

BBQ 101 – The Essentials

Wine & Dine with Dave Preston
Guru of the Good Life®

Summer time is here and that means getting the barbie running for great outdoor cooking on the grill. Grilling at my house is something we do weekly all summer. All of these recipes require a multi-zone fire. That means hot in the back, very warm around the edges, just right for vegetables, yes I said vegetables and what a flavor they take on when done on the Barbie! If you are using hardwood (hats off for a moment of silent respect) or briquette charcoal, what I use, this means you're going to heap our coals in the back of the grill and leave the front half almost empty. This gives you a hot zone in the back for searing and a cooler zone that you can manipulate for slower roasting or cooking.

If you are using gas, we'll be using the burners on one half of the grill and leave the other half off. If the rest of your meal isn't ready all at the same time, you can take a piece of foil and put it over the cool part of the grill and use it to help keep some items warm until everything is ready to come off the grill. Plus, if your food is cooking unevenly, you can move it around and allow the part that isn't cooking fast enough to catch up.

Start your fire and allow the fire to burn off the large bits that have stuck to the grill surface. Scrape the residue and ash off with a grill brush. Then oil the grill with a folded paper towel dipped in a bit of vegetable oil rubbed back and forth over the grill surface while grasped in a pair of tongs. Hot, clean, lubricated. That's how you want your grill.

Folks don't think of grilling a whole Vidalia onion, but what a treat. This grill dish is referred to as the Sweet and Savory Onion Bomb. First you are going to need 4 fist-sized sweet onions. You should plan on at least 1 onion per person. The important thing to pay attention to is that all of your onions will need to be roughly the same size to standardize the cooking time.

I really prefer to use Vidalia onions because of their size and shape, but any large sweet onion will do. You want to cut the ends off of them and peel them. Wrap them in foil and add a tablespoon of white wine and a dash of seasoning salt.

These onion bombs need time on the grill to caramelize. Place them on the hottest part of the grill as soon as your coals are ready. You can rotate them occasionally, but they are going to need at least 45 minutes to cook properly. What I usually tell folks is to make them the first thing they put on the grill and make it the last thing they take off. You'll know they are done when they are soft to the touch and have lost about half their weight. Open the foil up and, using either a fork or a knife, remove the caramelly, gooey goodness from the ¼ inch of burned onion on the bottom of the foil.

Another dish that is popular at my house is grilled corn on the cob. Many people like to soak the corn and grill them in the husks. That's an OK way of doing it, but with the husk on you don't really get the benefits of a wood fire. They steam that way and frankly you could just as easily boil them or steam them indoors with much the same results. Here's how I do it.

Take 6 ears of fresh sweet corn. Pull back but do not strip the husks off completely. Remove the silks thoroughly. Gather the husks back and tie them off with twine or sewing thread 2 or 3 inches from the end. This makes a handle that you can use for moving them around very easily. Using a barbecue brush, liberally coat them with olive oil and season with seasoned salt and fresh ground pepper.

Grill them over a medium-hot part of the grill parallel with the grill grate to keep them from rolling around (the husk handles should help with that as well), monitoring them constantly and making sure that they are cooked evenly without burning.

Just as simple as the corn is grilled asparagus. The idea and technique is very similar and the result is quite tasty. Snap a pound of fresh asparagus (grasp it at each end of the spear and bend it until it snaps off-the bottom part is tough and woody while the top part will be tender). Arrange it on a lipped cookie sheet and drizzle it thoroughly with olive oil and either seasoned salt and ground black pepper or another seasoning you like *Chef Paul's Vegetable Magic*.

Grill them on a medium-hot section of the grill perpendicular to the grill grates, moving them frequently to insure all the spears cook evenly until they are tender-maybe 5 minutes. If you have trouble keeping the spears from falling through the grates, you can cover the area of the grill you will be using with a piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil that has had several holes poked in it with a knife or BBQ fork. *Bon Appetite* and remember to make it a point to go out and live the good life!