

Summer Grilling

Grilling is a fun way to prepare food and can be especially tasty when marinades are used.

A marinade is a savory acidic sauce in which food - meat, poultry, fish, or vegetables – are placed in to enrich the foods flavor or to tenderize it.

Marinate means to steep food in a marinade. When marinating, you are treating the food like a sponge, enabling the food to absorb flavor.

Marinades vary from recipe to recipe but they generally contain three basic components – an oil, an acid, and seasonings. However, red meat marinades don't always include oil since the meat generally contains enough fat.

A marinade should be thin enough in consistency to penetrate the meat. A general rule of marinade-to-meat ratio is 1/2 cup of marinade per pound of meat.

Any marinade that contains acid, alcohol, or salt should not be used for very long, because it will chemically "cook" the food in it. Marinate food in these marinades for less than four hours.

Marinades that contain citrus juices, especially lemon or lime juice should be used for only two hours or less. Be careful when using acidic marinades. Foods left too long in these blends can change color and texture. Fish fillets, for example, can change in a matter of minutes.

Marinades that contain no salt, acid, or alcohol can be marinated overnight or in some cases longer.

Always marinate in the refrigerator. Never marinate at room temperature or outdoors when barbecuing as bacteria can quickly multiply on the raw meat.

Some older recipes call for marinating at room temperature. Do not follow this practice. Marinating at room temperature causes meat to enter the temperature danger zone (between 40° F. and 140° F.) where bacteria rapidly multiply. If your recipe calls for marinating at room temperature instead marinate in the refrigerator and increase the marinating time.

Marinate only in glass, stainless steel, or a food-grade plastic bag, so the container will not react with the acid. The glaze on a ceramic container may contain lead – you have no way of telling if it does – and acid will draw the toxic lead from the glaze into the food. Turn meat occasionally so all sides are coated evenly with the marinade.

The easiest way to marinate meat is in a resealable food-grade plastic bag. When your meat is marinated in a resealable bag and all of the air is sealed out, the marinade completely surrounds the meat. This dramatically reduces the amount of marinade necessary, distributes the marinade evenly from top to bottom, and allows maximum penetration from all sides.

Discard any remaining marinade used on the raw food. If you plan to use the marinade as a finishing sauce on the cooked food, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood.

Never use the marinade in which raw meat, poultry, or fish has marinated for basting cooked food or as a sauce without first boiling it for five minutes to kill any harmful bacteria from the food.

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