

The Best of Backyard Barbecuing

Backyard barbecuing is popular all year long, but especially during summer in the Finger Lakes. Because grilling varieties of meat is especially popular, knowing what to buy is important.

The size of the cut affects the rate of cooking and the ultimate tenderness and juiciness of the meat. Selecting steaks and chops one to one and one half inches thick and cooking them slowly over a medium fire will give you delicious results. It is better to cook one thick steak and carve it into portions than to cook several thin steaks. A slowly cooked piece of meat will tenderize in its own juices during the cooking process

Less tender cuts such as pork spare ribs and beef ribs can be successfully grilled by first steaming or parboiling, and then grilling the meat for browning and the charbroiled flavor. Less tender steaks can be tenderized prior to grilling. To tenderize the meat, use a commercial meat tenderizer or marinate the meat using a tested marinade recipe. Always marinate meats in the refrigerator.

Although a number of beef cuts on the market today are very lean, ranging from 4-6 grams of fat, meat and chicken that contain 6grams of fat will actually taste better. The fat protects the meat from dehydration during cooking, increases the rate of cooking and contributes to juiciness and flavor. To prepare, trim the excess, outside fat, but leave a uniform cover over the surface of the meat during cooking. Some fat will render out during cooking and leave a tender, juicy piece of meat when done. The outside fat can be removed before serving or removed on the plate. The outside fat should be scored on steaks and chops to prevent the meat from curling on the grill.

Meat flavor comes not only from the type of fat but also from the browning reaction achieved during cooking. The unique barbecued flavor results from the browning of the fat and protein on the surface of the product. Smoke flavor is absorbed into the meat along with any spices, seasoning and flavoring that are added before, during or after barbecuing.

While you can use frozen meat for barbecuing, it can make for a dryer finished product. For best results, thaw roasts and steaks under refrigeration before cooking, never at room temperature or try microwave thawing. Hamburgers can be cooked from the frozen state to reduce the amount of bacteria growth that may occur during thawing. To reduce juice loss during cooking, turn steaks and chops with tongs rather than using a fork and never press hamburger patties on the grill while cooking. Basting meat cuts during cooking greatly reduces the amount of surface moisture lost and allows you to add a flavoring spice to the meat. Hold on using too much salt because it draws the moisture out of the meat.

The only sure way to determine when meat is done is to use a meat thermometer. To check the temperature, insert the tip of the thermometer into the center of the thickest part of the cut without touching a fat pocket or bone. The end point internal temperature for

the degrees of doneness for meat is: 145 degrees F rare; 160 degrees F medium; and 170 degrees F well. The meat thermometer should read 180 degrees F for whole poultry and dark meat; 170 degrees F for white meat on poultry parts.

For more information and recipes on barbecuing meats on the grill, go to the New York Beef Industry Council's website at www.nybic.org

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