



# COACH SPOSATO'S BAR-B-QUE FUNDAMENTALS



## COOKING METHODS

**Steaming.** Place delicate fish or vegetables inside a package you make from a sealed square of aluminum foil. When sealing the edges, be sure to leave some space for the steam to circulate. Instead of putting the packet directly over the hot coals, place it on the cooler side of the grill for slow cooking. This method of cooking will seal in juices and natural flavors, making heavy seasoning unnecessary.

**Rotisserie.** While this method requires more complicated equipment and longer cooking times, it can be a real crowd-pleaser. Rotisserie cooking allows you to evenly cook an entire bird or large piece of meat while retaining most of the natural juices. Place a whole chicken or leg of lamb, well seasoned with salt and pepper, on a rotating spit directly over the flames. The key to good rotisserie is to keep what you're cooking well balanced on the spit. An unbalanced rotisserie means uneven cooking.

**Smoking.** You don't need a fancy contraption to impart a smoky flavor to your food. "Flavored" wood chips or an assortment of fresh herbs work just as well. Wood chips come in a variety of flavors, including mesquite and hickory. To prevent burning, soak them in water for about an hour before using and place them over the coals just before you begin to cook your food. You can also soak a bunch of fresh herbs — like sage, thyme, and rosemary — and sprinkle them on the coals before cooking.

## GRILLING

- The grill is easier to clean when it is warm. Use a wire brush or a wadded up newspaper.
- Always remove the ashes after the grill is cooled down. This will prevent corrosion in the bottom of the grill.
- Grilling may be done with direct or indirect heat. Direct heat is obtained by distributing the coals evenly over the bottom of the grill. Moving the coals to one side and placing a foil drip pan under the meat in the middle area between the coals or to one side of the grill obtain indirect heat. Indirect heat cooks slower and is best for thick or large pieces of meat.

### DIRECT GRILLING METHOD

- Foods cooked directly over coals. This is a fast method for cooking steaks, hot dogs and burgers.
- Mesquite wood burns hot, so cook around perimeter of coals.

### INDIRECT GRILLING METHOD

- Slow cook thicker steaks and roasts in a covered grill. Bank coals around a foil pan.
  - Place beef over pan so food is not over the coals. Keeps grill temperature at 300° to roast. Add wood or charcoal to maintain heat.
  - Wrap a handful of wood chips in a foil pouch. Pierce the foil to release the smoke. Put pouch over hot charcoal or gas briquettes. The chips will smolder and not flame. Soak the chips in water first for at least 30 minutes.
  - Use a quick-read thermometer or use the touch method. If the meat is rare, it will feel soft and yielding; if the medium it will give slightly, and if well done it will be firm.
  - Spray meat with apple juice to maintain moisture and added flavor.
- Oil the grill with olive oil or a vegetable spray before grilling.

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## GRILLING (CONTINUED)

- If using charcoal to grill it will take 30 to 45 minutes before the coals are ready. Do not start grilling before the coals are covered with a light ash. The coals should not be flaming.
- HOT coals are barely covered with gray ash. MEDIUM coals glow through the layer of gray ash. LOW coals are covered with a thick layer of gray ash.
- Use your hand to determine how hot the coals are. Place your hand about 4" above the coals. Count the number of seconds you can hold your hand in that position before the heat forces it away. One second equals HOT; Three seconds equals MEDIUM HOT; five seconds equals MEDIUM COOL.
- Use a water or apple juice filled spray bottle to extinguish flare-ups.
- If your grill has a lid or cover, it may be placed on the grill to cut off oxygen to the flare up.
- Turn food with tongs or spatula to prevent juices from escaping.
- Most fresh, raw vegetables may be grilled. Preparation is generally just washing, removing bruised areas, and lightly brushing with a marinade.
- A grill thermometer is useful, but not necessary for gauging the cooking fire's intensity. If you use one, steaks, chops and skewered meats are cooked at 375° and poultry and fish cooked at 325°.
- Anything that can be pan fried, broiled, or roasted indoors can be grilled or smoked.
- Foods wrapped in foil and cooked on a grill should be turned often to prevent burning and assure even cooking.
- If using wooden skewers, soak them for 30 minutes before using to prevent burning while cooking.
- If using metal skewers place one end outside the cooking area, this prevents that end from getting very hot.
- To avoid overcooking pork or undercooking vegetables, have separate skewers for meat or vegetables. You can also, parboil the vegetables first.
- If using a gas barbecue, you can grill roasts evenly without flare-ups by only turning heat on one side of the grill and placing roast over a drip pan on the other side.
- *Per the Texas Beef Council*
  - Grilling at medium to medium-low temperatures ensures even cooking. If the temperature is too high, beef can char and become overcooked on the outside before the interior reaches the desired doneness. Charring beef is not recommended.
  - Trim excess fat from meats to avoid flare-ups while grilling.
  - Use long-handled tongs for turning steaks; spatulas for burgers. A fork will pierce the beef causing loss of flavorful juices.
  - For best results, use an instant-read thermometer to determine doneness. For steaks and burgers, insert the thermometer horizontally into the side (not the top) to check the internal temperature.
  - Cook burgers to at least 160°F (medium doneness); cook steaks to at least 145°F (medium rare doneness).

## SMOKERS

- Use water in your smoker to form steam to help keep your meat moist.
- Add water-soaked green wood to get more smoke.

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## SMOKERS (CONTINUED)

- Place water pan directly under meat so meat can be self-basting.
- Make sure smoker is hot before adding meat. (250 to 300°)
- Put baked beans or other vegetables in your smoker to get a smoked taste. Do not over smoke. Vegetables can be par-boiled before smoking.
- Smoking should be done at 200 to 250°; if temperature gets too high, close dampers part way; if temperature gets too low open dampers and add wood or charcoal.

## HEAT SOURCES

### WOOD

- Put wood chips in water for 30 minutes or longer before using.
- Use dry oak to keep fire up to correct temperatures.
- Use hickory, apple, peach, pecan, or alder for sweet mellow taste.
- Use top quality hardwood charcoal such as Kingsford, Jack Daniels, and Royal Oak.
- Wait until 70 to 80% of charcoal has a gray ash before putting on meat.
- Use hickory nuts in hot charcoal to improve flavor of steaks.
- Add a little wood at a time to keep temperature constant.
- Do not use **CEDAR, FIR, PINE, SPRUCE, and EUCALYPTUS; THEIR SMOKE GIVES THE MEAT A BITTER FLAVOR.**
- Use Mesquite after it has been burned down to charcoal. Otherwise it leaves a bitter taste.
- If using water-soaked wood let it drain before adding the wood to the fire.
- If fire is too cool, knock ashes from charcoal or wood and add a little wood or charcoal.
- If fire is too hot shut dampers, mist with water or raise the grill.

### CHARCOAL

- **NEVER ADD LIQUID FUEL STARTER AFTER YOU HAVE STARTED THE CHARCOAL BURNING.**
- **NEVER USE GASOLINE FOR ANY REASON TO START A FIRE.**
- You will obtain the best results with high quality hardwood charcoal such as Kingsford or Jack Daniels.
- When using as match light product, be sure to allow 45 minutes or more to burn the fuel out of the charcoal before placing meat on the grill or in the smoker.
- When using liquid fuel starter for charcoal, choose a commercial charcoal starter. It is the safest liquid starter.
- There are several options to liquid starters such as electric starters and charcoal chimneys.
- Do not start grilling until at least 80% of the charcoal has a gray ash to it.
- If a fire is too cool, knock off some of the ashes and add charcoal around the edge.
- If the fire is too hot; shut off the dampers, mist with apple juice or water, raise the cooking area, close the cover or lid to reduce the amount of oxygen available.

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## CHARCOAL (CONTINUED)

- Use hickory nuts in hot coals to add flavor to steaks.
- Chips of hickory, mesquite, or other woods may be soaked in water for 30 minutes or more and added to hot coals for various flavors.
- Fresh herbs such as bay leaves, marjoram, rosemary, thyme, oregano, and sage, may be moistened with water and placed on the coals to impart other flavors to meat and vegetables.
- Lump-style charcoal disperses a woodier aroma but briquettes last longer.
- When grilling for a long period of time (i.e., several hours) place 10 to 12 briquettes around the other edge of the hot coals when you start cooking. These may be added into the cooking area when they are needed.
- Arrange charcoal around a water pan if smoking in a grill.

## MEATS

- Double wrap large cuts of meat (such as brisket) with aluminum foil three to four hours into the smoking of the meat. This tenderizes the meat and helps it stay moist.
- Put meat in the smoker when the temperature reaches 300°, and then cook the meat between 200 and 250°. This will sear the meat and seal in the juices.
- Marinated meat should be patted dry before putting on the spices and searing to form a second skin.
- Use a meat thermometer to check internal temperature of the meat at the end of the smoking/cooking time.
- Meat should be salted to taste after cooking. Salt will dry out the meat.
- To prevent chops or steaks from curling, slash edge of fat at 2 to 3 inch intervals. Cut the fat to the edge of the meat.
- Brush meat with olive oil or salad oil to prevent surface from drying out.
- Spray meat with apple juice every 45 minutes to prevent drying out when smoking.
- Test meat for doneness by making a small cut into the center of the meat. Remember that smoking may leave a bright pink ring just beneath the browned surface.
- It is not a safe food practice to bring meat to room temperature before cooking.
- Trim cuts of meat of all excess fat, leaving about ¼ inch around the edges.
- Marinating meat helps tenderize and adds flavor to the meat.
- When marinating meat turn occasionally to distribute the marinade.
- Use a non-corrosive container such as glass, porcelain, glazed earthenware, stainless steel or a plastic zip lock bag when marinating meat.
- **ALWAYS** put cooked meat on a clean platter.
- Meat should be allowed to rest and set up at least 15 to 20 minutes before carving.
- Check for the color of the meat and the juices. The juices will run clear when done, especially in poultry.
- The cut of beef, its thickness, grill position, temperature of coals, weather, desired doneness will affect grilling time.
- To prevent steaks or chops from curling, slash edge of fat at two to three inch intervals. Cut fat to the edge of the meat.
- Use medium to medium-low coals to ensure even cooking.

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## MEATS (CONTINUED)

- Direct grilling can be done with the grill covered or open; foods cooked in a covered grill usually cook faster.
- Use long-handled tongs for turning steaks, or roasts, spatulas for turning burgers. Do not use a fork, which pierces the beef; allowing the flavorful juices to escape.

## STEAKS

- Steaks should be cut 1 to 1½" thick for grilling.
- Lean cuts may be wrapped in bacon to improve flavor and retain moistness.
- Cook one side for 4 to 6 minutes then turn over to finish cooking to desired doneness.

## LAMB

- Cuts of lamb should be 1 to 1½" thick for grilling.
- Lamb should be smoked or grilled to medium rare.

## BRISKET

- Slice brisket ¼" to ½" thick. Place the slice in each hand.
- Brisket falls apart while it is being pulled apart. It is overdone. TOO TENDER
- Brisket makes a sound while it is being pulled apart it is not quite done.
- Brisket makes no sound while it is being pulled apart. IT IS PERFECT
- Stick a fork in thick end of brisket and turn fork, if it turns it is tender.
- Put finger into brisket to get a feel for tenderness.
- Packers trim should be trimmed of fat before smoking, leave about ¼" of fat on the brisket all the way around.
- The thick end of the packer trim brisket has a hard core of fat. This should not be too thick. If it is more the 1" thick you need to either select another brisket or plan to trim it down.
- Brisket flats make the best-sliced briskets. There is very little waste.
- Before smoking briskets cut a small slice diagonally out of the end where all the grain of the meat goes. This helps later in slicing the meat against the grain and not with the grain of the meat.
- The bigger the brisket the better for chopped beef sandwiches.
- Look for uniform shape, long thin brisket on the end gets too dry.
- Figure three servings per pound for plenty of leftovers.

## OTHER USES FOR BRISKET

- Cook beans or peas with brisket instead of smoked ham.
- Add to split pea soup instead of smoked ham
- Use in Oriental-style rice or Cajun-style dirty rice.

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## OTHER USES FOR BRISKET (CONTINUED)

- Add to Chile con queso (Mexican cheese dip) along with cubed avocado.
- Fold into an omelet.
- Saute with onions and chile peppers in scrambled eggs.
- Fill flatias, tacos, burritos, or enchiladas with sliced or chopped brisket.
- Add to marinara sauce and serve over spaghetti.
- Use instead of chicken in favorite chicken recipe.
- Simmer with bottled or homemade salsa for an easy huevos rancheros sauce.
- Fill a tortilla with brisket, top with queso and roll up.

## POULTRY

- Marinate chicken overnight in Italian salad dressing for a great taste.
- Cook chicken breasts with skin on to prevent drying.
- Baste chicken every 30 to 45 minutes to prevent drying.
- Grill chicken with the skin down first.
- Smoke chicken with the skin up first.
- Keep cavity of chicken/turkey full of fruits, other chicken parts or marinates to prevent drying.
- Poultry is done when the juices run clear.
- Whole chickens are done when the drumstick can be turned easily and broken off.
- Chicken may turn pink in the middle, even though it is done. (Especially with hickory wood)
- Place small pieces of chicken when grilling towards the outside part of the grill.

## PORK

- Ribs will cook better if cooked as a whole rack.
- Ribs are done when ½" tip of bone is showing.
- Cook pork slowly. For fresh pork cook 30 to 40 minutes per inch of thickness.
- When checking or turning meat do not puncture the meat.
- Tenderize ribs by using a fork to pierce the bones before you add your spices. Do this to both sides of the ribs.
- Ribs are done when they can be touched end to end and they start to come off the bone.
- Pork will grill better if it is at least 1" thick.
- Pork other than ribs should be cooked to 160° internal temperature.
- Double wrap Boston Butts with aluminum foil three to four hours smoking to make them tender.

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## SAUSAGE

- If not available in the meat case, as at the meat counter for lean ground pork made from shoulder butts or picnic roasts.
- Wrap sausage in plastic wrap in desired size you want. Cool for a couple of hours in the refrigerator till firm.
- Grill sausage over medium heat turning frequently for about 10 to 20 minutes, until browned and cooked thoroughly.
- Do not pierce casings as you may lose favorable juices.

## VEGETABLES

- Most fresh vegetables may be grilled.
- Wash and removed bruised spots.
- Brush with olive oil, vegetable oil or a marinade and place on the grill or smoker.
- Vegetables need to be turned occasionally during grilling to avoid burning.
- For evenly cooked vegetables and meat Kabobs, parboil solid or starchy vegetables before they are threaded onto skewers for grilling or smoking.
- Never use aluminum foil to cover a tomato-based product. Tomato forms an acid and will eat through the foil.
- Freeze onions for 45 minutes before slicing or dicing them. This will help you from crying.
- Soak ears of corn in cold water before grilling or smoking.
- When cooking several vegetables in the smoker or grill, do the firmer ones, such as potatoes first.

## GRILL TIMES FOR VEGETABLES

<i>Vegetable</i>	<i>Time to Grill</i>	<i>Prepared</i>
Bell peppers	12 to 15 minutes	Whole
Corn	20 to 30 minutes	Whole
Eggplant	10 to 12 minutes	Cut in half
Green onions	4 to 5 minutes	
Leeks	12 to 15 minutes	If large, halved lengthwise
Mushrooms	12 to 14 minutes	
Onions	15 to 20 minutes	Sliced ½" thick
Squash	8 to 10 minutes	Cut in half lengthwise
Sweet potatoes	14 to 16 minutes	Peeled and sliced ½" thick
Tomatoes	3 to 5 minutes	Sliced ½" to ¾" thick

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## USING HERBS, SPICES, RUBS AND BASTES

- Put spices on the meat at least one hour before cooking and it's better to refrigerate overnight.
- Spray a good quality vegetable spray on the meat before and after using spices. This keeps the spices on the meat.
- Use branches of rosemary or fennel dipped in oil to baste meats and vegetables as they cook on the grill.
- As a subtle seasoning add a bay leaf or two to your charcoal fire before or while your grilling fish.
- Skewer bay leaves with cubes of marinated swordfish or lamb and roast over coals.
- With your mortar and pestle, crush fresh sage, coriander and dill. Rub the mixture over lightly oiled chicken before smoking or grilling.
- Fresh fennel placed on the grill adds subtle flavor to fish.
- Garlic odor can be removed from your fingers by rubbing them with lemon juice or by dunking them in vinegar.
- Add a few sprigs of fresh rosemary to your gas or charcoal grill to impart a subtle suggestion of its flavor to vegetables, pork or lamb.
- Tuck fresh leaves of rosemary under the breast skin of chicken before smoking or grilling.

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