



# Culinary Craftwork

## Newsletter: June 2010

### *Al Fresco Cooking, Part 1*

#### *Grilling & Barbecuing*

#### Introduction

This issue of the newsletter focuses on summer grilling with a variety of mouth-watering recipes: **The Best Burger Ever with a Tuscan Flair (Page 6)**; **Moroccan Spiced Lamb Kebabs with Minted Yogurt (Page 8)**; **Grilled Cajun Shrimp with Pepper Broth & Garlic Bread (Page 11)**; and **Spice Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting (Page 13)**.

Culinary Craftwork is my business, which specializes in offering private, semi-private, and group cooking classes. Some of you may remember me from when I taught cooking classes at Williams-Sonoma in Los Gatos. I am grateful to all of you who encouraged me to branch out on my own!

The Culinary Craftwork experience is different in that the classes I offer are fully customizable to what you want. I teach the classes in your own home at a time that is convenient for you. And I do all the shopping.

*It is my mission to give you the tools you need to prepare meals that will seduce you with savor and wow your guests.*

My website contains many sample menus that focus on building different skills, but I am happy to partner with you and come up with something new. The classes are fun, informal, and informative — and you get to eat!

The Culinary Craftwork newsletter is a monthly publication that focuses on seasonal fare with recipes and pictures. My newsletter also includes a section called "Ask the Chef," so please don't be shy—email me with your questions.



#### Professional In-home Cooking Classes

Culinary Craftwork offers professionally taught in-home cooking classes by a chef with over 20 years' experience in restaurants and catering.

The classes are designed to build basic skills and boost confidence in the kitchen. I teach the classes in your own home, offer themed menus, cooking class parties and catered dinner parties.

Full class descriptions and prices are available on my website.

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## Grilling Tools



There are many grilling sets available; it is not necessary to buy top-of-the-line tools, which can be quite expensive.

You will absolutely need sturdy stainless steel tongs and a spatula, as well as a silicone brush for basting and glazing and a wire grill brush (preferably with a replaceable head).

Home centers and hardware stores usually have better values than cooking stores.

[More About Grilling Tools](#)



## Al Fresco Cooking, Part 1

Summer is the time for eating al fresco, which often means we cook al fresco as well—grilling and barbecuing. This year summer has been slow in coming; we've had a long, chilly spring, and a recent visit to the Campbell Farmers' Market was disappointing. Sure, there were the usual greens, good strawberries and citrus, but stone fruits, such as peaches and nectarines, were barely edible. Hopefully, June will be a better month with sweetly ripe fruit. I had wanted to include a recipe for my Nectarine & Blueberry Crumble, but decided to wait and publish it in the July issue when the summer fruits will be at their peak.

### Grilling vs. Barbecuing

Ever the optimist, I decided to run a two-part newsletter with the June issue focusing on grilling and the July issue on barbecuing. If that sounds redundant, it's not really, because grilling and barbecuing are actually two different cooking styles, though they are both usually done on a grill—hence the confusion.

In simple terms, grilling is done over direct heat (covered or uncovered), whereas barbecuing is done over indirect heat, usually covered. Barbecuing can also be done in an oven. It is generally much faster to grill than to barbecue. I'm not going to take issue with those who insist that anything cooked on a grill is "barbecuing." I'm just trying to make a broad differentiation between the two techniques: burgers are grilled, not barbecued.

I love my grill and use it often, but rarely for barbecuing. Most often, I am cooking for only two people, and it makes sense to have a gas grill, which only takes 10 minutes to come to temperature. It hardly seems worth it to wait 45 minutes for charcoal briquettes to settle down and cook something that only takes 5 or 10 minutes. I know there are many folks out there who are adamant about grilling over charcoal, and I respect that; however, I am equally adamant about the convenience of a properly seasoned gas grill.

### Seasoning your grill

By proper seasoning, I'm not suggesting that you sprinkle salt and pepper over your grill; I'm talking about keeping your grill well scraped and oiled, which builds up a virtually non-stick surface. The more you use your grill, the more seasoned it becomes. You should keep a cloth or a bunch of paper towels and vegetable oil at hand to oil the grates, as well as a wire brush for scraping them down. I oil both the grill grates and the food I am grilling, and in between I use a wire grill scraper to remove caked on, charred deposits.

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Those little charred deposits that fall down between the grates help give the food that special smoky, grilled flavor. Never clean your grill grates with detergent or degreaser, as it will destroy the surface seasoning. The process is similar to caring for a cast iron pan. Always scrape down your grill with a wire brush before and after grilling.

#### Cooking with smoke

Barbecuing is almost always done over charcoal or hardwood for a long time at a low temperature, covered, until the meat is tender. You can also get some pretty good smoke flavor using a gas grill by using soaked wood chips to impart flavor. The kind of meats that lend themselves to this technique are pork or beef ribs, beef brisket and other larger cuts containing fatty intramuscular tissue. The fat in the meat renders out and keeps the meat from drying out on the grill during the long, slow cooking process. I'll go into greater detail about barbecuing in the July issue of this monthly newsletter.

#### Grilling can be good for you

I am passionate about grilling, and it doesn't hurt that many grilled foods are often considerably healthier (and I'm always trying to eat healthy). Boneless, skinless chicken breasts and fish fillets are high in protein and low in saturated fat. They cook quickly and lend themselves to many different styles of cooking. When grilling pork chops, it helps to brine them first. For more information about brining, [click here](#).

I especially love grilled fish and other seafood with olive oil. I also like to marinate meats and chicken before grilling, and I'm not ashamed to say that I like highly seasoned food (which is not to say that I like food drowned in salt, but I do love spices!).

Grilling over direct heat requires constant attention; proper preheating of the grill is necessary. When grilling marinated meats or fish, brush off any excess marinade before placing the items on the grill. This will help reduce flare-ups. If the grill does flare up, immediately remove the offending item and relocate it to a cooler part of the grill that is not directly over the heating element or charcoal. If flare-ups occur on a charcoal grill, use a spray bottle of water to instantly douse the flames. Unfortunately, this technique is not very useful on a gas grill.

On rare occasion (and this will not happen with brand-new grills) you may get a grease fire, especially if you have not been diligent in scraping and cleaning the grill. There is a small container underneath the grill which collects grease; you should empty this regularly. If you do get a grease fire, don't panic (I know it's kind of scary). Remove the food from the grill immediately and sprinkle a generous amount of Kosher salt over the flames. In a short time, the fire will be smothered and should go out. Never attempt to put out a grease fire with water; this will only make the situation worse.

When I was growing up I thought the way to make barbecued chicken was to marinate it in bottled barbecue sauce, which I doctored with additional spices. Then I'd attempt to cook the sticky chicken on the grill without charring it, which was almost impossible. That's because bottled barbecue sauces are full of sugar, which sticks and burns. It wasn't until later on that I read that barbecue sauces were for glazing the meat just before removing it from the grill and serving additional sauce on the side.

Even homemade barbecue sauces often have ketchup, sugar and/or molasses in them. While they may taste great, you get better results by using a seasoning rub and applying the barbecue sauce at the end of the cooking process. I'll talk more about rubs in Part 2 of this article in the July issue of my newsletter.

## Hardwood Chips Add Smoke Flavor



Hardwood chips need to be soaked in water before placing over the coals or in a metal smoke box. Some chips come packaged with their own aluminum box. Apple wood, hickory and maple are good choices.

Wood chips work exceptionally well if your food is grilled for 30 minutes or more as is the case with ribs and bone-in chicken. If you only want to impart a subtle smoked flavor, as may be the case with fish or chops, the desired taste can be achieved in a shorter cooking time.

[More About Using Wood Chips.](#)

## About Grades of Beef & Where to Find the Good Stuff

Most supermarket beef is graded USDA Choice or Select. USDA Prime is usually sold directly to upscale restaurants by wholesalers.



### USDA Prime

Represents about 2.5% of all available beef. Prime is the highest quality beef in large part because of its intramuscular fat. Prime beef is very difficult to find. Locally, prime beef can be purchased at Willow Glen Meats & Smoke House in San Jose (408) 279-4009. Typically, a New York strip steak will usually cost around \$60.00 per pound!



### USDA Choice

Represents about 53.7% of available beef. Choice is high quality beef and widely available in supermarkets. The difference between Choice and Prime is largely due to the fat content in the beef. Prime typically has a higher fat content than Choice. The even distribution of fat in the meat is known as marbling.



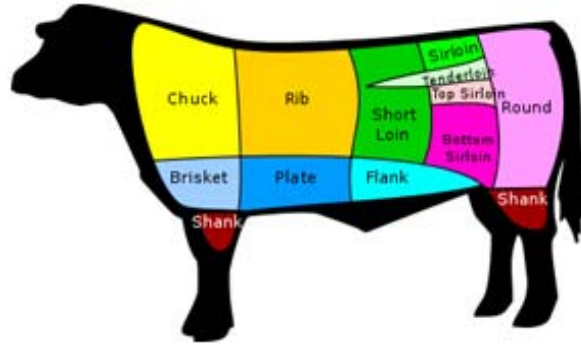
### USDA Select

Represents the lowest grade of beef commonly found in supermarkets; it is acceptable quality but less juicy and tender due to leanness.

[More About USDA Beef Grading](#)

When I worked in restaurants, we always used an open gas grill; covering the grill was not an option, but on occasion we made do by using an inverted sauté pan to cover items that needed the additional heat to cook through without burning. You can also use heavy-duty aluminum foil to tent a burger while melting cheese on top. The instructions that came with my grill indicated that the grill lid should be closed for cooking. However, there is no one rule that applies to all.

I recently grilled a rib-steak and made the mistake of cooking it covered. By the time I had beautiful cross-hatch grill marks on the first side, the meat was nearly cooked through though I failed to realize it at the time. I flipped the steak over and cooked it for an additional five minutes, let it rest (one should always let grilled or roasted meats rest before serving) and then found to my horror that it had been woefully overcooked. My husband and our dog enjoyed it mightily. I may have spent many years cooking professionally, but that does not mean I don't occasionally make mistakes, even expensive ones. Live and learn. 😊



This beef diagram shows the primary cuts, many of which are suitable for grilling, but not all. Brisket, for example, is not considered a good cut for grilling, though it is an excellent candidate for barbecue. Flank steak, however is good for grilling, as is the rib, tenderloin and sirloin.

### Cajun Shrimp on the Barbie

My husband is a big fan of the Cajun shrimp served at Bubba Gump's Shrimp Co. restaurant. The shrimp are coated with a Cajun spice blend and sautéed with garlic and butter. I make a similar dish at home, which is a combination of recipes for New Orleans style "Barbecued Shrimp" that I obtained from the Royal Sonesta Hotel and my best guess at the Bubba Gump's dish.

New Orleans style barbecue shrimp is typically not grilled, but cooked in a skillet with a spicy broth enriched with plenty of butter. In keeping with my grilling theme for this newsletter, I decided to try briefly marinating the shrimp with the spices and garlic and grilling them with the broth served in a bowl for dipping. The results were even better than when the shrimp were sautéed.

There are several methods of cooking shrimp on a grill: there are special grill baskets that hold the shrimp, fish or vegetables in place and facilitate turning them over. You can lay the shrimp directly on the grill grates, but as they cook, they shrink, and you run the risk of having your shrimp fall through the grates.

My favorite method is skewering. You can skewer the shrimp aligned in one direction, or you can alternate them head to tail with the skewer piercing each shrimp in two places. Another skewering method is piercing the shrimp through the center only and crowding them together in a "spooning" fashion.

My recipe for Cajun shrimp may not be 100% authentic, but it is outstanding whether you grill or sauté the shrimp. It is spicy, peppery and rich—utterly irresistible when served with homemade garlic bread.

## The Evolution of the Best Burger Ever (for real!)

I enjoy a good hamburger every now and then; I eat perhaps 2 or 3 per year, which hardly qualifies me as an expert. However, for as long as I've known my husband (and I've known him since the Jurassic Era) he's been casually looking for the world's best burger. For him, and many like him, the humble hamburger defines the summer grilling season.

My husband's search for the best burger began in San Francisco during the late 70's with a very disappointing cheeseburger from the famous but now defunct [Doggie Diner](#). Many of those who remember speak nostalgically of the Doggie Diner, but my husband remembers a greasy burger on a grease soaked bun. Not very appetizing.

Over the years, he has tried many restaurants known for great burgers: [Redrum Burgers](#) in Davis, formally known as Murder Burger; [Burger Hut Burgers](#) in Chico; and of course [Mojo Burgers](#) here in Silicon Valley—and even the famous [Palm Steakhouse](#) in New York City. Unfortunately, none of these places have really lived up to his expectations.

Last year we took a vacation in Napa. Naturally, my husband combed the internet for the area's best burgers. His research identified Taylor's Automatic Refresher in St. Helena, now known as [Gott's Roadside](#). While touring the Castello Di Amorosa Winery, our guide mentioned to our group that we had to try Taylor's for the best burgers anywhere. After that unsolicited testimonial there was no way of getting out of it—we had to give it a try.

When we arrived, we waited in a line some 40 people deep. My husband placed his order for a blue cheese burger with great anticipation only to be disappointed yet again. There was nothing special about the burger, and it was too greasy for his taste.

In the final analysis, it's easy to understand that people have different tastes and expectations. The burger recipe that follows was inspired by a burger competition that I saw recently on the Food Network. Using minimal add-ins to the burger itself, I developed a burger specifically designed for our own taste; the secret ingredient is the addition of finely minced capicola ham mixed in with the ground beef. Don't believe me? Read on....

The burgers were fantastically juicy and flavorful without any of the usual condiments I also experimented with several cheeses including fontina and gorgonzola before eventually settling on taleggio (a soft ripened Italian cow's milk cheese) for its earthy, full flavor. It is a truism that great ingredients make great burgers.

If you are one of those people who like to drown your burgers with condiments (as typically, I am), please resist the impulse and try your burger this way first before adding ketchup, mayonnaise or mustard.

Honestly speaking, there are a near infinite number of toppings that can distinguish a burger, such as we encountered at the Sonoma Chicken Coop (see sidebar), but the truly fabulous burger begins with the patty itself. It is easy to add too many ingredients to the ground beef, which ultimately detracts from the flavor of the beef itself.

The addition of the capicola ham in this recipe led to subtly superior flavor; no one would be likely to identify what made this burger patty so good—it tastes just as one imagines a great burger should taste without any "hammy-ness." A truly fabulous burger!

The patties were flavorful and juicy even when cooked to medium-well. I encourage you to try this recipe and write back to us with your feedback. It may turn out that you acquire a secret that makes your burger barbecue the envy of your friends and family. Suspend your disbelief, and give this recipe a try!

### Burger Review: The Sonoma Chicken Coop



The Blue Cheese Burger with Sweet Potato Fries

#### The Sonoma Chicken Coop

200 E. Campbell Ave.  
Campbell, CA 95008  
(408) 866-2699

The Sonoma Chicken Coop is probably not the first restaurant that comes to mind when most people think about burgers. But I've heard several very positive comments about their burgers and decided to give them a try.

Priced at \$9.99 each, they offer six free range grass fed beef burgers: Southwest Burger, California Burger, Blue Cheese Burger, Anytime Burger, Texas BBQ Burger and the Teriyaki Burger.

My husband and I ordered the Southwest Burger and the Blue Cheese Burger. Both were quite good but not great; they were a bit dry. (We ordered medium and received well done.) Of the two, the Blue Cheese Burger was superior to the Southwest Burger in that the flavors really came together. Despite having pickled jalapeños and sliced avocado the Southwest Burger seemed bland.

The old fashioned milkshakes were ABSOLUTELY WONDERFUL and are too good to pass up!



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## The Secret Ingredients:



### Capicola Ham

Capicola or Coppa, as it is sometimes called, is a spiced cured ham that is available in sweet or hot varieties. It can be found in better grocery stores or Italian delicatessens.

I've found that a ratio of 1 oz. finely chopped capicola to 6 oz. ground beef is perfect. The ham flavor is very subtle, and it lends a juicy depth of flavor to the burgers.

If you are unable to find capicola, substitute another type of cured ham, such as prosciutto or speck.



### Taleggio Cheese

Taleggio is an Italian washed rind cow's milk cheese. The consistency is soft without being runny. Its flavor is full and nutty. Very yummy.

## The Best Burger Ever with a Tuscan Flair



In this recipe, the softened Italian herb butter is spread on the bun as an alternative to ketchup or mayonnaise. It can be made ahead and kept in the refrigerator or freezer, and it also makes a wonderful topping for grilled meat or fish.

## The Best Burger Ever with a Tuscan Flair

Makes 4 hamburgers

### Ingredients

#### Italian Herb Butter

- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh Italian parsley leaves
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves
- ¼ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, chopped
- 2 tablespoons chopped shallot
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 1/2 sticks good quality unsalted butter, room temperature

#### Grilled Red Onions

- 1 large red onion, sliced 3/8-inch thick
- A few tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- Salt & freshly ground pepper

#### Patties

- ¼ pound dry, capicola (coppa), thinly sliced and chopped finely in a food processor
- 1 ½ pounds ground beef chuck, 80% lean
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 6 ounces sliced taleggio cheese or gorgonzola dolce
- 1 cup baby arugula, lightly packed
- 4 potato buns, split

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[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

## The Best Burger Ever with a Tuscan Flair (Cont.)

### Directions

#### Make the Italian Herb Butter

In the bowl of a food processor, combine the parsley, basil, thyme, shallot, garlic, lemon juice, and Dijon mustard and puree until smooth. Add the butter and pulse until well combined. Transfer to a small bowl and reserve for later. This butter keeps indefinitely frozen and is also excellent on grilled meat or fish.

reheat the grill to high.

#### Make the Grilled Red Onions

Slice the red onion 3/8-inch thick and keep the rings together. Brush with extra virgin olive oil on both sides, and sprinkle generously with salt and freshly ground pepper. Grill the onion slices, covered, on both sides till grill marks appear and the onions have softened slightly. Remove from the grill to a small bowl and toss the rings with 3 Tbs. red wine vinegar. Let sit for 10 minutes, or until ready to assemble the burgers.

#### Make the Patties

Put the capicola in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until finely minced. It helps if the capicola is partly frozen.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the capicola, ground beef, salt, and pepper; mix well with your hands. Separate the mixture into 4 equal portions and form the portions into patties to fit the size of the buns. Depress the center of each patty with your thumb. As it grills, the center will puff up and flatten out; this will ensure an even, flat surface on which to layer the other components.

Grill the patties for five minutes or until nice grill marks appear. Flip the burgers and cook for 3 to 4 minutes or to desired doneness. During the last few minutes of cooking, top the burgers with taleggio cheese and tent with aluminum foil to melt cheese slightly. Also, during last few minutes of cooking, toast the buns lightly on the grill.

#### Assemble the Burgers

Let the Italian herb butter soften. Spread the cut sides of the toasted buns with the herb butter. Toss the arugula lightly with a touch of extra virgin olive oil and a splash of red wine vinegar. Place the arugula on the bottom half of the bun. Place the burger and cheese on top and dress with a generous amount of the grilled red onions. Eat and enjoy!

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

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### Tips:



Chop the capicola in a food processor, and mix the ground beef and capicola by hand.



Your grilled onions are usually caramelized enough when grill marks are visible on both sides. The texture should be crisp-soft.



Burgers tend to puff up in the middle as they cook. To get a more uniform shape, use your fingers to depress the center of each burger patty.

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### Important Steps:



Remove the fat and silver skin from the boneless leg of lamb.



Marinate the lamb in a re-sealable bag. Mash the bag well to distribute the marinade.



Combine vegetables and toss with extra virgin olive oil, salt and pepper.

## Moroccan Spiced Lamb Kebabs with Minted Yogurt



Lamb, while fairly fatty, is also one of the most highly recommended proteins, along with buffalo and ostrich. I make lamb frequently, but prefer lamb from Australia or New Zealand to our own domestic product, which I find somewhat gamey. The following recipe is something that I developed years ago at the Bridge Café in New York City. Leg of lamb cooks quickly, so be sure not to overcook it. I like it cooked “pink” (or medium). Grilling the kebabs covered ensures juiciness and helps cook the vegetables at the same rate as the meat.

The Moroccan Marinade is lemony and well spiced without being hot; it is also excellent with chicken and fish. Because of the lemon juice in the marinade, don’t marinate the fish, as it will chemically “cook” the flesh. Simply brush some of the marinade over the fish and let it stand at room temperature for 5-10 minutes before grilling.

## Moroccan Spiced Lamb Kebabs with Minted Yogurt

Serves 4

### Ingredients

#### For the kebabs

- 2 lb. boneless leg of lamb
- 2 large red onions
- 3 bell peppers (mixed colors)
- 16 long bamboo skewers

#### For the Marinade

- ½ cup lemon juice + grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1 tsp. ground coriander, toasted
- ½ tsp. ground cumin, toasted
- 2 tsp. Kosher salt
- 1 ½ tsp. ground black pepper
- 2 tsp. dry ginger powder

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## Moroccan Spiced Lamb Kebabs with Minted Yogurt (Cont.)

### Ingredients

#### For the Marinade (Cont.)

- ½ tsp. grated nutmeg
- ½ tsp. cinnamon
- 1 Tbs. paprika
- ½ tsp. cayenne
- A pinch of saffron
- 2 Tbs. sugar or honey
- 5 large garlic cloves
- 2/3 cup chopped onion
- 1 cup lightly packed Italian parsley
- ½ cup lightly packed cilantro
- 1 ½ cup olive oil

### Directions

#### Make the Marinade

Toast the cumin and coriander in a small pan over medium-high heat until lightly browned and fragrant.

Combine the spices & seasonings, onion, garlic and lemon juice in a blender. Mix well. Add the parsley and cilantro, and puree well. With the blender running, slowly add the olive oil. Combine well till thick and creamy.

#### Prepare the Lamb

Trim the lamb well, removing the fat, silver skin, and connective tissue. Cut the lamb into 1 ½ -inch cubes. Toss with enough marinade to coat well in a re-sealable bag. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours. Reserve the rest of the marinade.

#### Prepare the Vegetables

Cut the onions and peppers into 1 ½ -inch chunks. Toss with a bit of olive oil, salt & freshly ground pepper.

#### Assemble the Kebabs

Skewer the lamb, alternating with the red onion and bell peppers. Let the lamb come to room temperature before grilling.

Preheat the grill to medium-high. Grill the kebabs for 3–5 minutes on each side, covered, till the lamb is grill-marked and the vegetables have softened slightly. Brush the kebabs with a bit of the reserved marinade. Cook the lamb till medium-rare (pink inside). Serve immediately with minted yogurt, rice and sautéed spinach if desired.

(Continued on page 10)

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### Lamb Kebabs ready for the grill.



Soak bamboo skewers in cold water for an hour to prevent burning on the grill. Prep all of your skewers prior to grilling. Alternate peppers and red onions with the lamb.



Grill kebabs covered for about 5 min. on each side, until done. Be careful not to overcook. You want the lamb to stay pink in the middle. Too much cooking will toughen the lamb.

## Minted Yogurt Sauce



Add peeled, chopped cucumber to the minted yogurt sauce for a refreshing taste. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

## Moroccan Spiced Lamb Kebabs with Minted Yogurt (Cont.)

### Ingredients

#### Minted Yogurt

- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1 garlic clove, smashed with salt to a fine paste
- 2 Tbs. chopped fresh mint
- Salt & freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 2 Tbs. peeled, chopped cucumber (optional)

### Directions

Combine the yogurt, garlic and mint in a small bowl. Mix together well, and season with salt and freshly ground pepper.

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## Cajun Grilled Shrimp with Pepper Broth & Garlic Bread



The recipe below is for 2 servings; if you want to double it, use two pans to make the sauce, as it needs to reduce down to  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup before whisking in the butter, which will help thicken the sauce. The broth is spicy, peppery and buttery and cries out for garlic bread and plenty of napkins. This is messy, garlicky finger-food at its best!

### Cajun Grilled Shrimp with Pepper Broth & Garlic Bread

Makes 2 servings.

#### Ingredients

##### Shrimp & Skewers

- 16 large or jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined (tail on)
- 10 inch Bamboo skewers

##### For the Marinade

- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. Lea & Perrin's Worcestershire sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. freshly ground black pepper or mixed peppercorns
- 1 Tbs. Seafood Magic (Paul Prudhomme's)
- 1 tsp. paprika
- 1 Tbs. minced garlic
- 3 Tbs. olive oil

##### For the Pepper Broth Dipping Sauce

- 1 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 jar of clam juice (11 oz.)
- 6 oz. lager beer (1/2 bottle)
- 2 tsp. Lea & Perrin's Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper or mixed peppercorns
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp. Seafood Magic
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. sugar
- 1 Tbs. minced garlic
- 2 Tbs. sweet, unsalted butter
- 2 Tbs. chopped parsley

(Continued on page 12)

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

### Skewer the shrimp to facilitate cooking.



Soak bamboo skewers in cold water for an hour to prevent burning on the grill. Prep all of your skewers prior to grilling.



Grill for about 3 min. on each side, until done or until shrimp turn pink and firm up to the touch.



Garlic Bread is the perfect accompaniment to Cajun shrimp. Encourage your guests to dip their bread into the dipping sauce.

## Seafood Magic



I don't often use commercial spice blends, but I make an exception for Seafood Magic, which contains many different ingredients and is a great convenience with terrifically authentic New Orleans flavor.

## Garlic Bread Tip



Garlic butter distribution is more effective when applied in between cross slices than when slathered on a halved loaf.

## Cajun Grilled Shrimp with Pepper Broth & Garlic Bread (Cont.)

### Directions

Soak the bamboo skewers in cold water for one hour.

Toss together the ingredients for the marinade adding enough olive oil to make a thick but fluid paste. Mix the shrimp into the marinade and let sit at room temperature for 10 minutes or so.

Make the dipping sauce. Melt 1 Tbs. olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and sauté for a minute or two until lightly golden and fragrant. Add the spices and sugar; stir well, then add the clam juice, beer and Worcestershire sauce. Bring to a boil, and reduce the liquids to ¾ cup.

Whisk in 2 Tbs. of butter. Whisk in 1 Tbs. of chopped parsley; reserve the remaining parsley to sprinkle on top. Keep warm till ready to serve.

Light the grill and set heat to medium-high. Skewer the shrimp.

Grill the shrimp lightly on both sides till firm and pink; remove the shrimp from the skewers and toss with the broth. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve immediately in a bowl with pepper broth and garlic bread to mop up the sauce.

### Garlic Bread

Makes approximately 2-4 servings

#### Ingredients

- 1 Tbs. + 1 tsp. finely chopped garlic
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- 2 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Tbs. finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 1 (15- by 4-inch) loaf Italian bread
- ½ tsp. Kosher salt

#### Directions

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Mince and mash garlic to a paste with a rounded ½ teaspoon salt using a heavy knife (or a mini food processor/spice grinder). Mix together the butter, oil, and garlic paste in a food processor until smooth, then mix in parsley.

Without cutting completely through the bottom, cut the bread diagonally into 1-inch-thick slices with a serrated knife; then spread garlic butter lightly between slices on each side.

Wrap loaf in foil and bake in middle of oven 15 minutes. Open foil and bake 5-10 minutes more.

Bread can be spread with garlic butter 8 hours ahead and chilled, wrapped in foil. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes before baking.

For a more herbal flavor, you can substitute 1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh basil for 1 tablespoon of parsley.

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I love simple sheet cakes, and the cream cheese frosting in the following recipe is one of best I've ever tried. I can literally eat it by the spoonful! While there are a fair number of ingredients in this cake and a few extra steps (such as cooking the spices in butter to bring out their flavor), it is an easy cake to make and quite delicious.

I recommend making the cake a day before you plan to serve it, as the texture will be much improved; there is no need to refrigerate the unfrosted cake, and I prefer to frost it the day of serving, as the frosting's creamy texture suffers from being refrigerated. It will hold at room temperature for the better part of a day without refrigeration, but be sure to refrigerate the leftover cake, as the cream cheese frosting is perishable.

## Spice Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting

Makes 12–14 servings. From Cook's Illustrated.

### Ingredients

#### Spice Cake

- 2 ¼ cups unbleached all-purpose flour (11 ¼ oz.), plus extra for dusting pans
- 1 Tbs. ground cinnamon
- ¾ tsp. ground cardamom
- ½ tsp. ground allspice
- ½ tsp. ground cloves
- ¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
- 16 Tbs. unsalted butter (2 sticks), softened
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- ½ tsp. baking soda
- ½ tsp. table salt
- 2 large eggs at room temperature
- 3 large egg yolks at room temperature
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 ¾ cups granulated sugar (12 ¼ oz.)
- 2 Tbs. light molasses or mild molasses
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger or minced crystallized ginger
- 1 cup buttermilk, at room temperature

(Continued on page 14)

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## Crystallized Ginger



Use finely minced crystallized ginger in place of fresh ginger for a zesty, but softer flavor. (This is my personal preference.)

## Tips for Success:



### Let the Cake Rest Overnight

The texture of the Spice Cake improves when it is allowed to rest overnight. The unfrosted cake does not require refrigeration.

Frost cake the day of serving.

Garnish the cake with chopped pecans, if desired.

## Spice Cake with Cream Cheese Frosting (Cont.)

### Ingredients

#### Cream Cheese Frosting

- 5 Tbs. unsalted butter, cut into 5 pieces, softened
- 1 ¼ cups confectioners' sugar (4 ½ oz.)
- 8 oz. cream cheese, cut into 4-5 pieces, softened
- ½ tsp. vanilla extract

### Directions

#### Spice Cake

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and flour a 13- by 9-inch baking pan. Combine spices in small bowl; reserve ½ teaspoon for frosting.

Heat 4 tablespoons butter in 8-inch skillet over medium heat until melted, 1 to 2 minutes. Continue to cook, swirling pan constantly, until butter is light brown and has faint nutty aroma, 2 to 4 minutes. Add spices and continue to cook, stirring constantly, 15 seconds. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature.

Whisk flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in medium bowl. In small bowl, gently whisk eggs, yolks, and vanilla to combine.

In a standing mixer fitted with paddle attachment, cream remaining 12 tablespoons butter with sugar and molasses at medium-high speed until pale and fluffy, about 3 minutes, scraping down sides and bottom of bowl twice with rubber spatula.

Reduce to medium speed and add cooled butter and spice mixture, ginger, and half of egg mixture; mix until incorporated, about 15 seconds. Repeat with remaining egg mixture; scrape down bowl again. Reduce to low speed; add about one-third flour mixture, followed by half of buttermilk, mixing until just incorporated after each addition, about 5 seconds. Repeat using half of remaining flour mixture and all of remaining buttermilk. Scrape bowl and add remaining flour mixture; mix at medium speed until batter is thoroughly combined, about 15 seconds. Remove bowl from mixer and fold batter once or twice with rubber spatula to incorporate any remaining flour.

Transfer batter to prepared pan; zigzag tip of metal spatula through batter, pulling it to pan edges. Lightly tap pan against counter 3 or 4 times to dislodge any large air bubbles; smooth surface with spatula.

Bake until toothpick inserted in center of cake comes out clean, 35 to 37 minutes. Cool cake to room temperature before frosting.

#### Cream Cheese Frosting

In bowl of standing mixer fitted with paddle attachment, beat butter, sugar, and reserved ½ teaspoon spice mixture at medium-high speed until light and fluffy, 1 to 2 minutes. Add cream cheese one piece at a time, beating thoroughly after each addition. Add vanilla and beat until no lumps remain, about 30 seconds.

Run a paring knife around edge of cake to loosen from pan. Using a spatula, spread frosting evenly over surface of cake. Cut into squares and serve.

[Printer-Friendly Version of this Recipe](#)

## Ask the Chef (Q&A)

### Substituting Chicken for Pork

*Linda asks, "I want to make your Pork in Green Chile, but I don't eat pork. Can I substitute chicken?"*

Reply: Boneless, skinless chicken thighs would work well. You'll need to adjust the time, as they will cook much more quickly than the pork. Additionally, be aware that if you use boneless, skinless chicken breasts instead of thighs, they have a tendency to dry out even though the green Chile is moist.

### Preventing Flare-ups on the Grill

*Shawn asks, "I seem to have a lot of flare-ups when grilling. How can I prevent them?"*

Reply: Let excess oil drip off your food before grilling. Pat off excess marinade as well. If you're using a charcoal grill, keep a spray bottle of water handy for dousing the flames. This method is not very effective for gas grills, however. If the flare-ups turn into an actual grease fire, use Kosher salt, not water for smothering the flames, as water will only make the situation worse.

### Liquid vs. Dry Measurements

*Ann asks, "Why are there different types of measuring cups? Does it matter which kind I use?"*

Reply: There are two types of measuring cups: one for dry ingredients, like flour and sugar, and one for liquids, like oil, water, and wine.

Dry measuring cups typically come in 1/4-, 1/3-, 1/2- and 1-cup measurements. The best way to measure out the right amount: Dip the cup into the dry ingredient so that the cup overflows. Run the back of a knife across the rim of the cup to scrape off the excess. Don't pack it down unless the recipe calls to do so (usually in the case of brown sugar).

Liquid measuring cups have a handy pouring spout and are usually clear glass or plastic so that you can easily see the level of the liquid. These cups come in 1-, 2- and 4-cup measurements. Make sure the liquid measuring cup is on a level surface so that you get a correct reading on how much liquid is in the cup.

### Using Tamari Instead of Soy Sauce

*April asks, "What's the difference between tamari and soy sauce?"*

Reply: Although soy sauce and tamari are both made from fermented soybeans, Japanese tamari (soy sauce) is thicker, darker, and richer than Chinese soy sauce. Think of it as the kinder, gentler (and less salty) soy sauce. It has a more complex, smooth flavor compared to the sometimes harsh bite of a salty soy sauce.

Soy sauce also comes in "dark" and "light," but don't let the name fool you. "Light" soy sauce (not to be confused with "lite," aka, low-sodium) is thinner, but tends to be saltier than dark soy. Chinese black soy is made very dark and thick because of the addition of molasses.

You can use tamari in any recipe that calls for soy sauce.

## Ask the Chef



I love hearing from people who have read the newsletter or taken one of my classes. I enjoy the opportunity to answer your questions in this general forum, and I hope that my advice is helpful.

Please continue to send me your questions, comments and ideas. They really make my day.

Thank you!

**Alyssa**