

Grill Master

Enjoy the last few weeks of summer with these finger licking melt in your mouth BBQ rib tips and recipes

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With the last few weeks of summer still in full swing, and the temperature rising, I'm sure you're probably planning to stay out of the kitchen. For me, the grill is the cleanest and best way to cook most evenings. I love to find meals that I can cook on the grill so I can avoid the endless cleanup.

Unfortunately for me, my wife is no master on the grill; she is still cooking burgers in a grill pan with smoke in the kitchen (alas she managed to set off the fire alarm this week!).

After having been to many a BBQ this summer at friend's homes, I have found that the favorite summer meal always includes BBQ ribs. And more recently I have found, there's some fierce competition as to whose ribs are the best. They're different at every house: Some prefer dry rubs, some are a tangy BBQ sauce, some like it hot and spicy, others prefer Asian or chipolte, etc... I've had them all, but my absolute

favorites are the classic pork spareribs with delicious smoky BBQ sauce that you can slather onto anything else you are eating. They are messy, but boy are they good. YUM!

While BBQ ribs are very popular, they are often cooked incorrectly on the grill. I don't know about you, but I don't like having to fight the bone for the meat

For some expert tips for cooking tender, delicious "fall off the bone" ribs:

Use fresh meat when at all possible. If you have to use frozen meat, make sure you thaw it before cooking.

Avoid exposed bones when purchasing meat. Try to purchase meat that covers the entire length of the bone.

Cook the entire slab rather than individual pieces. You can slice it after cooking.

Don't lose flavor by boiling the ribs before grilling. This method does make the meat tender, but it also causes you to lose flavor. However, my friend Sal swears by this method, so it's really your call.

The number one mistake people make when trying to grill ribs is too much heat. BBQ ribs should not be cooked quickly over a high direct heat source. They should be cooked low and slow (easy enough to remember, eh?).

There are several ways that you can make great BBQ ribs on a grill and avoid making charred meat sticks, but you need patience. Here's how:

First, there is straight grilling. You will want to grill indirectly, meaning that you have a fire on one side and the food on the other. Of course there are variations to this basic layout and you probably need to do a little experimenting to determine what is going to work best for you and your grill. A couple of variations include using wood chips, soaked in water and added to the charcoal fire, if you are using a charcoal grill, or in a smoker box if you are using a gas grill. This will add a good smoky flavor to your barbecue ribs, giving them an authentic flavor.

You will need to cook your ribs like this for several hours. You want the inside of your grill to hold a temperature around 200 to 225 degrees F. The ribs should not overlap the fire or they will burn and dry out. If you want the smoke flavor you will probably have to add more wood every hour. This is particularly important in the first two hours. Your ribs will be done when they become tender and the meat is loose around the bones.

You can also pre-cook your ribs to speed up the process or to increase the tenderness of the ribs. Ribs cooked on a barbecue smoker at a low temperature for several hours will be very tender. Ribs cooked on a grill, especially a gas grill, will not be as tender even cooked indirectly. To make your grilled ribs more tender you can pre-cook by wrapping them in foil and slow roasting in the oven at 225 degrees for 90 minutes depending on their size. This will get the ribs going and not dry them out. Once you are ready to grill then you can season the ribs and cook them indirectly until done. When it comes to

seasoning ribs you want to be very conservative. It is also important to avoid adding barbecue sauce to ribs too early in the process. Most barbecue sauces, whether store bought or homemade, contain some kind of sugar (tomatoes contain sugar). This can cause your barbecue ribs to burn, even cooked indirectly. I suggest using a good rub before you grill and maybe a barbecue sauce after the grilling is done.

Two of my close friends agreed to share their insider tips on how they make amazing ribs. I've tried them both and they are indeed delicious. I'll let you decide which one you like best:

Yune's recipe is simple:

No par-boiling. Grill off of the direct heat. Heat one side of the grill and close the lid. Wait until it heats up to 375 degrees and with your favorite rub on the ribs, start with bone side down and place on the non-heated side of grill. Place wet smoke chips in tinfoil over on flame side of grill to add some smoky flavor. You can use different types of wood chips for different smoky flavors. Keep the lid closed during cooking. After an hour, baste with your favorite BBQ sauce (we are fond of a little tanginess so there is some vinegar in our base) and flip ribs over and baste the underside. Leave for one hour. Repeat this for the next two to three hours until done. The last half hour, you can wrap ribs in aluminum foil, add some apple juice to steam in and place back on the flame side to add more moisture and flavor to the ribs. Oh, and Yune suggests serving them with your favorite Margarita!

My friend Sal swears by his simple recipe:

24 hours before serving, boil the full rack(s) for 90 minutes (falling off the bone). After letting them cool for 15 minutes, baste with a mixture of your favorite BBQ sauce and Saucy Susan (about 50/50 or a bit more BBQ sauce than Saucy Susan). Wrap them in aluminum foil and refrigerate overnight. The next day take them out of the fridge and let them sit for 15 minutes before putting on the grill. Place on grill, add more sauce and grill for 10-15 minutes to finish them. Sal loves them best served with Corona Light and a great group of friends.

My friend Jenny's suggestion for the best ribs is to call Marcia Selden Catering and let them do all the work!

So remember, keep the temperature low and be sure to keep a watchful eye on your ribs. Once the surface of the meat starts to burn there's no going back. Patience is the key!

Happy grilling!