed  
¼ tsp. kosher salt  
Canola oil for brushing

8 Tbs. (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature  
1 Tbs. potlatch seasoning  
2 lobster tails, each about ¾ lb.  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste  
Lemon wedges for serving

## Cedar-Planked Lobster Tails

*Native Americans pioneered the art of roasting fish and game on fragrant cedar planks, which produces exceptionally moist meat that is subtly flavored by the wood's essential oils. You can replicate this technique on a backyard grill. Here, lobster tails are seasoned with potlatch butter, then cooked on a cedar plank until succulent and flavorful.*

Soak 2 cedar planks in water for at least 2 hours or up to overnight.

In a bowl, stir together the butter and potlatch seasoning. Set aside.

Prepare a medium-hot fire in a grill. Place the cedar planks on the grill, close the lid and heat for 5 to 8 minutes.

Split the lobster tails in half lengthwise and season with salt and pepper. Smear 1 Tbs. of the potlatch butter on each half.

Place the lobsters, cut side down, on the planks. Close the lid and cook until the lobsters are cooked through, 10 to 12 minutes. Serve with lemon wedges and the remaining potlatch butter. Serves 2.

Williams-Sonoma Kitchen



## Grilled Shrimp Cocktail

To make the brine, in a large bowl, combine the water, salt, sugar, cumin and coriander and stir to dissolve the salt and sugar. Use immediately.

About 2 hours before you are ready to begin grilling, using kitchen scissors, snip open the shell along the length of the back of each shrimp. Then, using the tip of a small knife, cut a shallow groove along the length of the vein and lift it out. Add the shrimp to the brine, cover and refrigerate for 1½ hours.

If you want to skewer the shrimp, which makes turning them easier, soak 20 wooden skewers in water to cover for at least 30 minutes.

Prepare a hot fire in a grill. Brush and oil the grill grate.

Remove the shrimp from the brine and discard the brine. Pat the shrimp dry with paper towels and place in a bowl. Drizzle with the oil and toss to coat evenly. If skewering, hold 2 skewers parallel and about 1 inch apart, and skewer the shrimp onto both skewers, once near the tail end and once near the head. You should be able to get 5 or 6 shrimp on a pair of 10-inch skewers.

Place the shrimp on the grill directly over the heat and cook for 3 minutes. Turn the shrimp over and cook until the shrimp turn creamy white, about 3 minutes more. This could happen after only 2 minutes on the second side, so pay attention.

Transfer the shrimp to a platter. If you have used skewers, slide the shrimp off onto the platter. Let everybody peel their own shrimp. Serve with cocktail sauce. Serves 6 to 8 as an appetizer.

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

For the shrimp brine:

6 cups water

½ cup kosher salt

2 Tbs. sugar

1 tsp. ground cumin

1 tsp. ground coriander

48 large shrimp in the shell,  
about 2 lb. total

2 Tbs. canola oil

Cocktail sauce or Bloody Mary  
ketchup for serving



## Grilled Salmon Fillets with Herb Butter

*If you're reluctant to grill fish at home, for fear the fillets will stick to the grate, fear not! This recipe offers a brilliant solution: lubricate the fillets with mayonnaise before putting them on the grill. You won't taste the mayo, and the fillets won't stick when you turn them over. Be adventurous and try this recipe with different fish varieties and herbs.*

To make the herb butter, in a small bowl, using a fork, work the chives, dill, tarragon, a pinch of salt and a few grinds of pepper into the butter, distributing the herbs evenly. Squeeze the juice from the lemon into the butter and work it in. Using a spatula, scrape the butter out of the bowl into a rough log shape near one long edge of a 12-by-6-inch sheet of waxed paper. Roll the paper over the butter and press the butter into a solid, uniform log. Continue rolling the waxed paper around the butter and twist both ends to seal securely. Refrigerate to harden. (The butter can be made up to 5 days in advance and refrigerated, or frozen for up to 1 month.)

Prepare a hot fire in a grill. Brush and oil the grill grate.

Brush the salmon fillets on all sides with the mayonnaise, coating evenly. Sprinkle the cumin and then the coriander evenly over the fillets, and season with salt and pepper.

Place the salmon fillets, skin side up, on the grill directly over the heat and cook for about 3 minutes. Turn the fillets over and cook until the fish flakes when prodded gently with a fork, about 3 minutes more. The salmon will be cooked to medium, which is perfect for salmon.

Transfer the fillets to individual plates and top each fillet with a pat of the herb butter. Serve immediately. Serves 6.

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

For the herb butter:

1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh  
chives

1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh dill

1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh  
tarragon

Kosher salt and freshly ground  
pepper, to taste

8 Tbs. (1 stick) unsalted butter,  
at room temperature

¼ lemon

6 skin-on center-cut salmon  
fillets, each about 8 oz. and  
1 inch thick, pin bones removed

¼ cup mayonnaise, homemade  
or store-bought

2 tsp. ground cumin

2 tsp. ground coriander

Kosher salt and freshly ground  
pepper, to taste