



ON THE GRILL

Seasoning a New Griddle

One of the latest trends in outdoor cooking is the flattop griddle.

The first step in outdoor griddle bliss is properly seasoning the cooking surface for perfectly crispy food. Metal surfaces, such as your new griddle, need a fatty surface to help food slide off cleanly. It also protects the griddle from rust and helps it distribute heat evenly.

GETTING STARTED

Once your griddle is properly unpackaged and set up, start by cleaning the flat-top grill surface with water, mild soap and a scrub brush. Then rinse the surface with hot water thoroughly and dry with a clean paper towel.

Preheat the griddle on high for 10-15 minutes or until the surface is hot and you see discoloration across the griddle top. Turn off the heat and let it cool slightly, then add a thin layer of oil to the surface. This can be any high smoke point oil, such as flaxseed oil, vegetable oil, canola oil or avocado oil. Use paper towels to spread the oil evenly across the entire surface of the griddle.

Then, crank the heat back up to high and let the griddle heat until it starts smoking. When you see smoke, that means the fat has oxidized and the oil is bonded to the surface of the griddle. Repeat this process two or three times until the griddle top is evenly dark.



Let your now-seasoned griddle cool completely. Once it's cool, wipe off excess oil with paper towels and tongs.

RESEASONING

You'll need to season your griddle several times over the

course of its useful life. If you notice food sticking or that the surface is discolored and rusty, it's time to reseason. If you're still not sure, sprinkle a few drops of water onto the hot griddle. If it beads up and dances across the surface, the

seasoning layer is intact. If it sizzles and evaporates quickly, get your paper towels and reseason it again.

To remove rust, use a mixture of soap powder, salt and water to scrub the rust off before reseasoning your griddle. You

can make your seasoning last longer by properly cleaning and drying the griddle surface after every use. Scrape off food residue while the cooking surface is still warm and once it's cool, wipe it down with paper towels to remove grease or debris.

Finding the Best Local Meats

Local meats are often the most fresh because they didn't have to travel far from the farm to the plate.

By buying local, you're also supporting farmers and families in your community and you can be sure of what's going into your own families' meals.

FARMERS MARKETS

One of the easiest ways to connect with local farmers is to visit your local farmers market. The USDA maintains a list of farmers markets around the country. The Local Food Directory, usdalocalfoodportal.com, lists more than 6,000 farmers markets where you can find local meats, produce, dairy products and more. Many farmers markets also accept SNAP benefits; check with the organizers of the market to see what types of payments are accepted.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

Community supported agriculture, or CSAs, are a plan in which people pledge support to a farm and get, in exchange, boxes of fresh and local food. In 2022, the USDA said farmers and ranchers sold \$17.5 billion in food through CSA and other direct marketing operations. Find CSAs in your area on the USDA's Local Food Directory,



© ADOBE STOCK

which lists more than 1,500 opportunities to expand your family's palette.

LOOK FOR CERTIFICATIONS

The USDA and other organizations maintain a variety of programs that allows consumers to make sure farms treat their animals well. Look for certifications from programs such as:

- **USDA Grass Fed:** This certifies cattle and sheep as grass-fed and has a small and very small producer option for

farms with fewer than 49 cattle.

- **Global Animal Partnership:** The Austin, Texas, nonprofit facilitates and encourages improvement in animal agriculture. It maintains certification standards in five levels for each animal group. It does not audit or certify farms; it just sets the standards for bison, beef cattle, broiler chickens, laying hens, meat goats, pigs, meat sheep and turkeys.

- **Certified Humane:** These certifications are maintained

by Humane Farm Animal Care (HFAC), a nonprofit dedicated to improving the lives of farm animals in food production. It certifies single operations, producer groups, marketing groups and other pooled product operations. Its standards cover bison; beef and dairy cows; broiler chickens and laying hens; dairy, fiber and meat goats; pigs, dairy, fiber and meat sheep; and turkeys.

- **Animal Welfare Approved:** This certification program is maintained by A Greener World (AGW), an organization

whose goal is to improve farm animal welfare by certifying family farmers who adhere to "the highest animal welfare and environmental standards." It audits and certifies independent family farmers, cooperatives and producer groups. It also certifies marketing groups, distributors, retailers and restaurants. The program covers bison, beef and dairy cows, broiler chickens, laying hens, meat and dairy goats, pigs, meat and dairy sheep, turkeys, ducks and geese.

The Basics of Grilling Safety

Cooking outside can be fun for all, but burns, fires and other events are never welcome at a party.

Here are some tips from the National Fire Protection Association on how to stay safe while cooking out

FAST FACTS

The NFPA says the peak month for grill fires is, unsurprisingly, July. It's followed by June, May and August. In about a fifth of the fires, the grill was dirty and more than a quarter of structure fires started by a grill began on an exterior balcony or open porch. Eight percent began when an outside wall caught fire and 4% began with a type of structural member or framing.

Gas grills are involved in more than 9,000 house fires every year, including 4,454 structure fires and 4,625 outdoor fires. Leaks or breaks were the primary problem with these types of grills, accounting for 6% of gas grill structure fires and 15% of outdoor gas grill fires.

An average of 22,155 patients went to emergency rooms for injuries caused by grills from 2017-2022, says the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

SAFETY TIPS

• The NFPA warns grill users to always check propane tanks and lines and gas lines for



© ADOBE STOCK

leaks. Remove grease or fat buildup from the grills and trays below the grills. Make sure lids on gas grills are open before lighting them.

• For charcoal grills, only use charcoal starter fluid and not other flammable liquids to start the fire. Do not add charcoal starter fluid to coals that

have already been ignited. When you are finished grilling, let the coals cool completely before disposing of them in a metal container. Never pour coals directly into a trash can.

• Never leave grills unattended while lit or still hot. Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the

grilling area. Place grills away from overhanging branches and a safe distance away from lawn games, play areas and foot traffic. Keep anything flammable, such as food wrappers, oven mitts or towels at least three feet from the grill.

• Never use a portable grill in a restricted area, such as

many apartment or hotel balconies or porches. Check for fire dangers such as dry conditions and high winds before using any grill.

• Use long-handled grilling tools to keep hands and fingers well away from heat and flames. Keep the fire as small as possible.

Beer and Wine Pairings

Just because it's cooked over open flame doesn't mean we have to eat like Neanderthals.

The perfectly paired beer or wine can elevate your grilled entrees and complement your meal. Grilled foods have bold, smoky, often spicy flavors that need a drink that can stand up to them. Here's a guide to help you find the perfect beverage for your grilled smorgasbord.

WINES

Sure, we all know that reds go with red meats and whites go with white meats. But grilled food means you should pay special attention to the flavor profile of the wine you pick. Bottles with big tannins and body, such as cabernet sauvignons or malbecs are the perfect pair for beef and lamb.

Grilled chicken and turkey should go with light whites with plenty of acidity to play well with the smoky flavor of the meat. Try a lightly oaked chardonnay or a crispy sauvignon blanc for fattier cuts. White wines also pair well with fish and seafood, particularly pinot grigio's dry flavor that enhances the natural sweetness of seafood. You can try a rosé with seafood dishes. Look for a balance of acidity and fruitiness.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

While the above are rules, sometimes, rules are meant to



© ADOBE STOCK

be broken. Try a chilled pinot noir with grilled chicken or pork shoulder. A robust Malbec can sit with a veggie burger or grilled mushroom caps just as well as a juicy steak. Try a crisp rosé with a burger. Even hot dogs and

brats can be made better with a glass of wine. Try a tempranillo, Riesling or lighter red blends.

BEER

Beer pairings aren't as well-known as wine pairings, but

they do follow similar rules. Dark meats go with darker ales; the caramelized crust of the meat accents the malty richness of these brews. Look for slightly sweet brown or amber ales.

Lagers and pilsners go well

with lighter foods, such as chicken, seafood and vegetables. These refreshing brews don't compete too much with the grilled flavors. For spicier dishes, choose wheat beers with citrusy flavors to cool the palate.

Grills Aren't Just for Meat

While grilling recipes typically contain a big, meaty protein, grills aren't just for meats anymore.

Here are a couple of recipes with bold flavors that even the meat-eaters will love.

CORN RIBS

Makes four servings. Recipe is from Allrecipes.com.

Ingredients

- 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 4 ears fresh corn, shucked
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 4 tablespoons melted butter

Directions

1. Stir together the spices and set aside. Using a sharp knife, trim off both ends of the ear of corn to expose the cob. Stand the cob on end and cut the corn in half down the center of the cob. Try rocking the knife while applying downward pressure for easier cutting.
2. Put the corn in a bowl and drizzle the oil over the cob halves. Add about two-thirds of the spice mixture and toss well, coating each piece.
3. Cook on a grill until hot and browned. Finish indoors using the oven's broiler. Arrange the cobs with the maximum number of kernels facing up, toward the heat. Use extra foil to prop up the ribs if you need to.



© ADOBE STOCK

Sprinkle with the rest of the spice mixture.

4. Broil on high until the corn starts to brown in spots, about seven minutes. Remove and rearrange ribs to brown more areas of the ribs. Continue to broil until the corn is charred in spots, another seven minutes.

5. Remove and brush with melted butter. Add more spices to taste if desired.

GRILLED CABBAGE STEAKS WITH WHOLE GRAIN MUSTARD SAUCE

Makes four servings. Recipe

is from the Vermont Foodbank.

Ingredients

- 1 medium green cabbage
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons whole grain mustard
- 3 tablespoons plain Greek yogurt
- Fresh chives or parsley

Directions

1. Trim the cabbage by removing outer leaves and cutting off the brown core end. Do not remove the core. Wash the cabbage and pat dry.

2. Place the cabbage core-side-down on a cutting board and slice the cabbage 3/4-inch steaks cutting from top to bottom. The core should hold the steaks together.

3. Brush both sides of the cabbage steaks with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Set aside.

4. Preheat the grill to medium-high. Blend the mustard and yogurt in a bowl. Chop the chives or parsley and set aside.

5. Arrange cabbage steaks on the hot grill, leaving space in between. Lower the lid and cook for 4-5 minutes per side until they're crispy on

the outside and tender on the inside.

6. Remove from grill and top with the mustard sauce and chopped parsley or chives.

GRILLED PORTOBELLO MUSHROOMS WITH TOMATOES AND FRESH MOZZARELLA

Makes four servings. Recipe is from The Food Network.

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons olive oil, plus extra for greasing the grill
- 4 large portobello mushrooms about 5 inches in diameter, stemmed
- Salt and black pepper
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
- 2 cloves garlic
- 3 small to medium tomatoes, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
- 8 ounces fresh, water-packed mozzarella, cut into 1/2 inch cubes
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil leaves.

Directions

1. Heat a grill to medium-high heat.
2. Drizzle 3 tablespoons of olive oil over both sides of the mushrooms. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Drizzle olive oil on a grill pan to keep mushrooms from sticking. Grill until the mushrooms are heated through and tender, about five minutes per side.
3. Whisk extra-virgin olive oil and garlic in a medium bowl. Add the tomatoes, cheese and basil. Toss to coat and season with salt and pepper, to taste.
4. Place hot mushroom caps, gill side up, on a serving plate. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, then spoon the tomato salad on top. Drizzle with extra-virgin olive oil to finish.

Desserts to End the Meal Right

Sweet treats are the best way to end a great meal. Try bringing these desserts next time you're invited to the cookout.

PEACH COBLER

Makes 12 servings. Recipe is from Food.com.

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup melted butter
- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2/3 cup room temperature milk
- 1 room temperature egg
- 28 ounce sliced peaches, drained if canned
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg

Directions

1. Melt the butter in a 9x13 pan. Mix together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. Stir in the milk and egg, then pour it over the melted butter.
2. Combine the peaches, sugar and spices and spread over the batter. Don't stir it.
3. Bake at 350 degrees for 35-45 minutes, or until the batter comes to the top and is golden brown. Serve warm.

LEMON SQUARES

Makes 25 servings. Recipe is from Betty Crocker.

Ingredients

- 1 cup all-purpose flour



© ADOBE STOCK

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1/4 cup powdered sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- Powdered sugar

Directions

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Mix flour, butter and 1/4 cup powdered sugar and press into a an ungreased 8-inch or 9-inch square pan. Build up 1/2-inch edges.

2. Bake the crust for 20 minutes and remove from the oven. In a medium bowl, beat the remaining ingredients with an electric mixer on high speed for about 3 minutes or until light and fluffy. Pour over hot crust.

3. Bake 25-30 minutes or until no indentation remains when touched lightly in center. Cool completely in the pan on a cooling rack for about an hour. Sprinkle with powdered sugar and serve.

S'MORE BROWNIES

Makes 20 brownies. Recipe is

from Allrecipes.com.

Ingredients

- 1 18.3-ounce boxed brownie mix
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 2 large eggs
- 3 tablespoons water
- 6 graham crackers
- 1 1/2 cups mini marshmallows
- 8 1.5-ounce milk chocolate bars, coarsely chopped

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9x13 inch baking dish.

2. Make the brownies by stirring the mix, oil, eggs and water in a medium bowl until well blended. Pour into the pan and bake for 15 minutes.

3. Break the graham crackers into 1-inch pieces and place in a bowl. Add the marshmallows and chopped chocolate. Toss to combine.

4. Remove the brownies from the oven and sprinkle with the topping ingredients. Return to the oven and bake until a toothpick inserted 2 inches from the side of the pan comes out clean, 7-10 more minutes. Serve warm.

Kebabs 101

Kebabs, also spelled kabob or kebob, are meats cooked on a stick with vegetables and other accompaniments.

The traditional meat for kebabs is lamb or goat, but kebabs can also be made with chicken, beef, fish or pork.

The word kebab comes from Turkey and refers to grilled and broiled meat cooked on skewers. It comes from the Persian word kabab, meaning roasted meat. The word is commonly associated with meat dishes from Persia and Anatolia, but has spread around the world.

BEEF KEBABS

Makes 6-8 servings. Recipe is from The Pioneer Woman.

Ingredients

Marinade:

- 1/3 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1/3 cup Worcestershire sauce
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, grated
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons honey, divided
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard, divided

Kebabs:

- 1 1/2 pound sirloin or New York strip, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 8 ounce baby portobello mushrooms, large stems removed
- 1 red onion, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 green bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 yellow bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
- Chopped fresh parsley, for garnish

Directions

1. Make the marinade by whisking together the vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, olive oil, garlic and peppers. Transfer 1/4 cup of the marinade to a small bowl and whisk in a



© ADOBE STOCK

tablespoon each of honey and mustard to make a glaze. Set aside.

2. Add the rest of the marinade and meat to a plastic bag. Seal and coat all the meat. Refrigerate for an hour or up to six hours. Remove the meat from the fridge 30 minutes before grilling.

3. Soak wooden skewers in water for 30 minutes. Preheat the grill to medium-high heat. Thread the vegetables and meat onto the skewers, alternating however you prefer.

4. Grill the kebabs on one side until grill marks form, about 4 minutes. Turn and brush the grilled side with the glaze. Continue grilling, turning and brushing until finished to the desired degree of doneness. Let kebabs rest for 5 minutes and sprinkle with parsley before serving.

TURKISH CHICKEN KEBABS

Makes 4 large portions. Recipe is from Allrecipes.com.

Ingredients

- 1 cup whole-milk Greek yogurt
- 6 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice, or more to taste
- 2 tablespoons ketchup
- 1 tablespoon red pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

2 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, halved

Directions

1. Whisk yogurt, garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, ketchup, red pepper flakes, salt, cumin, black pepper, paprika and cinnamon together in a large bowl.

2. Add the chicken thighs and coat on all sides. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate from 2-8 hours.

3. Preheat a grill to medium-high heat and lightly oil the grate. Using 2 metal skewers for each kebab, thread half the chicken thighs on to each pair of skewers. Grill for 3-4 minutes per side, continuing to turn and cook until the chicken is no longer pink, about 6 minutes more.