

Peak Grilling Window for Barbecue

EXTEND THIS TASTY SEASON

Liz Tarditi

AS BRANDYWINE TABLE goes to press, the world has just spent the past month visiting North America for the FIFA World Cup. Social media has been filled with soccer fans (or football fans) sharing their favorite discoveries. From yellow school buses to free refills, our humidity to our hospitality — there was one food visitors couldn't stop talking about: American barbecue.

Grown men wept as meat melted in their mouths. Bottles of ranch dressing and barbecue sauce were confiscated as liquid contraband at airports so often the TSA had to issue a statement about packing them in checked luggage. But who can blame these would-be smugglers — it really is that good.

Throughout the summer for residents here, one grill gets fired up in the neighborhood on a Saturday and the next day every family in smelling distance is cooking out themselves. Barbecue is a full-immersion sensory experience of taste and smell plus fire and smoke and a little magic.

And lucky us, the barbecue season

is far from over. Given our soggy springs, August isn't the end of grilling — it's the halfway point. The cooler days of late summer and early fall are perfect for lingering over the grill, and the deeper flavors of smoked paprika, apple cider vinegar, garlic, brown sugar and slow-cooked meats feel even more at home when the leaves start to turn than they did when the daffodils were blooming.

To help us celebrate this peak grilling window, our friends over at **Hood's BBQ** — the legendary local pitmasters holding down the smoke in Unionville — graciously shared recipes for their iconic baked beans, cheese potatoes and Brunswick stew. As Larry Hood puts it, "Barbecue is more than just good food and taste. It's a state of mind. It's summer, family and good times."

Because great barbecue is a community effort, these soulful side dishes from the Hood family kitchen simply require a good main dish to gather

around. Since their secret smokehouse entrees remain a well-guarded local treasure, we share, instead, a few reliable ideas for firing up your own backyard adventures.

In our sidebar, you'll find a simple homemade barbecue sauce recipe made from pantry staples to get you started. From there, explore two straightforward techniques to test your own pitmaster skills. First, try Brandywine Table Spatchcock Barbecue Chicken, a whole bird that's brine-injected and then cold-air dried for two days before hitting the hot grill grate. Alongside it, you can tackle our Hybrid-Cooked Barbecue Baby Back Ribs, which are dry-rubbed and cooked the foolproof way by starting low in the kitchen oven before moving over a live flame to catch that final kiss of smoke and char.

Fire up the grill!



Hood's BBQ, Unionville

Hood's BBQ Baked Beans

Three varieties of beans along with bacon, brown sugar and molasses come together in this sweet-and-smoky side dish that has become a Hood's favorite.



Serves 6

- 1, 15-oz. can butter beans, drained and rinsed
- 1, 28-oz. can B&M Original Baked Beans
- 1, 15-oz. can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ C. chopped cooked bacon
- 1 T. onion powder
- 1 tsp. liquid smoke (see note)
- 1 C. packed dark brown sugar
- ½ C. yellow mustard
- ¼ C. molasses
- 1 T. Worcestershire sauce

Combine all ingredients in a Dutch oven or slow cooker and stir until well combined.

Cook over low heat for 2 to 3 hours, stirring occasionally, until hot and slightly thickened. For the richest flavor, cook the full 3 hours.

Cook's Tip: Liquid smoke is highly concentrated. Start with a light hand and adjust to taste.

Hood's BBQ Cheesy Potatoes

This rich, creamy potato casserole has long been a favorite alongside Hood's smoked barbecue.

Serves 6

- 1, 30-oz. bag frozen shredded hash browns, thawed
- 1, 10.5-oz. can cream of potato soup
- ½ C. sour cream
- 1 C. shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 2 tsp. onion powder
- 2 tsp. dried parsley flakes
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

The Science of Browning

If you've ever wondered why grilled food tastes so much better than boiled food, the answer is chemistry. Great barbecue depends on two different browning reactions that work together to build the color, aroma and flavor we crave.

The *Maillard reaction* occurs when proteins and natural sugars are exposed to high, dry heat, creating the savory browned crust on meats. That's why the spatchcock chicken is air-dried before grilling — the drier the skin, the better it browns before it's brushed with barbecue sauce.

Caramelization is different. It occurs when sugars brown under heat, producing the rich sweetness in barbecue sauce. As that sauce cooks over the fire, it forms a glossy glaze with lightly charred edges. A little char adds smoky, bittersweet complexity, while too much quickly turns bitter.



Serves 6

Preheat the oven to 300°. Lightly grease a 9x13-inch baking dish.

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl and stir until evenly mixed. Spread into the prepared baking dish.

Bake for 1½ hours, or until the potatoes are tender and the casserole is lightly browned around the edges.

Hood's BBQ Brunswick Stew

Originally made with wild game like squirrel and opossum, Brunswick stew has become a Southern barbecue classic. Claimed by both Brunswick County, Virginia and Brunswick, Georgia, today's versions typically feature smoked pork or chicken simmered with vegetables in a rich tomato-barbecue broth.

Serves 6

- ½ stick butter
- 1 T. minced garlic



- 1 small onion, diced
- 1, 16-oz. bag frozen black beans, roasted corn and pepper blend
- 1 C. frozen lima beans or shelled edamame
- 1, 32-oz. can fire-roasted diced tomatoes
- 1 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 C. Hood's BBQ Sauce
- 6 C. chicken or vegetable stock
- ¾ to 1 lb. pulled pork, finely chopped

Melt the butter in a Dutch oven or large stockpot over medium-low heat. Add the garlic and onion and cook until the onion is softened, lightly golden and fragrant, about 6 to 8 minutes.

Stir in the black bean blend, lima beans, tomatoes, Worcestershire sauce, cayenne, salt and black pepper. Add the Hood's BBQ Sauce and stock, stirring until well combined.

Increase the heat to medium-high and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and stir in the pulled pork. Simmer for at least 30 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender and the flavors have melded.

Serve hot with warm cornbread.

The Brandywine Table Spatchcock Barbecue Chicken

This recipe starts with a fresh whole young chicken for more even cooking after spatchcocking, for which good kitchen shears are essential. A savory injection keeps the meat juicy while an overnight uncovered rest in the

Homemade BBQ Sauce

Those of us foodies who love to tinker might decide to skip the bottled aisle and make our own barbecue sauce with pantry staples. Here's a small-batch recipe that after cooking will cover about 2 racks of baby back ribs — double it if you want extra for passing and dipping.

Tangy and smoky, this balanced, all-purpose recipe lets you see the magic deconstructed and then build it out in any direction you want to go. You might be thinking: everything there is shelf-stable, do I really need to cook it? Absolutely. Taste it before and after — simmering brings the flavors together. It's good for about 2 weeks in the fridge — if it lasts that long.

Makes just under 2 cups

- 1 C. ketchup
- ⅓ C. apple cider vinegar
- ¼ C. packed dark brown sugar
- 2 T. molasses
- 2 T. honey
- 1 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. smoked paprika
- ½ tsp. garlic powder
- ¼ tsp. onion powder
- ½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- ½ tsp. salt
- up to ½ tsp. liquid smoke (optional)
- 1 tsp. bourbon (optional)

Whisk all ingredients together in a medium saucepan over medium heat until smooth. Bring to a gentle simmer, then reduce the heat to low and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cool completely before serving.

refrigerator dries the skin, creating an exceptionally crisp finish that holds up even after being brushed with barbecue sauce.

Serves 4-6

For the chicken:

- 1 fresh whole chicken, clean, patted dry, giblets discarded, 4-5 pound size is preferred over an "oven-stuffer"

For the garlic butter brine injection:

- ½ C. low-sodium chicken broth
- ¼ C. unsalted butter
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- ½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ tsp. finely ground white pepper

For the grill:

- 1 C. barbecue sauce, chef's choice

Using kitchen shears, remove the backbone from the chicken by cutting on either side of the spine, neck to tail. Discard trim or save it



for other purposes. Turn the chicken breast-side up and press firmly on the breastbone until it lies flat — listen to hear a crack. The chicken is now spatchcock cut.

Combine the chicken broth, butter, garlic powder, onion powder, salt, Worcestershire sauce and white pepper in a small saucepan over low heat, stirring, until the butter melts and the salt dissolves. Remove from heat and allow to cool to lukewarm, then strain if needed so no spice clumps clog your brining needle.

Inject the lukewarm mixture evenly into the breasts, thighs and drumsticks without breaking skin. Wipe the skin a final time with paper towels, dabbing away any drops of the butter brine or bits from spatchcocking that might keep the skin from drying evenly. Place skin-side up on a baking sheet fitted with a rack or crumpled aluminum foil to elevate the bird and allow air flow. Refrigerate uncovered for 24 to 48 hours to dry the skin.

Prepare a two-zone grill with one side at 375° to 400° and the other side unlit. Oil the grill grates, but not the bird, which is already seasoned from the inside. Place the chicken skin-side up over indirect heat, cover and cook 40 to 45 minutes, or until the thickest part of the breast reaches 155° to 160°.

Move the chicken skin-side down over direct heat and grill 3 to 5 minutes, watching carefully, until the skin is crisp and deeply browned. Flip skin-side up, brush generously with barbecue sauce and grill about 1 minute more, just until the sauce bubbles and caramelizes.

Rest 5 to 10 minutes before carving.

Hybrid-Cooked Barbecue Baby Back Ribs

A classic braise combines wet and dry heat. This hybrid method begins with a sealed oven braise before finishing over live fire, creating baby back ribs so tender they practically fall off the bone with their smoky, caramelized barbecue glaze.

Serves 4-6

- 2 racks baby back ribs
- ¼ C. packed dark brown sugar
- 2 T. smoked paprika
- 1 T. kosher salt
- ½ T. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 T. garlic powder

- 1 T. onion powder
- 1 tsp. chili powder
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper, optional
- 6 T. water, divided
- 1 C. barbecue sauce, chef's choice



Remove the thin membrane from the bone side of the ribs, and pat dry with paper towels.

Whisk together the brown sugar, smoked paprika, salt, black pepper, garlic powder, onion powder, chili powder and cayenne, if using. Coat both sides of the ribs generously, pressing the seasoning into the meat. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or overnight.

Preheat the oven to 250°.

Place each rack of ribs on two layers of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Add 3 T. water beneath the rack. Cover with two additional layers of heavy-duty aluminum foil, then fold and crimp the edges all the way around to create a sealed packet with room for steam to circulate. Place on a rimmed baking sheet and bake for 2½ to 3 hours, or until the meat is tender and has begun to pull back from the ends of the bones.

Prepare a two-zone grill with one side at medium-high heat and the other side unlit. Carefully remove the ribs from the foil. Using two long grill spatulas, transfer the racks to the indirect side of the grill. Pour all the juices from the aluminum over the ribs for added smoke and flavor.

Cover and grill for 10 to 15 minutes to develop a light smoky flavor.

Brush both sides of the ribs generously with barbecue sauce and move the ribs over direct heat. Grill 2 to 3 minutes per side, watching carefully, until the sauce caramelizes. Using the spatulas, carefully transfer the ribs to a cutting board.

Rest 5 to 10 minutes before slicing between the bones and serving. ♦

Liz Tarditi is a chef and wine specialist with more than 30 years of experience in food, wine and event planning. She holds degrees from Villanova University and from a Seattle culinary arts program founded by a Certified French Master Chef, where she trained in a classic brigade-style kitchen. Liz later ran her own catering company and has worked as a wine specialist in Pennsylvania. She brings her training and lifelong passion for seasonal, approachable cooking to Brandywine Table.

