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Treat Yourself to an Around the Table Chef's Apron

Contact Susan Nye at susannye@tds.net or 603/526 7319

More information the web at www.susannye.com

May is National Barbeque Month, which seems a little early for me. Spring has just sprung, I still have daffodils in my yard and summer is at least a month way. To top it off a gale was blowing across the lake the other day. I took a walk anyway and almost ended up in Oz. I made it home safe but hardly of sound mind because I immediately began staining the new porch. I nearly froze. Yes, it's the same porch that I was hoping would be done in time for Mothers' Day. And no, it's not finished. I guess that's ok because it was too cold to eat outdoors. Instead of firing up the grill, I lit a fire in the fireplace and we had a warm and cozy celebration inside.

But back to barbeques. The Memorial Day Weekend is the more or less official start of summer in places warmer than northern New England. We wait until at least Flag Day or even the 4th of July. However, like the proverbial postal carrier, neither snow nor rain nor dark of night can keep us from our grills for too long.

With longer days and (hopefully soon) warmer evenings, grills are coming out of hibernation. Before you know it, the neighborhood will be filled with enticing aromas from multiple backyard barbeques. Or is it cookout? In New England, we generally call them cookouts, although a true aficionado will tell you that a cookout is not a barbeque. Direct heat, indirect heat, grilling or smoking, whichever you do and whatever you call it, a party under the stars has enormous appeal for any- and everyone. What's not to love about a warm, relaxing evening outside with family and friends?

When it comes to the backyard barbeque, one size does not fit all. First, there are the indifferent cooks. The guys (yes, most outdoor chefs are male) who just like the camaraderie of a neighborhood get-together. They'll dash out to the supermarket in the late afternoon, grab some burgers and dogs, a bag of chips and a jar of salsa, a quart or two of coleslaw, some beer and a box of popsicles. They call up everyone they know and bring them together for a jolly evening around the grill and picnic table. These parties may lack a little when it comes to unusual or gourmet flavor but they surely make up for it in spontaneity and good cheer. Besides no one goes home hungry.

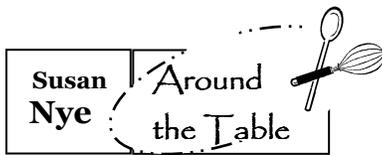
Then there are the enthusiasts. They certainly know the difference between a barbeque and a cookout. These guys live to grill. The enthusiast is ready, willing and able to debate the pros and cons of different cuts of meat, gas versus charcoal, even Mary Ann versus Ginger. They take great pride in creating perfect pulled pork, smoky ribs or beer can chicken. Some even enter cook-offs. These guys can be fiercely loyal to a specific style of barbeque, be it Memphis or Tex-Mex, Kansas City or whatever.

Others take a more adventurous route; they mix it up a little. These backyard chefs get their inspiration from far and wide and around the world. They don't ignore American grilling and barbeque traditions but they take additional cues from Asia, the Middle East and the Caribbean. They seek out secret spices and experiment with different flavors, sauces and rubs.

Whether staunch regionalist or wanderlust foodie, you may have an enthusiast in your neighbor or better yet, he may live with you. Maybe you are that guy. Count yourself lucky, you will be well fed throughout the fun-filled summer. I discovered long ago that good friends make a good party but adding a few, really good, really special dishes will make a good party great. Enjoy the long weekend and,

Bon appetit!

Susan



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just look like one!

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Apron

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Spicy Grilled Steak

Interesting, flavorful food doesn't have to be difficult. Sometimes all it takes is a few extra minutes and a little advanced planning. Add some spice to a simple steak; grill up a few vegetables and you'll have your first taste of summer. Enjoy!

Serves 4

1 – 1 1/2 pounds New York strip steak (or cut of your choice), cut about 1 1/2 inches thick

2 – 3 teaspoons Spicy Rub (recipe follows)

Juice of 1/2 lime

4 cloves garlic, minced

Olive oil

1. Combine the spice rub, lime and garlic, in a shallow dish; add enough olive oil to create a smooth paste. Add the steak and coat it with the marinade. Rub the marinade into the meat. Let the steak marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes or in the refrigerator for 1-2 hours. (If marinating in the refrigerator, bring the steak to room temperature before grilling.)
2. Prepare a charcoal or gas grill. Fire should be medium hot. Grill the steak, about 4 minutes per side for rare and 6 minutes per side for medium rare. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest for 5-10 minutes. Slice and serve.

Spicy Rub

1 tablespoon each ground cinnamon, ginger, allspice, cumin and kosher salt

1 teaspoon each thyme, paprika, cayenne pepper and freshly ground pepper

1. Combine all the spices in a clean jar. Shake to combine.