

Quick Guide: Let's Get Grilling!



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Quick Tips

- Let meat reach room temperature before grilling. (except ground meat!)
- Steak only requires 2-3 hours in a marinade, if at all.
- Use tongs, not a fork, to turn steak on the grill.
- Instant-read thermometers are the best way to judge the internal temperatures of meat and poultry.
- Wet, drained wood chips will smoke when scattered over wet coals.
- A covered kettle grill works as a smoker.



5 Ways to Grill Perfect Steak

Grilled steak is unbeatable -- here's how to guarantee it's perfect every time!

Really fine steak needs nothing more than a sprinkling of salt and pepper before it's grilled. Less expensive cuts benefit from marinating.

Either way, steak grilled to charred perfection on the outside and juicy pink on the inside is a summertime treat.

1. Choose the Best Steak for Grilling

There is no right or wrong cut of steak, but the higher the quality, the less fuss. Sirloin, club, T-bone, and porterhouse steaks all qualify as high-quality steaks.

Flank and chuck steaks, which are sometimes labeled London broil, are less expensive cuts that takes nicely to marinating.

2. Get the Steak Ready for Grilling

Let the meat come to room temperature before grilling. For safety, the meat should never be left out for more than 30 minutes.

(Chopped meat should go directly from refrigerator to grill.)

Wipe the steak dry with paper towels and season it with salt and pepper. Some grill cooks like to brush it lightly with olive oil or lemon juice.

3. Marinate the Steak

Marinades add flavor but are not necessary for tenderizing — in fact they penetrate a mere quarter inch.

Use marinades on flank and chuck steak for a flavor boost. They are unnecessary on high-end cuts. All marinades include an acid and usually some oil, which conducts the flavor and holds in moisture. Steaks only need two or three hours in the marinade to take on optimal flavor.

4. Prepare the Grill

You need moderately hot to hot heat. For charcoal, the coals will have a thin coating of ash and glow deep red. If using a gas grill, the temperature should be 375° to 400° F.

The grill rack should be approximately five inches from the coals. To prevent sticking, spray it lightly with nonstick vegetable spray first.

5. Grill the Steak

Put the steak on the grill and sear it for two to three minutes on both sides. Use tongs — not a fork — to turn the meat. (Forks pierce the meat and release juices.)

Let the steak rest for about five minutes before slicing. This gives the juices time to collect.

A steak will take 10 to 25 minutes to cook. For rare meat, steaks that are one inch thick will need about 10 minutes on the grill, including searing. Steaks that are between one and one-and-a-half inches thick will be rare in about 12 minutes.

For medium-rare meat, increase the cooking times by about five minutes. For medium-well done meat, increase the cooking time by about 10 minutes (for example, a one-inch-thick steak, needs 20 minutes or so to reach medium-well done). Put the steak on the grill and sear it for two to three minutes on both sides. Use tongs — not a fork — to turn the meat. (Forks pierce the meat and release juices.)

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Also check internal temperatures with an instant-read thermometer:

130 degrees F. = rare meat

140 degrees F. = medium-rare

150 degrees F. = medium



Smoking Food on the Grill

Smoked food has its own allure. Use your kettle grill or backyard smoker for outstanding results.

Smoking food is a method of slow cooking over moderately hot coals and smoky damp wood chips. During cooking, the smoke swirls around the food, surrounding it with mild heat and impregnating it with irresistible smoky flavor.

What You Will Need

If you have a small, backyard water smoker, you are in luck. Follow the instructions to smoke turkey, fish, and other food.

A covered grill, such as a kettle grill with a domed lid, works well, too.

Invest in an oven thermometer with a sensor that can slide into one of the domed lid's vents. This will allow you to monitor the interior temperature.

Equally important is an instant-read thermometer that will read the temperature of the food in seconds.

You also will need charcoal and wood chips. The chips, produced for smoking food, are crucial, as they provide the smoke.

Finally, you need time and patience.

The Basic Method

Begin by building a fire with fewer coals than you would use for grilling. Build it on one side of the grill, for indirect grilling. For most smoking needs, you need 12 to 16 coals burning in the grill at any one time.

At the same time, fill a bucket or pot with cold water and soak the chips for at least 30 minutes. Longer won't hurt.

Let the coals burn for a few minutes and then cover the grill. When the thermometer indicates that the interior of the grill is 160° to 200°F (depending on what you are smoking), it's time to begin..

Scatter a good handful of drained, wet wood chips over the hot coals. They will begin to smoke.

Set the food on a lightly greased grilling rack away from the coals and positioned over a metal or aluminum drip pan. The pan may or may not contain liquid such as water or broth. Replace the lid of the grill and let the food smoke.

Whole fish or fish steaks will take about two hours to smoke, while a turkey breast will need up to three hours. Beef brisket needs six or seven hours.

During smoking, you will have to replace the coals as they burn down and replenish the chips to keep the cooking chamber smoke filled and at the correct temperature. It's a good idea to have extra coals burning in a hibachi or charcoal chimney.

Smoked food has a flavor and texture all its own. Once you start smoking, you will want to try any number of foods, including shrimp, pork chops, sausages, salmon, chicken. All taste wonderful.



6 Pitfalls to Avoid at the Grill

With a little know-how, you can have perfect grilled food every time!

Ahhhh...summer! When backyard grills from coast to coast get almost-daily workouts.

And yet, whether you are an enthusiast or a “sometimes” grill cook, there are traps lurking amid the glowing coals. Here are 6 ways to insure your grilling experience is all it should be.

1. Start with a clean grill:

The heat of the coals or heating elements burns off most residues on the grilling grate, but it's always a good idea to brush the grate with a metal brush between uses. Every so often, clean the grate with oven cleaner. (You should always do this at the beginning of every season.) Finally, before cooking, spray the grate lightly with flavorless vegetable oil; this prevents sticking.

2. Let the coals burn down:

If you use charcoal to fire your grill, light the coals in plenty of time so that they can burn down to the right temperature. If the coals are too hot, the food could burn. If too cool, it won't cook. For long cooking, keep charcoal “alive” and lit in a grill chimney to add to the fire as needed. Keep in mind that natural charcoal burns faster than others—but gives the food a cleaner, better flavor.

4. Use an instant-read thermometer:

It's tempting to cut into a steak or chicken breast to determine if it's done, but please don't! Tasty juices will flow from the incision and be lost. Soon, you will be able to gauge doneness simply by pressing on the meat, but until then, use an instant-read thermometer. In seconds, you'll know the internal temperature of the meat or poultry. (Never leave the thermometer in the meat! It will melt.)

5. Know when to cover the grill:

When you cover the grill you essentially are mimicking an oven. Sear the meat over the hot coals and then move it to a cooler part of the grill (depending on what you are cooking) and cover the grill to finish cooking. For most grilling, a covered grill does a good job once the food is seared. The cover raises the temperature of the cooking environment, although you can control it by opening and closing the vents (open vents allow more air and the coals burn hotter).

6. Use the right tools:

Long-handled tongs and basting brushes are musts when you grill. The same is true for oven mitts with extra-long cuffs. All protect you from burns. A hinged basket with a long handle is convenient, too, for cooking delicate items such as vegetables and fish.

Grilling Recipes

We've come up with two irresistible recipes for the grill, one for chicken and the other for fish tacos.

Go to FamilyTime.com for recipes for steaks and smoked foods on the grill.

Photo Credit: Jif® Peanut Butter



Grilled Chicken Breasts with Zesty Peanut Sauce

This sweet and savory grilled dish relies on some unexpected ingredients, such as peanut butter, unsweetened coconut milk, fresh ginger and as much or as little chopped cilantro as you like.

Serves 8

3 tablespoons light brown sugar	¾ teaspoon cayenne
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons peanut butter	2 ½ pounds skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
¼ cup vegetable oil	1 cup unsweetened coconut milk
½ cup plus 3 tablespoons soy sauce	2 teaspoons finely minced fresh ginger
1/3 cup plus 4 tablespoons fresh lime juice	½ cup chicken broth (we like Swanson)
4 cloves garlic, minced	½ cup heavy cream
	Chopped cilantro leaves, for garnish

1. In a mixing bowl, stir together 1 tablespoon of brown sugar, 2 tablespoons of peanut butter, the oil, ½ cup of soy sauce, 1/3 cup of lime juice, half the garlic, and ½ teaspoon of cayenne.
2. Put the chicken in a shallow glass or ceramic bowl or a gallon-size resealable plastic bag. Pour the peanut butter marinade over it and turn to coat or seal the bag and turn it until the meat is well coated. Refrigerate, covered if in a dish, for at least 4 hours or overnight.
3. Lightly oil the grill rack of the grill. Heat the charcoal or heating elements until medium hot.
4. Lift the chicken breasts from the marinade, letting the excess drip back off the meat. Grill the chicken for about 15 minutes, turning once, until cooked through.
5. Meanwhile, in a 3-quart saucepan, stir the remaining brown sugar with the remaining peanut butter, soy sauce, lime juice, and cayenne. Add the coconut milk and ginger and cook, stirring, for about 15 minutes or until the sauce thickens. Add the broth and heavy cream and stir just until heated through.
6. Serve the chicken with the sauce, garnished with cilantro.

Photo Credit: Florida Department of Citrus



Grilled Fish Tacos with Orange-Cilantro Slaw

Fish loves the tang of citrus, as is evident with the first bite of these tacos. Everyone loves 'em, kids and grownups alike.

Serves 12

1 cup orange juice	1 cup diced orange segments (1 orange)
½ cup vegetable oil	½ cup diced red onion (1/2 onion)
1 teaspoon dried oregano	½ cup diced tomato (1/2 large tomato)
1 teaspoon finely minced garlic	½ cup diced red bell pepper (1/2 bell pepper)
¼ teaspoon cayenne	¼ cup chopped cilantro
1 ½ pounds firm white fish fillets, such as mahi-mahi or cod	1 small jalapeño, seeded and minced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper	Plain Greek yogurt, for garnish, optional
4 cups finely shredded cabbage (about 1 pound cabbage)	24 corn tortillas

1. In a large bowl, whisk together the orange juice, oil, oregano, garlic and cayenne. Add salt and pepper to taste. Reserve 1/3 cup of the marinade for the slaw.
2. Put the fish in a shallow glass or ceramic bowl or a gallon-size resealable plastic bag. Pour the marinade over it and turn to coat or seal the bag and turn it until the fish is well coated. Let the fish sit at room temperature for about 15 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, in a large mixing bowl, toss the cabbage with the oranges, onion, tomato, bell peppers, and cilantro. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Drizzle with the reserved marinade and toss to mix. Set aside for the flavors to blend.
4. Lightly oil the grill rack of the grill. Heat the charcoal or heating elements until medium hot. Or, heat a grill pan on the stove.
5. Lift the fish from the marinade and let any excess drip off. Grill the fish for about 5 minutes or just until opaque in the center and nearly flaking. Do not overcook. Transfer the fish to a shallow dish and flake it with a fork.
6. Heat the tortillas on the grill for about 20 seconds on each side until warm and supple.
7. Divide the fish among the tortillas and top with slaw. Garnish with yogurt, if desired, roll the tortillas closed and serve.