

Cottage Life Grill Guide

chicken



Produced by Martin Zibauer

Photography Edward Pond

By David Zimmer Recipes by Jane Rodmell

Chicken rules the roost.

Take a flip through any cookbook or food magazine, and it quickly becomes evident. Much of chicken's popularity comes from its uncanny ability to meld with (and sometimes disappear into) other flavouring agents, giving background base while other ingredients take centre stage. And yet, in many modern dishes designed for speedy prep, noble chicken is reduced to a protein topping, plunked unceremoniously on top of salad or pasta.

This is just plain wrong. The chicken is a mighty bird, not a meat crouton. It has moxie, able to please the fussiest eaters (even many vegetarians), and feeds a crowd on the cheap. The merest waft of grilled chicken, that incomparable smell of vapourizing fat and its promise of moist meat and crispy skin to follow, is nothing short of miraculous. At the cottage, a grilled-chicken dinner should be an event, a hands-on, no-holds-barred, napkin-ripping free-for-all where knuckles are bathed in succulent juices and dipping sauce is flying. Shirts will be ruined. Tablecloths will not survive.

But there's trouble in the henhouse. A chicken comes complete with bones, skin, and two kinds of meat, each requiring subtly different treatment by the cook. So, from a small bird comes a long list of grilling malfunctions: dried-out breasts, underdone thighs, incinerated skin. Don't blame the chicken, though. Most disasters are pilot error—usually caused by treating our favourite bird like it's a frozen hamburger patty. Fortunately, you can circumvent all of these common fowl fiascos with a better understanding of chicken fundamentals and some foolproof grilling techniques. >>



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Indonesian chicken satays with dipping sauce



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Old-fashioned barbecue sauce



Hot chick or not? The very desirable bird at left looks fit and trim, with good-sized legs relative to breast, and dry, slightly yellow skin. The water-chilled chicken at bottom is puffy and pale, with legs that just don't look as if they've done much strutting.

Birdwatching basics

Get to know your chickens. First off, the use of hormones and steroids in chicken feed has been illegal in Canada for decades, so don't worry about them. Also, most chickens sold for eating in Canada can be labelled "grain-fed" because much of their diet is grain and grain by-products. But they can also be fed some protein from bone meal or fish. If this is a concern for you, look for chickens that got their protein portion from vegetable sources, usually soy (they are often labelled "vegetable grain fed" or "vegetarian grain fed"). Birds fed mainly corn, sometimes called "yellow-skin chicken," are available, but there is disagreement about whether a corn diet affects the taste or merely colours the

meat and skin so the bird looks tastier. (Personally, I'm a fan.) Free-range chickens, birds that are allowed to roam and forage outdoors, are said to produce more flavourful meat. What's unfortunate is that there is currently no legal definition of what "free range" means, so sourcing these birds can be a bit of a crapshoot. Just don't confuse free-range chickens with "free-run": All birds raised specifically for meat in Canada are allowed free movement within a barn, so they're all called free-run.

"Organic chicken" is mainly about the feed—which must come from sources that meet organic farming standards. There can be no antibiotics mixed in, and any additives, such as vitamins, must be approved. Organic birds eat grain, corn,

or both, and must have access to the outdoors (whether they choose to "range" is up to them). Also, the land they roam has to meet organic standards, which, among other things, means it has to be pesticide-free. Confused? You should be.

A chilling tale

What's more important for grill artists are how the bird has been chilled after processing and its size. Most grocery-store chicken has been water chilled, dipped in an icy bath—containing chlorine as a disinfectant—to quickly cool it to refrigerator temperature. Whether sold loose, in the butcher's case, or plastic-wrapped and perched on a foam tray with a chicken diaper underneath, water-chilled birds tend to have skin that is very white and slippery from all that added H₂O. Air-chilled chickens, on the other hand, are rapidly cooled with circulating cold air. The skin is a more natural-looking yellow, the meat has a firmer texture, and the birds shrink less when cooked. Air-chilled chickens taste better, and they're now widely available at grocery stores. While water-chilled chickens are generally not identified, air-chilled chickens are usually labelled as such. Buy them.

A nice, full-figured bird

Chickens come in a range of sizes, from tiny, single-serving poussins and Cornish hens to 4-9 lb (2-4 kg) capons, roosters that have been castrated at a young age. In between are fryer/broilers, usually around 2½ months old, that weigh 3-4 lbs (1.5-2 kg), and roasters, a general term for birds up to about eight months old that weigh 3-6 lbs (1.5-3 kg). Very old birds, between 10 and 18 months, are stewing hens. They're flavourful, but tough and not made for grilling.

Because grills produce an intense, dry heat, really small birds—and their delicate breast meat—can easily dry out. >>

RAH, RAH, RUBS!

Pride of Szeged Chicken Rub

A mild Hungarian blend with garlic, basil, and paprika.

The Art of Spice Chicken & Poultry Rub

An unusual, appealing flavour combo—North African, maybe?—with coriander, cumin, and a little cinnamon.

Char Crust Amazin' Cajun

This rub adds some peppery heat with the slightly bitter depth of blackened chicken, and helps crisp the skin.

Old Bay Seasoning Heavy on the celery seed and with a hint of cayenne, this mix can also rim your Caesar glass.

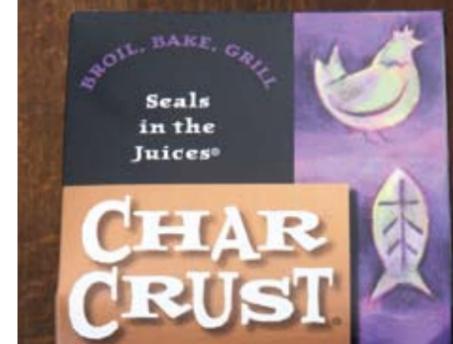
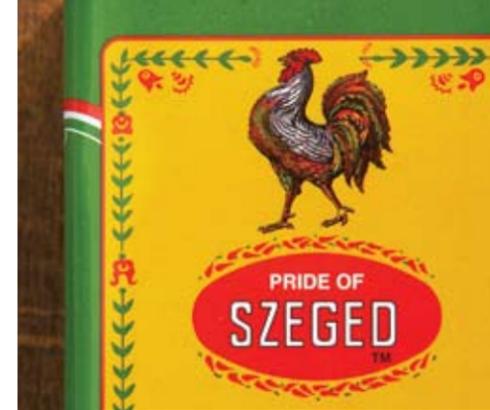
Club House La Grille Chicken Seasoning

Onion and lemon flavours dominate this mix, which has a coarse texture that holds its own.

President's Choice Roast Chicken Seasoning

A classic, poultry-seasoning blend of Mediterranean aromatic herbs. Mmm—sage, rosemary, and thyme.

—Martin Zibauer



Fact: Free-range chickens often prefer being indoors

How to spatchcock and section



FIRST SPATCHCOCK...

1. With the chicken breast-side down, use kitchen shears to cut through the ribs on both sides of the backbone. Save the back for stock.



2. Spread the chicken open and use a sharp knife to cut through the cartilage at the neck end of the breastbone.



3. Crack the chicken open like a book, then remove the keel bone, located beneath the cartilage you cut. It should come out fairly easily.



4. Turn the chicken over and flatten, and tuck wing tips under "armpits." That's it; your chicken is spatchcocked.



...THEN SECTION

5. Flip the spatchcocked bird breast-side down, then split in half by cutting along the slit left by the keel bone.



6. Cut through the wing joint, leaving a small piece of breast meat attached to each wing.



7. To remove the hindquarter, first cut the skin to expose the joint. Bend the thigh back to pop the bone out of its socket. Cut through the joint.



8. To separate thighs and legs, look for a line of fat, which shows where to cut. Leave the two bone-in breast pieces whole or cut in half.

So the best bet for the barbecue is to start with a big fryer/broiler or a mid-sized roaster, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 4-5 lbs (2-2.5 kg). (With bigger bones and a higher fat content, mid-sized capons have deep, rich flavour and are perfect for a crowd.) Chickens this big can withstand the rigours of grilling, and their higher fat content keeps the meat juicy. Look for birds—let's call them "joggers"—with legs and thighs that are large in relation to the breast for the best flavour and performance on the grill. When buying cut-up chicken pieces, again, look for mid- to large-sized legs and thighs; those tiny "drumettes" are easily torched and won't have much flavour. Likewise, breasts, bone-in or boneless, should be large so they'll stay juicy on the grill.

On the grill: legs and thighs

In my opinion, these are the best bits, moist and more flavourful than breast meat thanks to dark meat plus bone-in status, all wrapped in delectable, crispy skin. But legs and thighs can be tricky. With dense flesh, bone, and lots of flame-enticing fat, they are easily mistreated—underdone within, while burned black on the outside. Two-stage cooking is the best way to avoid half-raw chicken and stave off a mini-Chernobyl grilling disaster.

1. Set up your grill with one side on medium-high and the other on dead low. If you're using a charcoal grill, set your coals off to one side, leaving at least half the grill as a warming zone. Oil the cooking grates, then grill chicken pieces over direct, medium-high heat, skin-side up.
2. After 3-4 minutes, give them a flip and stand by. As the fat melts, you'll get flare-ups. Don't mess around spritzing flames with water or beer—all this does is move the grease around, create steam, and cool the grill. Instead, be active: Shuffle the chicken, dodging the fat fires. All grills have hot and cool spots, so use them to your advantage. (If flare-ups become unmanageable, shift the food to the low-temp side until the flames calm down.) Keep this up for another 3-4 minutes.
3. Use your judgment. If the first side of a piece could use a bit more browning, feel free to flip. If the skin needs more time, make it so. Continue until the chicken pieces are evenly char-browned and a joy to behold, 3-5 minutes more. >>



Five-spice rotisserie chicken with hoisin barbecue sauce



ILLUSTRATION: MARCO CIBOLA



Spatchcocked Tuscan chicken with balsamic glaze



4. Shut off the low-temp side of the grill, then shift the chicken over there, skin-side up. Close the lid. The idea is to finish the pieces to perfection over indirect heat, turning your grill into an outdoor oven. Depending on the size of your pieces, this could take another 4-6 minutes.
5. If you are saucing your chicken, do it during this period of indirect cooking. After testing for doneness (see "Is It Done Yet?" at right), remove the chicken pieces to a platter and let them rest for 10 minutes or so before serving.

On the grill: breasts, the original white meat

With a consistent texture and fewer bones to wrassle, chicken breasts are the bird's most popular part. But because breasts are irregularly shaped and relatively low in fat, the people's choice is usually grilled into dry, tasteless disappointment. Start with the best breast for the job and, again, use two-stage cooking.

1. Bone-in, skin-on breasts are best for the grill, with the bones on the cavity side protecting the delicate meat and adding mucho flavour. The skin and fat on the other side protect flesh from flame and lubricate the meat to keep it juicy. If skin is not your thing, at the very least look for bone-in breasts. But whatever type of breast you cook, remember that on the grill, size matters. Tiny, boneless, skinless breasts (the flat, 1"-thick runts in the plastic trays) are great for stir-fries or nuggets, but they have no place on the grill. By the time the exterior gets some colour, dinner is way overdone. Instead, look for thick, 5-7 oz (140-200 g) breasts: Their size lets them attain perfect char-brownness while staying nice and juicy.
2. Set up your grill for two-stage cooking as for legs and thighs (p. 102) and oil the cooking grates. Grill the breasts, skin-side up, over medium-high heat for about 3-4 minutes. If your grill has hot spots, position the big end of each breast over the hottest areas, protecting the slimmer end from overcooking.
3. After 3-4 minutes, flip the breasts and keep an eye on them. Skinless breasts won't cause many flare-ups, but shuffle them around for even brownness, about 4 minutes more, depending on the size.
4. Shut off the gas to the low-temp side and shift each

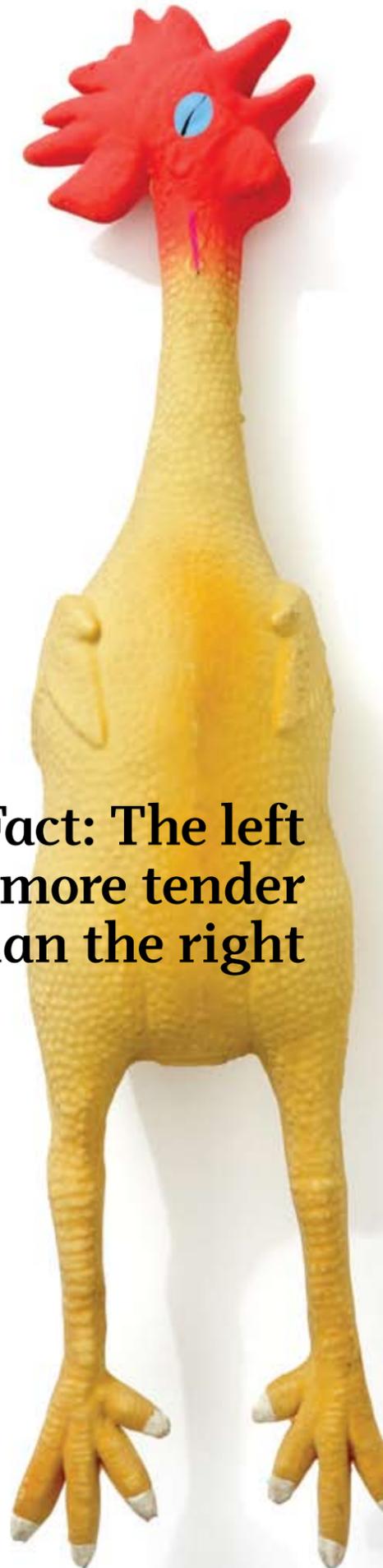
{Continued on page 115}

Is it done yet?

People worry so much about under-cooking chicken that they usually err on the side of caution — and end up with a dried-out bird. Here are some tips:

- ⌘ For a whole bird, use an instant-read thermometer. Take the chicken off the grill when the thickest part of the thigh is at 175°F (80°C), taking care not to touch the thermometer to bone. The chicken will come up to 180°F (82°C) after resting.
- ⌘ I don't like to cut into chicken until I'm eating, but it's a time-tested indicator for chicken pieces. Pierce the thickest part of a thigh or leg piece with a small knife, right to the bone. If the juices run clear (no pink), it's done. When breast meat close to the bone shows no sign of pink, it's done.
- ⌘ Veteran grillers use all their senses to know it's magic time, even if they double-check with a thermometer. Does the chicken look done? Do wings, legs, and thighs waggle easily? Are the juices clear and running freely? Is the meat shrinking from the end of the drumstick? How does it feel when you poke it with your finger? Practise makes perfect: Keep mental notes, and soon you'll "just know" it's done.—D.Z.

Fact: The left leg is more tender than the right





Cottage wings with sour cream dip



Cottage Wings

This method makes dry-skinned, crisp wings. Fans of sticky wings can replace the rub with Old-Fashioned Barbecue Sauce (recipe p. 110). To raise the heat, add extra cayenne to the rub or let diners douse cooked wings with hot sauce. Whatever style you prefer, serve with our cool Sour Cream Wing Dip (recipe p. 108).

- 24 chicken wings
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil (30 ml)
- Kosher or sea salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- ¼ cup Cottage Wing and Rib Rub (recipe follows) (60 ml)

1. Rinse chicken wings under cold, running water and pat dry. Cut off and discard wing tips (or freeze to use in stock).
 2. Toss wings in a large bowl with oil, salt, and pepper.
 3. Place wings on a clean, hot, lightly oiled grill over medium-high direct heat. Add smoking chips, if you like. Turn wings occasionally, moving to indirect heat or cooler part of grill as required, for about 25 minutes.
 4. Scoop the almost-cooked hot wings into a bowl and toss with Cottage Wing and Rib Rub until they are nicely coated on all sides. Return wings to grill for 5 minutes or so over medium-high direct heat, turning frequently until skin is crisp and wings are cooked through.
- MAKES 24 wings.

Cottage Wing and Rib Rub

Use this cottage staple whenever you fancy a taste of the southern US. Its exact flavour varies, depending on the whims of the chef. You might choose sweet, hot, or smoked paprika (or a mix). Ground coffee is optional: It intensifies the colour and smooths the spiciness.

- ¼ cup coriander seeds (60 ml)
- ¼ cup cumin seeds (60 ml)
- ¼ cup black peppercorns (60 ml)
- ¼ cup paprika (60 ml)
- 1 tbsp dried basil (15 ml)
- 1 tbsp dried oregano (15 ml)
- ¼ cup kosher or sea salt (60 ml)
- 1-2 tsp cayenne (5-10 ml)
- ¼ cup very finely ground (espresso) coffee (optional) (60 ml) >>

ILLUSTRATION: MARCO CIBOLA

HEY, BUDDY! LAY OFF THE SAUCE!

‡ Barbecue sauce is full of sugar, and sugar burns easily. So, if you must sauce, apply just one coat, and do it at the very end of the cooking process, when you're using indirect heat.

‡ The practice of building up a thick, caked-on layer of sauce completely obscures chicken's flavour (and probably promotes tooth decay). Try using a light lacquer of diluted sauce. Or give the chicken a spritz of good balsamic vinegar. The idea is to complement, not conquer.

‡ Everybody loves chicken with nice, crispy skin. Slopping on barbecue sauce reintroduces moisture, making the skin soft and pliable. In fact, the surest way to ruin a rotisserie chicken is to slather it with sauce. Try grilling your chicken after seasoning it only with salt and pepper or a dry rub. Then warm up some of your favourite barbecue sauce and serve it on the side as a dip. You'll be amazed at how good the unadorned chicken tastes (crispy skin!) and chicken-pickers can sauce as they see fit. —D.Z.

Indispensables

Foodservice foil
In the barbecue's fiery furnace, household foil is a lightweight: tearing when shifted or burning through as a drip pan or wood-chip packet. Curses, thin-foiled again! Barbecue foil is thicker and wider, but the real heavy-duty sheet is food-service foil, found in restaurant supply outlets or the stores that require membership cards. Along with the usual grill tasks, it makes an effective heat shield (a strip on the grill edge protects flammable bamboo skewer ends) and can even be formed into a temporary hibachi lid. —M.Z.

Fingerbowl
A proper grilled-chicken dinner is all about grease and glory—a bone-sucking bonanza best eaten with the hands. So, why not reward your paws for their hard work with a cleansing fingerbowl? (That's a little bowl of hot water with a lemon slice, for those of you who have never been to Swiss Chalet.) So retro. So practical. So nice not to have greasy fingerprints all over the wineglasses. —D.Z.

Basting brushes
All the legendary artists of the grill—Joseph Turnover, Roy Lichtenfingers, Charavaggio—choose their basting brushes with care. The avant-garde likes silicone for its durability (especially in the dishwasher), heat resistance, and colourful palette. Traditional masters prefer animal bristle, which sops up thin glazes and is better for poking into nooks and crannies. All agree that long handles help keep a genius's fingers from getting Remburnt. —M.Z.

Kitchen shears
A chicken's backbone is awkward to remove with a knife: The bird is slippery, and there's nothing much to push against. Kitchen shears work better for that task and others, including cutting twine, opening milk bags, and snipping chives. A good pair has sharp blades, comfortable, non-slip handles, and a wobble-free pivot. If you hold a pair of scissors open by the bottom handle and let the top one fall, it should close about halfway. Closed, the blades should touch neatly at their tips, but leave a thin gap in the middle. —M.Z.



Fact: Chickens can fly, for up to 13 seconds

5 easy glazes

Need a quick fix for boring barbecued chicken pieces? Try these glazes. Just mix equal parts (but please, no measuring) and brush on chicken near the end of the grilling time, turning to caramelize the glaze.

- ✂ Marmalade mixed with sherry
- ✂ Pesto mixed with lemon juice
- ✂ Dijon mustard, honey, and mayo
- ✂ Sweet chili sauce and soy sauce (with a little grated fresh ginger)
- ✂ Mango chutney thinned with yogurt (plus curry powder to taste)—M.Z.

2 FOWL FOULS

- ✂ Never put poultry on the so-called “warming rack.” Trapped in one of the hot spots of the cooking chamber, it’s more a drying (or torture) rack.
- ✂ A piece of chicken is no mass-produced burger patty, so don’t slap it on the grill frozen—unless you enjoy poultry that’s burnt on the outside and raw in the middle.—D.Z.

1. Combine coriander seeds, cumin seeds, and peppercorns in a small, heavy skillet. Shake pan over medium heat for 2-3 minutes, or just until you can smell the spicy aroma.
2. Crush spices with a mortar and pestle or grind in a spice mill. Combine with remaining ingredients.
3. Cool and store in a covered container in a cool, dark cupboard. MAKES about 1¼ cups (300 ml).

Sour Cream Wing Dip

Combine 1 cup (250 ml) sour cream and the juice and zest of 1 lime. Season to taste. MAKES 1 cup (250 ml).

Indonesian Chicken

It’s a challenge to grill boneless, skinless chicken breasts that are nicely glazed on the outside, but moist and tender within. The following method gets the right results, whether you leave the breasts whole or cook them as satays, the traditional Indonesian street snack. Any leftover chicken will be delicious added to a slaw or noodle salad, or included in a salad roll with some crunchy, slivered vegetables.

- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (5-7 oz/140-200 g each)
- 6 tbsp Kecap Manis, divided (recipe follows) (90 ml)
- 2 tbsp butter (30 ml)
- 2 green onions, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh coriander (30 ml)
- 1 lime, sliced

1. Rinse chicken under cold, running water and pat dry.
2. Use 4 tbsp (60 ml) Kecap Manis to coat chicken breasts on all sides. Set aside in covered dish or resealable freezer bag for 30 minutes.
3. Melt butter and combine with 2 tbsp (30 ml) Kecap Manis.
4. Lightly brush clean, hot grill with a little vegetable oil. Place chicken breasts

skinned-side up over medium-high heat for 3-4 minutes. Turn and cook for about 4 minutes more, moving them around to brown evenly.

5. Move each breast off flame when it’s nicely browned. Brush both sides with sauce mixture and finish cooking over indirect heat, with lid closed, for 1-4 minutes. Don’t overcook.
6. Remove chicken to a cutting board and let rest, tented with foil, for a couple of minutes. Slice each breast on the bias into ½" (1 cm) slices and serve garnished with chopped green onions, fresh coriander, and lime slices. SERVES 4.

TIP You can adapt almost any grilling recipe for poultry, including the ones here, to chicken in its many forms: whole, spatchcocked, cut up in pieces, or skewered for kebabs or satays.

VARIATION

Chicken Satays

1. Soak bamboo skewers in water for an hour or so. Pound chicken breasts to flatten and cut into long, narrow slices. Brush chicken with 4 tbsp (60 ml) Kecap Manis and marinate for 30 minutes.
2. Prepare Kecap Manis and butter mixture, as above. Thread marinated chicken on skewers. Grill over medium direct heat, turning and basting with sauce mixture, for 6-8 minutes, until nicely glazed and cooked through. Serve garnished as above.

Kecap Manis

This sweet, soy-based sauce (pronounced *kay-chap ma-nees*) is used in Indonesia the way we use ketchup—and yes, the words are related. Kecap Manis is available bottled in many Asian markets, but you can quickly make your own and, once strained, it will keep for several months on your pantry shelf.

- 2 cups brown sugar (500 ml)
- ½ cup water (125 ml)
- 2 cups soy sauce (500 ml)
- ¾ cup molasses (175 ml)
- 3 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 3 slices fresh ginger, each ¼" (0.5 cm), smashed and roughly chopped
- 1 tsp coriander seeds, crushed (5 ml)
- 1 tsp black peppercorns, crushed (5 ml) >>

CHICKEN GRILL GUIDE RECIPES

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1. Combine brown sugar and water in a saucepan. Stir over medium heat while sugar dissolves. Raise heat to medium-high and cook for 2-3 minutes.
2. Lower heat, stir in remaining ingredients, and simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Strain mixture through a fine sieve and store in a cupboard in a covered container. **MAKES** 3 cups (750 ml).

Indonesian Dipping Sauce

Serve this with satays, as a lighter alternative to the usual peanut dipping sauce, or for dipping spring rolls or salad rolls.

Combine ¼ cup (60 ml) Kecap Manis (recipe above), ¼ cup rice wine vinegar (60 ml), 1 finely chopped clove of garlic, 1 pinch hot pepper flakes, and 1 slivered green onion in a small bowl. Garnish with finely shredded carrot, if you like. **MAKES** about ½ cup (125 ml).

Old-Fashioned Barbecue Sauce

This basic barbecue sauce recipe—like what you can buy in the grocery store,

but fresher-tasting and all-natural—is an old favourite. It's delicious as is on grilled chicken pieces, but I encourage you to play with it by adding flavours (see Variations, below) to make your own signature sauce. The recipe makes a large quantity (enough for a summer's worth of barbecues or cottage gift giving). Keep the sauce in covered containers in the refrigerator, where it will last for at least a month, or freeze what you can't use in that time.

¼ cup vegetable oil (60 ml)

1 large onion, finely chopped

2-4 cloves garlic, finely chopped

1 tsp paprika (5 ml)

1 tbsp freshly ground pepper (15 ml)

1 tsp dry mustard (5 ml)

1 tsp cayenne (5 ml)

¼ cup cider vinegar (60 ml)

¼ cup fresh lemon juice (60 ml)

1 can (approx. 24 oz/725 ml) tomato sauce

1 can (approx. 28 oz/796 ml) crushed tomatoes

2 tbsp brown sugar (30 ml)

2 tbsp molasses (30 ml)

1 tsp-1 tbsp hot pepper sauce

Kosher or sea salt

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Cook onion until soft, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and spices, and cook for 1-2 minutes more, then stir in remaining ingredients.
2. Simmer for about 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. **MAKES** about 6 cups (1.5 L).

VARIATIONS

‡ To make a sweeter sauce, add more brown sugar or some honey. ‡ For extra heat, add chiles or more hot pepper sauce. ‡ For more tang, add Worcestershire sauce or more cider vinegar. ‡ Make it smoky with a chopped chipotle chile. ‡ Add dried or fresh basil, thyme, oregano, or other herbs.

Tuscan Chicken with Balsamic Glaze

Remarkably easy to master and always impressive, spatchcocking is a terrific prep technique for grilled poultry (see "How to Spatchcock and Section," p. 102). With the backbone removed, the

CHICKEN GRILL GUIDE RECIPES

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bird can be flattened, so it cooks quickly and evenly, while remaining juicy. Here, grilled chicken is finished with a sweet-and-sour Balsamic Glaze, building on flavours already infused in the meat by a garlicky paste. This is a good recipe for the cottage gardener, as you can vary the herb mix to include whatever's in your plot (or the grocery store).

1 whole chicken (3 lbs/1.5 kg)
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
3 tbsp olive oil, divided (45 ml)
2 tbsp chopped fresh herbs, such as oregano, chives, and flat-leaf parsley (30 ml)
Freshly ground pepper
Kosher or sea salt
2 tbsp chopped fresh herbs for garnish (30 ml)
Balsamic Glaze (recipe follows)
2 Grilled Lemons (recipe follows)

1. Spatchcock chicken, rinse under cold, running water, and pat dry.

2. Combine garlic with 2 tbsp (30 ml) olive oil and 2 tbsp (30 ml) of the chopped herbs, along with pepper to taste. Coat chicken with mixture and refrigerate in a covered dish or a large, resealable freezer bag for several hours or overnight.

3. Remove chicken from refrigerator and wipe away excess herb mixture.

4. Lightly oil a clean, hot grill. Sprinkle chicken with a little salt and place skin-side down over medium direct heat for 3-5 minutes.

5. Move chicken to indirect heat and close lid. After about 15 minutes, turn over chicken and baste with remaining olive oil. Continue to cook for about 25-30 minutes or until meat is opaque throughout when tested and the juices run clear.

6. During last 5 minutes of grilling, baste chicken with Balsamic Glaze.

7. Remove chicken to a platter, brush with remaining Balsamic Glaze, and let rest, tented with foil, for a couple of minutes. Serve garnished with remaining fresh herbs and Grilled Lemons (one lemon half per person). SERVES 4.

TIP To prevent cross-contamination, after basting the partly cooked chicken with oil, wash your brush before dabbing on glaze near the end of the cooking period (or use two brushes). By then, any bacteria on the meat will have been killed, so it's safe to brush on the rest of the glaze after the chicken comes off the grill.

Balsamic Glaze

1 cup balsamic vinegar (250 ml)

1 tbsp honey (15 ml)

1 tsp black peppercorns, crushed (5 ml)

1 tbsp chopped fresh rosemary (15 ml)

1. In a small saucepan, bring balsamic vinegar to a boil. Lower heat and simmer for 5 minutes.

2. Stir in remaining ingredients and simmer for 2-3 minutes, or until glaze is reduced to about ½ cup. Cool and strain. MAKES ½ cup (125 ml).

Grilled Lemons

Cut lemons in half crosswise. Brush with a little olive oil and Balsamic Glaze and grill, cut-side down, for about 5 minutes, or until surface is nicely glazed.

Five-Spice Rotisserie Chicken with Hoisin Barbecue Sauce

Five-Spice Powder is a wonderfully fragrant, quite pungent Chinese spice blend—a mix of star anise, Szechuan pepper, fennel, cloves, and cinnamon. It makes an excellent seasoning for grilled chicken and pork. Quick and easy to assemble yourself (recipe follows), it's also available at Asian grocers.

With its crisp skin and tangy soy flavours, this chicken may remind you of Peking duck. I use my rotisserie for this recipe, but it works as well for a whole chicken roasted over indirect heat. Puncturing the skin of a rotisserie chicken a few times near the backbone lets fat escape and helps to brown and crisp the skin as the chicken cooks. And to save time at the cottage, I like to cook two chickens on the rotisserie at once and use leftovers for salads and sandwiches.

2 whole chickens (about 3 lbs/1.5 kg each)

1 tbsp Five-Spice Powder (recipe follows) (15 ml)

Kosher or sea salt

Freshly ground pepper

2 tbsp vegetable oil (30 ml)

Hoisin Barbecue Sauce (recipe follows)

1. Rinse chickens under cold, running water and pat dry inside and out. Remove any excess fat from cavities. Sprinkle a little Five-Spice Powder, salt, and pepper inside each chicken. Combine remaining Five-Spice Powder with oil and rub all over chickens, lifting breast and thigh skin to rub some mixture underneath.

2. Truss chickens to keep the wings and legs from flopping about as the spit turns. Place in a covered dish or large resealable freezer bag and refrigerate for several hours or overnight.

3. Remove the barbecue grates, place a drip pan inside to catch the drippings and prevent flare-ups, and preheat the grill. Take chickens out of refrigerator and sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper.

4. Arrange and secure birds in centre of rotisserie spit. Put rotisserie in place and turn on motor.

5. Cook chickens over high heat for about 1¼-1½ hours, or until their juices run clear and internal temperature (when tested at thickest part of thigh, not touching bone) is 175°F (80°C).

Check chickens from time to time, and if skin is browning too quickly, reduce heat a little. Brush birds with Hoisin Barbecue Sauce (recipe follows) during last 5 minutes of roasting.

6. Turn off burner when chickens are cooked, but leave them spinning while they rest for about 15 minutes. Carefully, using thick oven mitts, remove rotisserie from grill. Slide chickens off the spit onto a large serving platter, being careful not to lose any juices. Serve with more Hoisin Barbecue Sauce on the side.

EACH CHICKEN SERVES 4-6.

VARIATION

Grilled Five-Spice Chicken (Without a Rotisserie)

Prepare chickens as in steps 1 and 2 above. Place whole chickens on a clean, hot, lightly oiled grill over a drip pan and cook over medium, indirect heat with lid closed. Check chickens occasionally and baste with pan drippings. If skin is browning too quickly, reduce heat slightly and turn chickens around so that the cooler side faces the heat source. When their internal temperature—tested at the thickest part of the thigh, not touching bone—is 175°F (80°C), remove chickens to a warm platter and allow to rest, tented loosely with foil, for about 15 minutes.

Five-Spice Powder

1 tbsp fennel seeds (15 ml)

1 tbsp Szechuan peppercorns (15 ml)

2 star anise

1 tsp whole cloves (5 ml)

2" piece cinnamon stick (5 cm), broken in pieces

1. Combine whole spices in a small heavy skillet. Shake the pan over medium heat for 2-3 minutes, or just until you can smell the spicy aroma.

2. Crush the spices with a mortar and pestle or grind in a spice mill. Cool and store in a covered container in a cool, dark cupboard. MAKES 3 tbsp (45 ml).

Hoisin Barbecue Sauce

This sweet, pungent sauce complements many grilled foods, but is especially good on poultry, pork, and salmon. Taste for yourself and next time you'll make a double batch. If you like heat, add chili sauce or a few chili flakes to suit. >>

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½ cup ketchup (125 ml)

½ cup hoisin sauce (125 ml)

1 tbsp honey (15 ml)

¼ cup rice wine vinegar (60 ml)

2 tbsp soy sauce (30 ml)

½ tsp Five-Spice Powder (recipe above)
(2 ml)

Kosher or sea salt

Freshly ground pepper

Combine ingredients in a small saucepan and cook over medium heat for 5 minutes. Cool. MAKES about 1½ cups (375 ml).

TIP Stored in a covered container in the refrigerator, Hoisin Barbecue Sauce will keep for at least a month.

VARIATION

Orange Hoisin Barbecue Sauce

Add a delicious fruit flavour to Hoisin Barbecue Sauce by mixing in 1 tbsp (15 ml) each grated fresh ginger and fresh orange zest.

Marinades 101

When marinades are good, they're very good—infusing complex flavours and moisture into meat. But when they're bad, they're horrid, as anyone who's eaten a pallid, stringy, pickled chicken breast will know. Most marinades combine four agents:

Acid, such as vinegar, wine, juice, or yogurt, loosens the meat's folded proteins, tenderizing it and creating wee gaps for moisture to occupy, at least temporarily. A little acid is good, but as a short-fibred meat, chicken is already tender—too much acid can leave it stringy or mushy, with a pickled taste. Better to dab on a tangy sauce or squeeze on some lemon juice just before serving. And remember high-school chemistry: Acids react with metals, so never marinate in a metal bowl.

Salt also helps rearrange proteins, but more importantly, it holds in moisture during cooking. If you're avoiding salt, don't bother marinating—use a salt-free rub or glaze instead.

Flavours from herbs, spices, veggies, and such get sucked in along with moisture. But flavours have to get into the liquid before they can get into the chicken. Throwing some dried herbs or, worse, whole spices into a marinade at the last minute is expecting

a miracle, as if peppercorns could magically wiggle themselves into the meat. Instead, finely chop or grind ingredients and make the marinade ahead to let the flavours infuse. Or heat a marinade briefly and let it cool.

Oil keeps air-exposed surfaces from drying too much, especially if you marinate in a bowl, not a resealable plastic bag.

Building a marinade is the first step; using it well, the second. First, don't overdo it. Marinating too long lets it go too far. Two to three hours is about right for skinless chicken breasts. A longer soak is okay for pieces protected by skin, or in less-acidic yogurt or buttermilk marinades. A quick bath is better when the mix is very acidic or pieces are small (such as kebabs, where greater surface area means more penetration). Pricking meat with a fork also speeds things up.

Before grilling, dry the meat's surface with paper towels. (Some cooks let whole birds air-dry in the fridge for several hours to get a really crisp cooked skin.) Why? A wet surface can't get hot enough to brown properly.

And while you must never infect dinner with bacteria by brushing used marinade on food that's about to come off the grill, a marinade can make a tasty sauce. Just boil it for a few minutes to kill micro-organisms.—M.Z.

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breast there when you like how it looks, keeping in mind that skinless breasts won't become quite as brown as skin-on.

5. Apply sauce if desired, close the lid, and bake using indirect heat until the breasts are just done, 1–4 minutes, and not a millisecond more (see “Is It Done Yet?” p. 105). In the 10 minutes you'll let it rest before serving, the meat will continue to cook a bit from residual heat.

Resolving the mixed-grill dilemma

Dealing with a whole cut-up chicken can be daunting. Breast meat requires less cooking than thighs and legs, so even if a full breast looks bigger, resist the urge to cut each side of it into smaller pieces. Instead, keep each side (two per bird) whole, which will give them the size to stand in there with the legs and thighs.

If somebody else did the prep work and cut the breasts into smaller pieces, or you simply prefer them cut small, employ a little “time delay” cooking: Get the legs and thighs and larger pieces on the grill first, giving them a 3- to 4-minute head start before you add the smaller breast pieces. With a little luck, doneness and dinnertime will coincide perfectly.

Whole chickens: the total package

An entire bird, roasted on a rotisserie or seated on the grate, proves that a whole chicken is indeed greater than the sum of its parts. With white and dark meats, bones, skin, and fat all working together, it's the ultimate in chicken goodness: moist, flavourful, and wrapped in crispy skin. And as much as a golden bird fresh from the grill impresses dinner guests, it actually takes less work from the cottage cook than a load of individual pieces. Rotisserie cooking, in particular, makes for a very moist, evenly cooked chicken with a full complement of delicious skin.

Indirect roasting

1. Preheat one side of your grill to high, leaving the other turned off, and place a drip pan under the cooking grate on the cold side. If you're using a charcoal grill, set up your coals under one half of the grate or arrange them along both sides with a space in between. Place a drip pan under the cooking grate beside the coals.

2. Rinse your chicken in cold water to remove any bits you'd rather not know about that might be lurking in the cavity, then pat dry with paper towels. Remove any excess fat from inside the cavity. Season inside and out with salt and pepper or whatever magical spice mixture you desire. You can tuck the wing tips up under the “elbows” at a jaunty angle, but there's no need for trussing.

3. Set the chicken over the drip pan, close the lid, and try for a temperature of around 375°F–400°F (190°C–200°C) inside the cooking chamber. Built-in grill thermometers are notoriously inaccurate, so you might want to double-check your heat with an oven thermometer. With a charcoal grill, you'll experience an initial temperature spike that will subside as the coals burn down a bit. No cause for alarm.

4. That's pretty much it. If you want to add some smoke chips to the hot side of the grill, do that now. Then grab a beer and don't lift the lid for an hour or so. Whole chickens can take anywhere from 1¼–1¾ hours to cook, depending on size, so start checking for doneness after an hour and a bit (see “Is It Done Yet?” p. 105). If your grill is running hot and things are really crackling and spitting under the hood, drop the temperature a few degrees partway through by turning down the gas or, on a charcoal cooker, closing air intake vents a notch or two.

5. Let the chicken rest for at least 15 minutes before you carve and devour.

Rotisserie roasting

1. For success in the rotisserie league, your best bet is a gas grill with a dedicated rear rotisserie burner, a model with multiple tube burners that run side to side or a charcoal grill. You'll also need a rotisserie rig with a motor, a spit rod and its holders, and forks. If you need to buy a rotisserie, try to find a model that's made by the company that manufactured your grill—it will fit better than a “universal” design. To get ready to roast, remove the grates entirely and place a drip pan in the bottom of the cooking chamber. Fire up the rotisserie burner and let it preheat with the lid down. If you're using a charcoal grill, build a coal bank on either side of the cooking chamber with a drip pan in the middle.

2. Rinse your chicken in cold water, then pat dry with paper towels. Remove any

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excess fat from inside the cavity. Season inside and out with salt and pepper or your favourite spices, then loosely truss the bird to keep the wings and legs from flopping around on the spit. Nothing fancy, and not too tight: You want hot air to circulate all around the limbs.

3. Screw one rotisserie fork onto the spit, then slide the chicken down the spit rod, butt first. Seat it evenly and securely onto the fork, then slide the other fork down on top of the neck end. Tighten both forks with needle-nosed pliers. Proceed triumphantly to the grill, slip the spit rod into place, start the motor, and close the lid.

4. Rotisserie cooking is a little faster than indirect roasting, so check for doneness after an hour. Depending on the size of the chicken, you might need another 15-20 minutes' cooking time (see p. 101). When your bird is ready, turn off the gas or shut down the intake vents, and let it rest for 15 minutes while it's still spinning on the spit. This keeps the juices tumbling inside until they're reabsorbed by the meat. To avoid painful finger burns, use pliers to loosen the spit forks. Then carve and enjoy.

Master your spin control

On many rotisseries, the exact middle of the spit rod doesn't line up with the middle of the grill itself. (But you can't see this in the kitchen, where you're setting up the spit with a bird or two.) So, when you slide the spit rod into place—now locked and loaded with chicken—your birds won't be evenly spaced and will have to be readjusted. Try this: Set up your rotisserie, then use a metal file to make a small mark on the spit rod, indicating the dead centre of your burner or coal pan. Use this mark to perfectly align your spit forks. 🐔

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