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grill power

Put more sizzle in your barbecue with these fast, surefire ways to cook meat, seafood, and vegetables.

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STEAK

New York strip and sirloin are terrific boneless options; you can also use bone-in steaks like T-bone and porterhouse. If you don't see packages of 1-inch-thick steaks, ask the butcher to cut them for you.

SAUSAGE

The expanding array of chicken and turkey links means lots of choices, but these tend to dry out more quickly. If you'd rather not pay close attention to the grill, stick with classic, low-maintenance pork.



HAMBURGERS

Because fat equals flavor, the best burgers come from the cheapest ground beef. Try 80 percent lean; or, for a slightly leaner patty, Karmel suggests asking the butcher to grind equal parts chuck and sirloin.

grilling beef and sausage

The right cuts: For steak, burgers, and sausages, use meat that's not too thick and not too thin: Think 1 inch. This thickness allows the meat to cook through without becoming charred, says Elizabeth Karmel, the founder of www.girlsatthegrill.com and the author of *Taming the Flame* (Wiley, \$25).

The easiest technique: Cook with both direct and indirect heat. If you have a gas grill, turn one burner on medium (direct heat) and another on low (indirect heat). With charcoal, pile smoldering coals at the ends of the grill (direct) and arrange a single layer of coals in the middle (indirect). To impart those classic grill marks, place the steak or burgers over direct heat first, then transfer them to indirect heat, where they can finish cooking. Cook sausages entirely over indirect heat. Whatever you cook, keep the lid closed and don't turn the meat obsessively—once is enough. (For cooking times, see Grilling Cheat Sheet, page 226.)

tips

Consider flank steak if, like a short-order cook, you have requests ranging from medium-rare to well-done. This large cut has a thicker center and tapered ends, Karmel explains. When the middle is medium-rare, the ends will be well-done.

Prevent a burger from bulging by making an indentation in the center with your thumb, says Karmel. It will fill out on the grill.

To prick or not to prick the sausages? Not to prick. If you keep sausages over moderate heat, the casings won't split.



WINGS

To keep wings from cooking to a crisp, buy the biggest ones you can find. Some stores carry packages that are all drumettes—the meatier miniature-drumstick portion of the wing.

LEGS

For foolproof grilled chicken, buy a package of all dark meat. Thighs and drumsticks stay moist longer than their paler, leaner counterparts.



BREASTS

Look for the smallest ones available so the centers will cook through before the outsides become dry.

grilling chicken

The right cuts: For the juiciest results, pick up some inexpensive bone-in, skin-on pieces. The skin prevents the meat from drying out, and the warmth of the flame melts the fat beneath the skin, effectively basting the meat, says Karmel.

The easiest technique: Place the chicken, skin-side up, over indirect heat, close the lid, and don't touch it for about 45 minutes. It's that simple. The closed lid creates an oven-like atmosphere that yields a crisp, golden skin. If you prefer grill marks, says Karmel, turn the chicken during the final eight minutes or so. (For cooking times, see Grilling Cheat Sheet, page 226.)

tips

Use the skin as a pouch for flavorings. "It's handy for rubbing seasonings or a fresh herb mixture right against the meat," says Cheryl Jamison, coauthor with Bill Jamison of *The Big Book of Outdoor Cooking and Entertaining* (Morrow, \$25). (See Flavorings, page 227.)

Slather chicken with barbecue sauce or other sugary glazes only during the last 10 minutes or so of grilling. This will prevent the sugar from scorching.



SHRIMP

Splurge on large or extra-large shrimp—they're less likely to dry out. Leaving the shells on also helps shrimp retain as much moisture and flavor as possible, though you can peel them first (or buy them already peeled).



TUNA STEAK

Look for steaks that are an inch thick—no thinner. The same goes for salmon and swordfish steaks.

SALMON FILLET

Don't ask the fishmonger to remove the skin from the fillet; it protects the flaky fish from the heat and minimizes sticking.

grilling seafood

The right cuts: The sturdier the seafood, the better it can withstand heat. Stick with hearty tuna steaks, shell-on shrimp, and skin-on salmon.

The easiest technique: Fish cooks quickly, so don't turn your back on it. And resist the temptation to fuss. "You should put it down and just leave it there for the prescribed amount of time," says Bill Jamison. When cooking tuna steak and shrimp, flip them once. Place salmon fillets skin-side down and leave them alone until they're the same color throughout—no turning required. (For cooking times, see Grilling Cheat Sheet, page 226.)

tips

To prevent sticking, oil the fish, not the grate, says Karmel (this also minimizes flare-ups). And strew some sliced lemon on the grate before adding the fish. You won't end up with grill marks, but you'll get a citrusy tang.

Buy a single center-cut piece of salmon if you need several fillets, allowing 6 ounces per person. Cut it into individual pieces, slicing almost but not quite through to the skin. When it's done, slide a spatula between the fillet and the skin. The fillet will lift off; the skin will stay attached to the grill. (For easy cleanup, turn the flame to low, close the lid, and let the skin burn to ashes.)

Save some money and buy frozen shrimp rather than "fresh," which almost always have been previously frozen. You can defrost as few or as many as you need.

To find out what to look for when buying shrimp, go to www.realsimple.com/shrimp.



SLICED

If you can slice it, you can grill it. Zucchini, eggplants, bell peppers, and onions are ideal candidates.

FOIL-WRAPPED

Slow-to-cook and potentially messy foods, like potatoes and tomatoes, require a buffer from the heat, along with some olive oil and herbs.



IN THE HUSK

Soak corn, husks still on, for an hour to minimize charring. Before grilling, pull back the husks but don't detach them. Remove the strings, add olive oil or butter, and replace the husks.

grilling vegetables

The right cuts: Almost any vegetable works on the grill, whether sliced, wrapped, or fresh from the field.

The easiest techniques: To simplify your prep, slice summer vegetables $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick, slick them with oil, season them with salt, and place them over direct heat. They'll be just tender by the time grill marks appear. Potatoes and tomatoes—foods you wouldn't normally associate with the grill—work well when wrapped in a double layer of heavy-duty foil and placed over direct heat. Allow corn on the cob to steam in the husks over direct heat. If the tips start to blacken, rearrange the ears so they hang off the edge of the grill. And don't forget about your vegetables. Like meat and seafood, they require a specific cooking time; otherwise they'll char or turn mushy. (For cooking times, see Grilling Cheat Sheet, page 226.)

tips

If space is limited, put the vegetables on the grill before the entrée. They taste just as good at room temperature as they do hot off the grill.

Use a spatula, not tongs, to turn sliced vegetables. This ensures that onion rings remain nicely stacked and that the flesh of the softened eggplants doesn't detach from the skin.

Judge an ear of corn's ripeness by feeling through the husk for plump kernels. If you can't resist peeking, bend back the husk, exposing only the tip of the ear. The kernels should be full and close together.