



A Guide to Summer Grilling

Brush up on your grill skills this summer with this comprehensive guide from Kalamazoo Grillmaster Russ Faulk. Explore Russ' favorite techniques, tips for better grilling, common mistakes to avoid, some classic cookout recipes and more!

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The Magic of Combining Direct and Indirect Heat

When most people think of grilling, they think of cooking right over the fire. This is called “direct grilling.” The technique is ideal for grilling smaller items that can be cooked in less than 12 minutes — burgers, zucchini wedges, chicken breasts, shrimp and more. Done right, this technique delivers delicious results with fantastic browning. Try using this technique for something too large, however, or with too long a cooking time, and the results can be awful. A whole chicken will be burnt on the outside before it is cooked through. Larger foods need gentler, indirect heat because they must cook longer. An indirect cooking zone with a high air temperature (above 400°F) is ideal for thicker, larger foods.

Combining techniques creates the real magic of grilling. To set up your grill for multi-zone grilling, create two zones: one with a direct fire or heat source beneath the grill grates (this is your direct zone), and the other with no fire beneath it (your indirect zone). Once your grill is setup, sear your food on all sides to achieve all over browning, then move it to the indirect zone to finish cooking over the more gentle heat source.

One of our favorite ways to grill a steak is the “sear and slide” method. Sear a nice, thick cut over a blazing-hot fire for a minute per side to brown it, and then move it away from the fire to the indirect zone to coast up to temperature for about 20 minutes more. You will be rewarded with a beautifully brown exterior and succulent interior. The longer cooking time allows more of the inner marbling to render without having to cook the steak past medium-rare.



Russ' Top Grilling Tips

1. TURN YOUR FOOD OFTEN

All of the best steaks and chops I have ever made were flipped and moved frequently along the way — particularly when using the combination of direct and indirect heat. On a big-old bone-in ribeye, I will even score the outer surface with a knife to increase the amount of surface area for browning. The crust is where the flavor lies, so the more browning the better.

2. OIL AND SEASON THE FOOD BEFORE GRILLING.

I brush just about everything with olive oil and season liberally with sea salt before it goes on the grill. This helps brown the outside and form a perfect crust. When you start with good quality protein, and you can nail your technique on the grill, most meats and fish don't need anything more than this simple treatment. Oiling your food (rather than your grates) also helps prevent food from sticking. Oiling the grates on a high-powered grill like a Kalamazoo can be largely ineffective because of the high temperatures. If the food is oiled it will penetrate the small crevasses in both the food and the grates when it's placed on the grill, creating a smooth and slippery surface that will help to prevent sticking.

3. DON'T OVERCROWD THE GRILL

It may be tempting and seemingly efficient to put as much food on the grill as possible at a big cookout with lots of people. Be patient and keep at least 25-30 percent of open space on the grill with no fire below it. This space is your safety zone. If you begin to experience flare-ups or need to slow down cooking, you can move your food to this area.





Russ' Top Grilling Mistakes to Avoid

1. TOUGH CHICKEN BREASTS

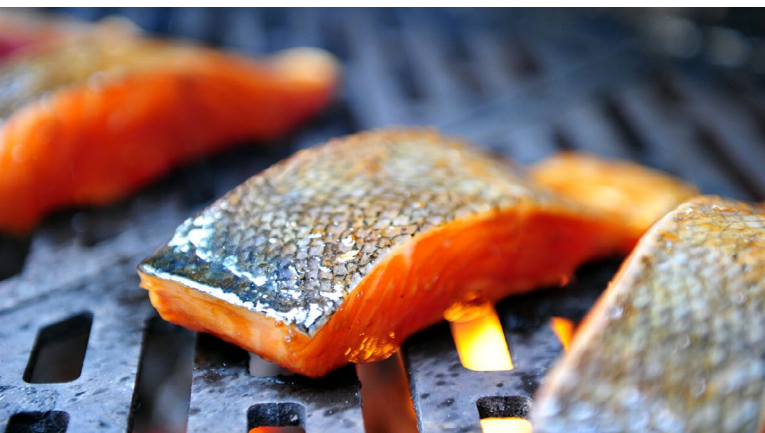
A boneless, skinless chicken breast can be fantastic off the grill, but its shape is not conducive to being perfectly-cooked throughout. Either the pointy end is overcooked, or the thicker end is undercooked. The best solution is to pound the breast to an even thickness (called a palliard), and then grill it over high heat. The thinner and more uniform cross section allows it to cook quickly and evenly.

2. BURNING THE SAUCE

Barbecue sauce is not a marinade. It has a lot of sugar in it, and sugar can burn easily on the grill. To prevent burning, brush sauce on at the end of cooking and then quickly mark it on the grill for a nice, caramelized flavor.

3. COLD-START COOKING

Some people toss cold meat on a cold grill and then fire it up. Any grill should be hot before the food goes on. Not only does this deliver better results, it is necessary for food safety. Be patient. Wait for the grill to get thoroughly hot, and then start cooking.



How to Grill the Perfect Steak

PREPARING THE MEAT

Preparing the meat is simple. I think it is more important to coat a steak in olive oil and generously season it than to let it come to room temperature. I typically remove steaks from the cooler at the same time I light my grill. They warm up a little bit, but not even close to room temperature.

Whether you season just with salt, salt and pepper, or a seasoning blend is entirely a personal matter, but a thorough brushing with olive oil is critical.

APPLYING THE RIGHT HEAT

Thinner steaks like a ribeye cap steak, or skirt steak, are best grilled over direct heat at temperatures around 600°F. A charcoal fire will deliver a drier heat than a gas flame, which helps create that perfect crust and delicious Maillard reaction.

Using a combination of direct and indirect grilling techniques is best for thicker steaks like bone-in ribeyes and filet. Start by searing over a hot fire at temperatures around 700° to 800°F. After thoroughly browning the steaks on all sides (not just the tops and bottoms), move the steaks to an indirect zone or an elevated rack. Add soaked wood chunks or limbs to the fire, close the grill, and let the steaks coast up to the perfect doneness while being bathed in flavorful wood smoke in the indirect cooking zone.

Thick or thin, direct or indirect, I prefer an all-over deep browning of the exterior rather than dark grill marks and light-colored spaces in between. Those spaces between the grill marks are a lost opportunity for flavor. All-over browning is achieved by turning the steak frequently and using high heat. Coating the steak with olive oil during prep helps with this as well.





JUDGING THE DONENESS

If you test for doneness by poking the meat, I think it is very important to test the feel right before it goes onto the grill. The “benchmark touch” for the raw steak is valuable because a typical New York strip steak is firmer than a ribeye at every stage of doneness. Firmness can also vary between grass-fed/grass-finished beef and corn-fed beef.

An instant-read meat thermometer can be more accurate than the touch test, but there is only one thermometer I trust more than my own experience with the touch test, and that is the ThermoPen. It gives me an accurate temperature reading in just a couple of seconds. Don't forget, steaks will continue to rise in internal temperature after being removed from the grill, and the USDA's published temperatures for doneness are way too high for gourmet cooking in my opinion.

A new option I have been using is the Steak Champ electronic steak thermometer. It is inserted into the steak before cooking, and a flashing LED lets you know when it is time to remove it from the grill. I have been very impressed with its accuracy and reliability - so impressed that Kalamazoo now sells it. In addition to telling you when to pull the steak off the grill, it indicates when the resting period is finished.

RESTING THE STEAK, OR NOT

Allowing a steak to rest after cooking will redistribute the juices and keep more of them inside meat when you do cut into it. This is almost always the best way to go... But, there are times when the juices running out onto the carving board is a good thing. When I share a steak with my wife (which I do quite often because I prefer to grill a thick steak that typically weighs more than 12 ounces), I will usually slice the whole steak for serving straight off the grill. A great trick is to whisk together olive oil, sherry vinegar and a little melted butter and pour it onto the cutting board with some fresh chopped herbs. Place the steak on top and slice it immediately, letting the juices mingle with the sauce on the board. Drag the slices through the mixture when serving and pour the remainder over the plates for a wonderful flavor boost.



Tips For Hosting a Successful Summer Barbecue

Cooking outdoors for friends and family is one of summer's greatest pleasures. Cooking for a large group doesn't mean you have to resign yourself to making simple, low-effort dishes. A party is an opportunity to really show off your skills. With careful planning and advanced prep work, you can cook amazing food for your friends and family without stress.

1. PLAN TO COOK - AND SERVE - IN WAVES

The key to serving great party food to a large crowd is to embrace the idea of staggered serving. Plan to cook and serve dishes throughout the entire event, and only cook what you can handle. If you only feel comfortable cooking eight burgers at a time, then do it - even if you have fifty guests - because then you can be sure that everyone will get a great burger. Just be sure to announce the plan so that your guests can pace themselves accordingly.

2. ORGANIZE AHEAD OF TIME

For big events, it's a good idea to create a sort of Gantt chart for cooking projects. List all of your planned dishes on the X-axis, in order of cooking or serving priority. On the Y-axis, you can break down your timeline (including prep time) into 15-minute increments. Then, you can block off the total time needed for each dish, adding notes for each cooking step. Color-coding your time blocks based on the primary cooking equipment needed for each dish will help you immediately see any equipment conflicts that need to be resolved.



3. PREP AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

Whatever you can do ahead, you should. Chopping your veggies, preparing your seasonings, marinating meat - do as much as you can in the days before your event so that you limit your responsibilities on the day of the party. Maintain a checklist of tasks so that you can be sure you completed them all.

4. USE THE TIMERS ON YOUR PHONE

Cell phones now allow you to set as many timers as you need, so take advantage! Following the cooking chart you created before the event, set timers or alarms for each step in your plan.

5. KEEP YOUR THERMOMETER HANDY

With all the socializing and other distractions around, a party is not the time to rely on instinct or feel for proper cooking temperatures. Check the temperature of each and every dish before you take it off the grill.

6. ASSIGN TASKS TO KEY GUESTS

It's an established rule that sous chefs should never touch someone else's BBQ. If you have a group of people hanging around your grill, give them something to do! That will satisfy their need to participate. Drafting people into dishwashing service can be especially helpful when you're hosting a large crowd, as dishes can pile up quickly. And, perhaps most importantly, assign someone the job of making sure that you, the chef, always have a beer.



Classic Summer Cookout Recipes



HEDGEHOG HOT DOGS

This is an elevated take on the humble hot dog, that is so delicious we promise you will return to it again and again. The beef sausages are scored to maximize the flavor and texture when they are browned on the grill. Decadent brioche hot dog buns are toasted, then filled with remoulade, micro greens and heirloom tomatoes.

[GET RECIPE >](#)



KALAMAZOO SLIDERS

Every Grillmaster needs a phenomenal burger recipe in their arsenal, and this one is our go-to. The secret weapon is a triple cream blue brie from Germany called Cambozola that melts creating a luscious sauce.

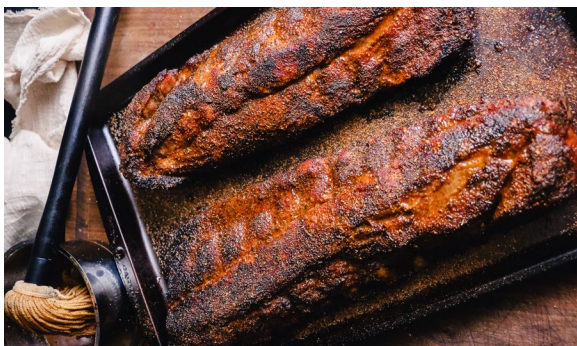
[GET RECIPE >](#)



PULLED PORK SANDWICHES

Nothing can beat the flavor of a good pulled pork sandwich. And, amazingly, pulled pork is just about the easiest of the classic barbecue favorites to make. This recipe yields moist meat with an amazing bark on the outside. Add a delicate brioche roll, a rich bourbon barbecue sauce and pickled onions and cabbage for the perfect combination of flavors and textures.

[GET RECIPE >](#)



MEMPHIS STYLE BABY BACK RIBS

This recipe takes its cue from the world-famous BBQ joint in Memphis, Rendezvous, by cooking the ribs hot and fast. The ribs are placed high above the coals and cooked for 90 minutes for truly delicious results.

[GET RECIPE >](#)

FOOD TEMPERATURE CHART

	GOURMET	USDA		GOURMET	USDA
BEEF STEAKS			PORK CHOPS		
Rare	125-130°F	140°F	Rare	N/A	
Medium-Rare	130-140°F	150°F	Medium-Rare	N/A	
Medium	140-150°F	160°F	Medium	N/A	
Medium-Well	155-165°F	170°F	Medium-Well	155-165°F	170°F
			Well Done	175-185°F	170°F
BEEF ROASTS			VEAL RACKS		
Rare	125-130°F	140°F	Rare	N/A	
Medium-Rare	130-140°F	150°F	Medium-Rare	130-140°F	
Medium	140-150°F	160°F	Medium	140-150°F	150°F
Medium-Well	155-165°F	170°F	Medium-Well	155-165°F	160°F
RACK of LAMB			VEAL CHOPS		
Rare	125-130°F	140°F	Rare	N/A	
Medium-Rare	130-140°F	150°F	Medium-Rare	130-140°F	
Medium	140-150°F	160°F	Medium	140-150°F	
Medium-Well	155-165°F	170°F	Medium-Well	155-165°F	
LAMB CHOPS			WHOLE CHICKEN		
Rare	125-130°F	140°F		165-175°F	180°F
Medium-Rare	130-140°F	150°F	WHOLE TURKEY		
Medium	140-150°F	160°F		165-175°F	180°F
Medium-Well	155-165°F	170°F	BURGERS		
				160°F	160°F or higher

ROLLED ROASTS

A temperature of 160° F is recommended when a roast of any type has been rolled, as surface bacteria may have been rolled into the center of the roast.

FISH

Fish is done when the meat flakes easily with a fork and appears opaque all the way through. If unsure by appearance, a temperature of 155° F is recommended.

SHRIMP AND LOBSTER TAILS

Flesh is fully cooked when it turns opaque and firm. Use caution to avoid overcooking shrimp or lobster.