

Daniel Ayton's Secrets to a good barbecue

A well-balanced marinade has an acidic ingredient, plus seasoning, salt and oil. Use some very good acid marinades such as ancient vinegars fruit juice, wine, vinegar, yoghurt or buttermilk, Marinating meat before grilling helps tenderise it and adds wonderful flavour fresh papaya, ginger and pineapple contain tenderising enzymes and they add an exotic flavour as well.

Seasonings such as herbs, spices, soy sauce, mustard and sugar provide the primary flavours. Use fresh herbs whenever possible, hard herbs such as thyme or rosemary contain greater amounts of aromatic oils that will be released when crushed.

Make sure that each and every ingredient of the marinade is uniformly rubbed all over and covers the items totally; in this way the food absorb the herbs and spices thoroughly.

Marinating time depends greatly on the size and type of foodstuffs you want to marinate; marinating for too brief a time doesn't allow the flavour of the marinade to penetrate the meat, overlong marinating time results in softening the texture of the meat too much. Here are some guidelines: fish/seafood must be marinated for 15minutes-1 hour, bird meat between 1/2-3 hours, red meat must be kept aside overnight dipped in the marinades inside the refrigerator. Never pierce the meat prior to marinating as this allows the marinade juices to flow out of the meat whilst it is being cooked. Finally, a little oil also helps carry the seasoning flavours and keeps the meat moist during cooking. The same rules apply to barbecues and spit roasts, as seen in the following recipe Spit roasted goose marinated in ale gar with a prune and pepperdew stuffing.

When it is time to cook the meat product on the barbecue, always pre heat the grills this will both seal prevent the food sticking to the bars, it will seal the meat quickly preventing loss of flavour and moisture, any that does flow from the meat shall very quickly evaporate on the hot charcoal enhancing the flavour more. Once the meat is sealed move it to a cooler area of the grill to cook through.

Do not use excessive amounts of oil as this will spoil the taste of the food, make a natural brush using the hard herbs as mentioned before tied at the stalk end, simmer or infuse some oil with added flavours such as paprika, onion, garlic and herbs; then apply this to the griddle bars a minute before the meat allow this to burn off before adding the meat.

Lastly never wash the bars of the barbecue, just scrub with a stiff wire brush, but at the start and end of each session super heat the bars to burn off excesses of meat and marinade this will also sterilise the barbecue ready for use.

