

Gourmet Group Spring Menu 2021

Cooking Outside on the Grill

Happy spring to all!! We might not be able to entertain indoors yet so I am going to share some great recipes for the grill for outdoor entertainment.

Small Plates

Bread and Cheese skewers

Crostini (with wild mushrooms, fontina and gorgonzola)

Planked Semisoft Cheese

Main Dishes

Vegetable Platter

Planked Salmon

Beef Satay

Grilled Chicken Pita

Desserts

Pineapple on the Grill with Butter-Rum Glaze and Vanilla Mascarpone

Grilled Nectarines with Nutella Sundaes

Plums with Lemon Curd Whip Cream

Small Plates

Italian Grilled Cheese Skewers - Spiedini alla Romana

Ingredients:

- 1 loaf crunchy bread
- Olive oil
- 8 ounces bocconcini (small fresh mozzarella balls)
- 12 wooden skewers, soaked in water for 30 minutes or reusable metal skewers
- Salt
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes
- ¼ cup best-quality pesto, purchased from Costco or homemade
- Fleur de Sel or Coarse sea salt

Instructions:

Build a charcoal fire or preheat one side of a gas grill to medium-low.

Slice the bread and cut it into 1 ½ x 1 ½ inch cubes. Coat the cubes with olive oil and set aside.

Using two skewers per kebab - one on each side of the food like a ladder- thread the bread cubes and bocconcini, alternating ingredients. Sprinkle the skewers with salt and place them on the cooking grate over indirect medium-low heat. Cover and grill over indirect heat for 3-6 minutes, turning once halfway through to toast both sides of bread and warm the cheese.

Meanwhile, wash and dry the cherry tomatoes and cut them in half. Divide the tomatoes among six plates and drizzle them with the pesto sauce. Remove the skewers from the grill and place kebabs on plates. Directly on top of the tomato-pesto mixture. Sprinkle with Fleur de Sel to taste. Enjoy immediately. Makes 6 kebabs.

Crostini with Mushrooms, Fontina and Gorgonzola

Recipe by Joanne Weir

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- ½ lb wild mushrooms (porcini, chanterelles, shiitake) brushed clean and thinly sliced
- ½ pound button or field mushrooms, brushed clean and thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh mint
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 4 ounces Fontina cheese, coarsely grated
- 3 ounces Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 12 slices crunchy bread
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled
- Juice of half a lemon
- Whole flat-leaf parsley leaves

Instructions:

Preheat the grill. Heat the olive oil and butter in a large frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the mushrooms, thyme, mint and parsley and cook until the liquid has evaporated and the mushrooms are dry, 7-10 minutes. Let cool. Add the fontina and Gorgonzola cheeses and season well with salt and pepper.

Grill bread slices on an indoor or outdoor grill until toasted. Rub each side of the toast lightly with the garlic cloves. Distribute warm mushrooms on top of toast. Place mushroom toasts in a single layer on a baking sheet. Broil until the cheese melts, 30 to 60 seconds. Place on a platter and drizzle with lemon juice. Serve at once, garnished with parsley leaves. Makes 6 servings.

Planked Semisoft Cheese

A new twist on a baked Brie appetizer: Grill on a plank. Use any untreated hardwood plank but be sure to soak it before using.

Ingredients:

- 1 12x10x1 inch plank, maple or cedar, soaked in water for at least 1 hour before grilling
- 1 1lb wheel of Brie, about 8 inches in diameter
- ½ cup chutney or berry preserves

Instructions:

Preheat the grill on medium heat. Place the plank on the grill rack over the hot fire until the bottom of the plank begins to char and pop. Turn the plank over. Carefully place the Brie on the charred side of the plank. Cover and grill until the Brie begins to soften and melt, about 10 minutes.

Serve on the plank with chutney or preserves spooned on top of the cheese. Makes 12 servings.

I like to keep a spray bottle filled with water when grilling on a wooden plank just in case it catches fire.

Main Dishes

Vegetable Platter

Ingredients:

- 3 Zucchini
- 2 lbs fresh asparagus
- Onions
- 4 large bell peppers (all colors)
- Olive oil
- Fine kosher salt or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 2 pints cherry tomatoes
- Fresh basil sprigs for garnish
- Fresh Basil Vinaigrette (recipe follows)

Instructions:

Prepare a hot fire on the grill. Coat two perforated grill racks or hinged grill baskets and a grill wok with nonstick cooking spray; set aside.

Prepare the vegetables. Snap off the tough ends of the asparagus, trim the ends of the zucchini and cut each lengthwise into ½ inch thick slices. Seed the bell peppers and cut each lengthwise into ½ inch strips. Place the asparagus, zucchini slices and bell peppers strips on the prepared grill racks. Chop up the onion in circles and put them in the perforated wok separately. Spray the vegetables with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.

Place a large bowl near the grill racks and wok. Toss the onions in the grill wok and cook until tender for about 10 minutes. Meanwhile grill the vegetables on the grill racks, until tender and slightly charred 4 to 5 minutes per side. When the onions are done, transfer to the bowl and add the cherry tomatoes to the grill wok. Grill until the skins just begin to crack, about 5 minutes. When the asparagus, zucchini and bell peppers are done, transfer to the bowl. Add the tomatoes and set aside to cool slightly.

Arrange the vegetables on a large platter in a pleasing pattern or just a jumble. Garnish with basil if desired. Drizzle Fresh Basil Vinaigrette over everything. Serve immediately or cover with plastic wrap and let sit at room temperature up to 2 hours. Makes 8 to 10 servings.

Fresh Basil Vinaigrette

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup fresh lemon juice (3 to 4 lemons)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 cup finely chopped fresh basil
- Fine kosher or sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Instructions:

Combine all the ingredients in a medium-size jar with a tight fitting lid. Cover and shake to blend. Use as soon as you make it. Makes about 2 cups.

Planked Salmon

Ingredients:

- 1 plank preferably alder or cedar long enough for the salmon but short enough to fit inside your grill
- 1 ½ to 3 lbs salmon fillet, skin on or off wild caught Salmon*
- Olive oil
- Flaky sea salt, such as Maldon
- Freshly cracked black pepper

* If you can only find farmed salmon, try getting Norwegian farmed salmon.

Instructions:

Soak the plank in water, 30 minutes or more for a one time use plank and up to 2 hours for a ½ to 1 inch thick board. Weigh it down if it tends to float.

Stroke the surface of the salmon, feeling for tiny pin bones. Remove any that you find with tweezers. Coat the surface with oil and season generously with salt and pepper. Cover the salmon and let it sit at room temperature for about 30 minutes.

Fire up the grill to high heat.

Transfer the salmon to the plank, skin side down if there is skin. Place the plank in the center of the grill and close the grill cover to hold in the smoke from the wood. Cook for 8 to 10 minutes over high heat. You should see a light plume of smoke emitted during the whole cooking process. If you see a billowing dark cloud emerging or any other sign that the board is burning instead of smoldering, open the grill carefully and douse any flames with a spray bottle of water. If using a gas grill, aim at the plank rather than at the burners.

After the salmon has cooked for 8 to 10 minutes, turn off or shut down the heat and let the salmon sit in the covered grill for 8 to 10 minutes longer. (The plank shields the salmon from the heat, making the cooking time longer than if you were cooking it directly.) The smoke will brown the surface and the high heat will nicely crisp it, an effect enhanced by the coarse seasonings. The salmon is done when just barely opaque, with a touch of darker translucence remaining at the center. To cook fish to opaque grill fish a little longer.

Use a pair of heatproof mitts, to remove the plank with the salmon from the grill.

Transfer the plank to an upside down baking sheet placed on a work surface near the grill. The bottom of the plank will be sooty, so be careful about what you put it on, even after it's cooled. The easiest way to serve is to bring the plates to the plank. Makes 8-12 servings.

Beef Satay

Recipe by Food Network Kitchen

Satay is best when the meat is sliced very thin. Placing it in the freezer for about 30 minutes makes thin-slicing much easier. Make sure to soak the wooden skewers in water to keep them from catching fire on the grill. Or use reusable ones instead. This recipe is also good with chicken. Follow the same steps.

Ingredients:

For the Satay

- 1 lb beef flank steak
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup canned unsweetened coconut milk (skim off top and reserve 2 tablespoons for Peanut Sauce*)
- 2 to 3 tablespoons prepared Thai red or massaman curry paste (use a larger amount for a spicier sauce)
- 2 to 3 tablespoons firmly packed light brown sugar (use the larger amount if you are using all the curry paste)
- 1 tablespoon fish sauce
- Vegetable oil

For the Peanut Sauce

- *2 tablespoons coconut cream , skimmed from the top of canned coconut milk
- 1 to 2 tablespoons prepared Thai red curry or massaman curry paste (use the larger amount for a spicier sauce)
- 1 cup unsweetened canned coconut milk
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup chunky peanut butter
- 2 tablespoons firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice

Instructions:

Place the steak in the freezer for about 30 minutes to get it very cold. Remove from the freezer. Slice the steak against the grain into very thin strips that are about 1 inch wide. Whisk the coconut milk, the 2 to 3 tablespoons curry paste, brown sugar, and fish sauce in a large bowl. Add the steak and mix to coat evenly. Cover and set aside to marinate in the refrigerator for 1 to 24 hours.

If using wooden skewers, soak in water for 30 minutes before grilling. Prepare an outdoor grill with hot fire.

Thread the meat onto skewers and lightly brush with oil. Working in batches, grill the satays turning as needed, until the steak chars and is just cooked through, 2 to 4 minutes total, taking care to not overcook. Transfer the skewers to a serving platter and serve with Peanut Sauce.

For the Peanut Sauce: Cook coconut cream in a small saucepan over medium heat until shiny and sizzling, about 2 minutes. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons curry paste, cook and stir until fragrant for about 1 minute. Whisk in coconut milk, peanut butter, sugar, soy sauce, and lemon juice. Bring to a boil, then simmer, stirring until thickened, 10 minutes. Pour into a serving bowl and cool. Serve with beef satay. Makes 12 skewers.

Grilled Chicken Pita

Recipe by Paula Deen

Ingredients:

- 3 boneless skinless chicken breasts (about 1 ½ pounds)
- 3 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano, crushed
- 2 small tomatoes, finely chopped
- 1 cup (¼ pound) crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 large Vidalia or purple onion, cut into thin rings
- 6 pita breads
- ½ head romaine lettuce, finely chopped
- 1 10 oz jar kalamata or other black olives, drained, halved and pitted
- 12 slices bacon, fried crisp
- 1 recipe yogurt sauce (recipe follows)
- Alfalfa Sprouts
- Salt and pepper

Instructions:

Rinse the chicken breasts and pat dry. Combine the 3 tablespoons of the lemon juice, the soy sauce, garlic and 1 teaspoon of the oregano in a glass dish. Add the chicken, turn to coat, and cover with plastic wrap. Allow the chicken breasts to marinate for 30 minutes at room temperature or cover and refrigerate overnight.

Combine the tomatoes and feta cheese in a small glass dish. Add the 2 teaspoons lemon juice, the olive oil, and the remaining 1 teaspoon oregano and stir to combine. Allow to sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Preheat the grill to medium. Spray a grill basket with olive oil. Grill the chicken breasts over medium heat for 8 to 10 minutes until no longer pink in the thickest portion of each breast. Spread the onion rings over the surface of the basket and grill while the chicken is cooking. Turn the basket frequently. The onion rings will blacken as they cook; this will also take 8-10 minutes.

When the chicken and onion rings are cooked, place the pita breads on the grill for about 2 minutes per side, until grill marks show. Slice the chicken into very thin pieces. At serving time, put out all the ingredients and allow each person to assemble sandwiches; slit each pita. Place several slices of grilled chicken, 3 or 4 slices of grilled onion, a tablespoon of tomato-feta mixture, lettuce, olives and 1 or 2 slices of bacon into each pita. Top with Yogurt Sauce and alfalfa sprouts. Add salt and pepper to taste, fold up the sides of the pita, and enjoy! Makes 6 servings.

Yogurt Sauce

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces (1cup) unflavored yogurt
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ cup finely chopped walnuts
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Instructions:

In a small bowl, whisk together the yogurt, garlic, walnuts, and olive oil. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use. Makes about 1 cup.

Desserts

Pineapple on the grill with Butter-Rum Glaze and Vanilla Mascarpone

Recipe by Bobby Flay

Ripe pineapple, with its plentiful natural sugars, is ideal for grilling, and it suggests tropical like nothing else. Mascarpone cheese is found at Target, Trader Joe's, Hyvee but if for some reason you cannot find it, always use good quality vanilla ice cream or whipped cream with a little sugar and vanilla.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup dark rum
- 12 tablespoons (1 ½ sticks) unsalted butter
- ¼ cup light brown sugar
- 1 vanilla bean
- 8 ounces mascarpone
- 1 ripe pineapple, peeled and sliced into ¼ inch thick rounds
- ½ cup fresh blueberries

Instructions:

Combine the rum, butter and sugar in a small saucepan and simmer, whisking often, until the sugar has melted and the mixture is slightly thickened about 10 minutes.

Cut the vanilla bean lengthwise in half and scrape out the seeds with the tip of a sharp knife. Whisk the mascarpone and vanilla seeds together. *

Heat your grill on high.

Grill the pineapple slices, brushing frequently with the glaze, 2 to 3 minutes per side, until browned.

Remove the pineapple to a platter or serving plates and top each slice with a few fresh blueberries. Add a spoonful of vanilla mascarpone. Drizzle with any remaining glaze.

Serve immediately. Makes 6 servings.

*Note: The glaze can be made a few days in advance, cooled, covered and refrigerated. Bring to room temperature before using. The mascarpone mixture can be made a day in advance, covered, and refrigerated. You can double the fruit and mascarpone to serve 10 to 12 but do not double the glaze.

Grilled Nectarines Nutella Sundaes

These nectarines are grilled and filled with Nutella, then topped with vanilla ice cream and covered in chopped pecans. These fruit sundaes melt in your mouth with nutty and sweet flavors that are sure to please a crowd.

Ingredients:

- 2 nectarines
- 2 teaspoons honey
- 4 tablespoons Nutella
- 4 scoops vanilla ice cream
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans
- Whipped topping, optional
- 4 maraschino cherries, optional

Instructions:

Preheat the grill to medium heat. Halve and pit the nectarines and, using a pastry brush, brush each cut side with about 1/2 teaspoon honey.

Place the nectarines on the grill cut side down. Cover the grill and cook until the nectarines have grill marks, or about 5 minutes. Flip to the other side for 1 minute.

Remove from the grill and place on a plate cut side up. Allow to cool for 2-3 minutes, then fill the cavities with 1 tablespoon Nutella.

Top with a scoop of vanilla ice cream and whipped topping, if desired.

Sprinkle a tablespoon of pecans on top of the ice cream or whipped topping and garnish with a maraschino cherry. Serves 4

Plums with Lemon Curd Whip Cream

Grilling fruit brings out all new flavors by intensifying the natural sugars in the fruit. By grilling these plums, they lose a lot of their tang and become incredibly sweet. The lemon curd whipped cream is a refreshing and light complement to the plums.

Ingredients:

- 2 large eggs
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- Pinch of salt
- 1/4 cup butter
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon zest
- 1 cup reduced-fat frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 4 plums
- 3 teaspoons grapeseed oil
- Maraschino cherries, optional

In a blender or food processor, pulse together the sugar and lemon zest.

In a medium-size bowl, using hand beaters or a stand mixer, cream the butter with the sugar and lemon zest mixture.

Stir in the eggs, lemon juice and salt.

Transfer to a medium-size pot and cook on low heat for 10 minutes, stirring constantly. The mixture will thicken as you stir it.

Remove from heat, transfer to a small jar, and allow to chill in the fridge overnight (it will continue to thicken).

Remove the chilled lemon curd and lightly stir in 1 cup of completely thawed whipped topping. Return to the fridge.

Preheat the grill to medium heat. Halve and pit the plums and, using a pastry brush, brush both sides with the grapeseed oil.

Place the plums on the grill cut side down. Cover the grill and cook until the plums have grill marks, or about 5 minutes.

Remove from the grill and place on a plate cut side up. Allow to cool for 2-3 minutes and then top with a generous 1/4 cup of the lemon curd whipped cream.

Optionally, garnish with a maraschino cherry. Serves 4.

Enjoy cooking and entertaining outdoors!!