



On the
GRILL

Pellet Grill Basics

Wood pellet grills and smokers have been booming in popularity in recent years. These machines that are taking over the grilling landscape use an electrically driven auger to feed wood pellets into a burn chamber, imparting big flavor.

Wood pellet stoves had been primarily used for home heating up until the early 1980s. That's when Joe Traeger, the proprietor of a heating company based in Oregon, began putting the technology to use for outdoor grilling, according to the Harvard Business Review. Traeger is one of the leading manufacturers of pellet grills and smokers today.

HOW IT WORKS

Fill the hopper with wood pellets, which are then transported by an auger into the burn chamber. There they are ignited, and an electric fan moves air around to control the flow of oxygen, and thus the temperature. An automatic thermostat helps keep the temperature constant.

Higher temperatures will produce an experience similar to a gas grill, while lower temperatures will create smoke to infuse food with



savory flavor.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider how you use your current grill and what your goals are when deciding on a pellet grill or smoker. Here are some things to consider.

Pros: Starting up a pellet grill is as easy as the push of a button. It's easier to keep the grill at low temperatures when compared to gas or charcoal grilling. You can customize the flavor by choosing

the type of wood pellets you use. And many models have smart features such as an app that lets you monitor your cooking progress remotely.

Cons: Your grill will be nice and hot in about 15-20 minutes, putting it at the longer end of the range of setup times for charcoal and gas grills. Pellet grills rarely get above 500 degrees Fahrenheit, so if you're looking for char, you'll be disappointed. You can use a preheated cast iron

skillet to achieve char, or buy a device that uses a small gas canister to quickly flame your finished product. These

options obviously complicate the process and probably won't suffice for true grilling enthusiasts.

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Grilling Fruits

While we typically expect a day spent grilling to involve steak, chicken, burgers or hot dogs, and perhaps the occasional corn or vegetable kabobs, your grill is much more versatile.

Fruits can transform into something even more delicious with a little heat.

THE BASICS

Allrecipes.com offers the following tips for grilling fruits:

1. The best fruits for grilling are fairly firm and not overripe. Some good choices include Peaches, melons, pineapple, pears, avocado, tomatoes, bananas and figs.

2. Cut fruit into large chunks, slices and wheels to help it maintain its structure as it heats up, and to prevent them from falling through the grates. Corral smaller fruits such as berries on skewers.

3. Heat the grill to medium-high for at least 10 minutes, then scrape and oil the grates before putting the fruit on them.

4. Use an oil made for high temperatures, such as safflower oil. To avoid oil on the finished product, especially if you're using it in a dessert, skip the oil.

5. For a caramelized finish,



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dust the cut side of citrus fruits like oranges, lemons, limes, and grapefruit with granulated sugar before they go on the grill, and be sure to use oil to keep the rinds from sticking

6. Let the fruit sear on the hot grill for a few minutes before checking for grill marks. This will help avoid sticking.

7. Denser fruits, such as pineapple, will take longer to grill. It's done when it's hot in the middle.

8. Don't waste the juice. Once the fruit comes off the grill, put it on a rimmed baking sheet to collect the juices for another recipe.

GRILLED FRUIT KABOBS

Consider this recipe from FeelGoodFoodie.net to try your hand at grilling fruit.

Ingredients

2 cups pineapple chunks cut into 1-inch pieces

2 cups cantaloupe chunks cut into 1-inch pieces

2 cups strawberries stems removed

Coconut oil spray

1 tablespoon maple syrup

Vanilla yogurt for serving

Directions

1. Preheat the grill to high heat. Soak the skewers in water for 20 minutes, to prevent them from burning while grilling.

2. Thread two pieces each pineap-

ple, strawberry and cantaloupe onto skewer. Repeat process to assemble as many skewers as you'd like to make.

3. Spray with the coconut oil spray and brush maple syrup all over the skewers.

4. Place the fruit skewers on the grill in a single layer. Grill for 2-3 minutes on each side, or until lightly browned and tender, about 10 minutes total.

5. Serve immediately, dipped with vanilla yogurt, if desired.

Dry Rub vs. Marinade

There is more than one way to get delicious flavor into your grilled proteins.

Depending on the flavor profile and texture you're seeking, a dry rub or a marinade might be the right way to go.

Many grilling connoisseurs have a diehard preference for one method versus another. BonAppetit.com even goes so far as to declare: "Fact: Dry rubs are better than marinades." As with many aspects of cooking, however, the difference between the two comes down to science.

MARINADE

A marinade includes liquids, such as oil, vinegar and citrus, which, according to BigDogSpices.com, can move within the cell walls of the protein and break them down, providing both taste and tenderness to the final product. A marinade is a good choice for a tougher cut of meat that needs tenderizing before cooking.

The tougher the meat, the longer you'll need to marinate it to achieve the tenderness you want, from 12 to 24 hours, according to TasteofHome.com, or about an hour for smaller meats and fish. In order to stay safe, never keep the marinade after it has been used. This greatly increases the risk of contamination with food-borne pathogens.

DRY RUB

A dry rub is a mixture of sea-



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sonings and spices with no liquids. The effect on the finished product is a flavorful crust that provides both taste and texture. For recipes such as chicken wings, when you don't want excess moisture to prevent a good sear, a dry rub is ideal. After sprinkling the rub on the meat, gently pat to be sure it adheres, but don't press so much that the rub begins to take on moisture from the meat.

GRILLED HULI HULI CHICKEN

Taste of Home offers this rec-

ipe that uses a marinade.

Ingredients

1 cup packed brown sugar
 3/4 cup ketchup
 3/4 cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
 1/3 cup sherry or chicken broth
 2 1/2 teaspoons minced fresh gingerroot
 1 1/2 teaspoons minced garlic
 24 boneless skinless chicken thighs (about 6 pounds)

Directions

1. In a small bowl, mix the first 6 ingredients. Reserve 1-1/3 cups for basting; cover and refrigerate. Divide remaining marinade between 2 large



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shallow dishes. Add 12 chicken thighs to each; turn to coat. Refrigerate, covered, for 8 hours or overnight.

2. Drain chicken, discarding marinade.

3. Grill chicken, covered, on an oiled rack over medium heat for 6-8 minutes on each side or until a thermometer inserted into chicken reads 170 degrees Fahrenheit; baste occasionally with reserved marinade during the last 5 minutes.

BEST DRY RUB FOR RIBS

HeyGrillHey.com offers this recipe to up your rib game.

Ingredients

1/4 cup brown sugar
 2 teaspoons kosher salt
 2 teaspoons black pepper
 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
 1 teaspoon garlic powder
 1 teaspoon onion powder
 1 teaspoon ground mustard
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
 1/2 teaspoon celery salt
 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Directions

Mix all ingredients in a bowl. Use a fork to crush any clumps of sugar or seasonings.

Use or store. Store in an airtight container for up to a month.

Dry Aging Steak at Home

A dry aged steak is an entire culinary experience. The flavor and texture the dry aging process imparts are unique and sumptuous — but often comes with a higher cost.

If you have a mini fridge and are willing to educate yourself about the process, you can have delicious dry-aged steak in as little as 30 days.

WHAT HAPPENS IN DRY AGING?

OttoGrills.com explains the unique taste and texture of dry-aged steak this way: “Two things happen when dry-aging meat: the flavor of the cut intensifies and the meat becomes melt-in-your-mouth tender. The flavor intensifies when raw meat loses its juices and dries — kind of like condensing a stew. During the drying process, enzymes and helpful bacteria break down the protein while the fat oxidizes.”

The meat will also darken and could grow mold on the outside. This will be removed before you cook the meat, which means you will lose some of the volume of your cut.

TYPES OF MEAT

Dry aging works best with large muscle or sub-primal cuts on the bone, such as strip loin, ribeye, or sirloin, accord-



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ing to OttoGrills.com. Start with a larger cut of meat, rather than individual steaks, to avoid losing too much meat

when the outer layers are removed before cooking.

The meat should be very fresh, choice grade or higher,

with good marbling.

EQUIPMENT

Mini fridge. You need a sepa-

rate refrigerator from your main kitchen unit in order to keep constant temperature and prevent the meat from picking up flavors from other foods. Be sure you can set the temperature between 34 and 38 degrees Fahrenheit with a humidity of 65% to 85%. A unit with a glass door is ideal to check the progress of your meat without opening the door. You'll also need a small electric fan to circulate the air in the refrigerator.

METHOD

Sanitize the refrigerator with bleach and water before beginning the process. Hang the steak inside the refrigerator or place it on a wire rack over a sheet pan to allow air circulation around the meat. Use a standalone thermometer and humidity monitor to be sure the temperature does not go above 40 degrees Fahrenheit or the humidity above 85%, which could cause the meat to spoil. It will take around 21 days for the flavors to develop, and by 28-30 days, your steak should be perfectly aged. You can age for longer, but the effect on flavor and tenderness will be greatly reduced.

FINISHING UP

At the end of the aging period, cut off the outside layer, which may include light mold, and look for a deep red color. Any slimy texture or green color inside the meat is a warning sign that the meat spoiled and is not safe to eat. Throw it away to be safe. If your steak looks good and has no foul odor, it's time to hit the grill.

Grilling in the Winter

Most people tend to grill during the warmer months, but the truly intrepid grilling enthusiast can't wait out the winter for a bite of juicy grilled meat.

Although winter conditions bring some additional challenges to grilling, it can be done if you plan ahead and know what to expect.

If you're determined to grill despite chilly temperatures, here are a few tips to make the process smoother.

1. Keep it covered. If snow builds up on your grill, simply removing the cover is a better bet than having to shovel snow off it first.

2. Move your grill closer to the house to make it easier to get to when it's cold outside, and so you can keep an eye on the grill from inside where it's warmer. Be careful to keep it at least 10 feet from the house or any other structure, in order to stay safe. Be sure to clear a path to the grill to prevent slips and falls.

3. Increase your pre-heat time. Colder temperatures outside will mean a longer pre-heat time to reach your desired grill temperature.

4. Keep the lid closed. Opening the grill during cooking will have even more of a cooling effect inside the grill when the air temperature is



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lower.

5. Be safe. Never grill in your garage or under any overhanging structure. Use heatproof flexible gloves to protect your hands from the cold temperatures and the hot grill. Be careful to keep win-

ter outerwear, such as coats and scarves, away from the flames.

6. Keep extra fuel on hand. Your grilling times will be slightly longer to reach the desired temperature, so you'll want to have more fuel on

hand than usual.

7. Take advantage of technology to help monitor the food remotely. This includes an electronic thermometer with a large display that can be seen from indoors, or an app with smart features, such

as letting you know when the grill is done preheating or when the food is done.

8. Stick with recipes you've tried before. In challenging winter conditions, this is no time to work out the particulars of a new recipe.

Corn on the Grill

Corn is ripe at the height of summer, and with its hardy texture and compact shape, it's ideal for throwing on the grill.

While a simple combination of butter and salt is always tasty, here are some fresh new takes to punch up your grilled corn.

GRILL IN THE HUSK

Corn can easily be grilled in the husk to reduce prep time. Once the corn is grilled, the husk and silk will easily slide off. Soak the corn in water (husks included) for about 20 minutes to prevent scorching. Then pre-heat the grill to medium-high, throw the corn on the grill and cook for 20-22 minutes. The husks will char, but don't worry, as they will be tossed anyway.

GRILLED MEXICAN STREET CORN (ELOTE)

SimplyRecipes.com offers this recipe for the Mexican staple, elote.

Ingredients

6 to 8 medium ears sweet corn, husks removed

1/2 cup Mexican crema, or sour cream spiked with lime juice

1/2 cup mayonnaise

1/2 cup chopped cilantro

1 clove garlic, minced

1/4 teaspoon ground chipotle pepper, or to taste

2 teaspoons finely grated lime zest, from 1 lime

2 tablespoons lime juice, from 1 lime

1/2 cup cotija cheese, crumbled

Lime wedges, to serve

Directions

1. Heat a gas or charcoal grill to 400 degrees Fahrenheit. Once the

grill is hot, clean the grates.

2. Whisk together the crema, mayonnaise, cilantro, garlic, chipotle pepper, lime zest, and lime juice. Taste and season the mixture with salt if needed. (Crema and cotija cheese have a little salt already, so add extra judiciously.)

Set aside.

3. Place the husked corn directly onto grill grates. Grill the corn for about 3 minutes, undisturbed, or until kernels begin to turn golden brown and look charred. Turn over and repeat. When all sides are browned, remove from the grill

onto a plate.

4. Using a brush or a spoon, coat each ear of corn with the crema mixture. Sprinkle with crumbled cotija cheese. Sprinkle with additional chipotle pepper, if desired. Serve immediately with extra lime wedges.



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Cooking a Steak Indoors

If you're craving a steak but outdoor conditions aren't good for grilling, don't worry. There are a few methods of getting that "fresh off the grill" taste.

BROIL

The Food Network recommends using the broiler pan that comes with your grill because the slats allow air to circulate around the food while it cooks. A sheet pan lined with aluminum foil will work in a pinch.

Heat the broiler on high, with the top rack 5-6 inches from the flame or heating element. Preheat the pan for about 5 minutes. Rub the steak with olive oil and sprinkle on salt, pepper or any other seasonings you'd like. Use oven mitts to remove the pan and put the steaks on top with tongs. (Be careful to avoid splatters as the pan will be hot.) Return to the oven and cook until the steak is browned and has some give in the thickest part.

Use an instant-read thermometer to check for doneness (130 to 135 degrees Fahrenheit for medium-rare, 135 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit for medium, and 140 to 150 degrees Fahrenheit for medium-well.

Let the steak rest for 5 minutes before slicing.

INDOOR GRILL

We all remember the wave



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of indoor grills spurred on by the George Foreman phenomenon in the 1990s. A new wave of smokeless indoor grills are on the market, with many using a tray of water to absorb smoke and prevent a smoky

mess and lingering odors in your kitchen.

You can also use a grill pan on your stovetop to achieve similar results. (Just be sure to turn on the exhaust fan to trap smoke.)

The trick to any indoor cooking method for steak is high heat and a quick grill time (no more than 10-15 minutes, depending on the steak's thickness). After searing, reduce the heat to reach the

desired doneness.

For electric models, follow the manufacturer's directions and be sure to use oil to prevent sticking. Try using a few drops of liquid smoke on each side to up the smoky flavor.