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Chicken



THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
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CHICKEN

B A R B E C U E

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CONTENTS

History	3
The Basting Sauce	5
Splitting the Broilers in Half	5
The Finishing Sauce	5
Tests for Doneness	8
Tricks for the Chef	11

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A&M University System.

Welcome to Ye Old
Chicken Barbecue



Washington Irving

CHICKEN

B A R B E C U E

BARBECUE CAN BE a magic word! Barbecue suggests brown crusted meat with the aroma of wood smoke hovering about. It also suggests the enjoyable accompaniment of family and friends gathered about with enormous appetites whetted by the fresh air, bright sunshine and smell of cooking meat.

Cooking meat over an open fire is thought to be early man's introduction to eating cooked foods. Whether this was started by accident or on purpose, it was at that time simply searing and heating, not barbecuing. Ages later when seasonings were discovered the barbecuing art was born.

The word "barbecue" seems to have developed from a practice of the Tupinamba Indians of Eastern Brazil. They slept on a wooden frame covered with palm fronds. The frame was placed on long poles to keep it above the ground and was called a barbracat. The Tupinambas also used a similar frame over an open fire to smoke and dry meat. It is believed that the present-day custom of barbecuing meat developed and was named from this practice. About 1550, Hans Staden, a shipwrecked German, lived with these Indians and first reported this practice.

THANK YOU, WASHINGTON IRVING

Our colonial forefathers turned barbecues into day-long affairs with political overtones. Washington Irving first used the word barbecue to describe a social event in 1809. From these beginnings, barbecue has come into common usage in today's language. Normally, barbecue means a simple meal with meat cooked over an open fire. The meat may be poultry, beef, pork, wild game or even fish. It is usually accompanied by a tasty lettuce or cabbage salad, pickles, beans, potatoes and dessert. The barbecue can be a big social event or a backyard "fun time" for the whole family. Barbecue signifies a friendly atmosphere with tasty, well-prepared food usually served outdoors.

Broilers have become a favorite meat for barbecues. The young tender meat is easy to cook and to eat. Although broilers are the most popular poultry for barbecuing, turkeys and ducks are also available for a different taste treat.

Broiler barbecue is tasty and nutritious. It is appropriate for just about any occasion. Inexpensive to prepare, it has wide acceptance. With a little attention to detail, it may be served to the most discriminating.

The following planning suggestions will aid in the meat's preparation:

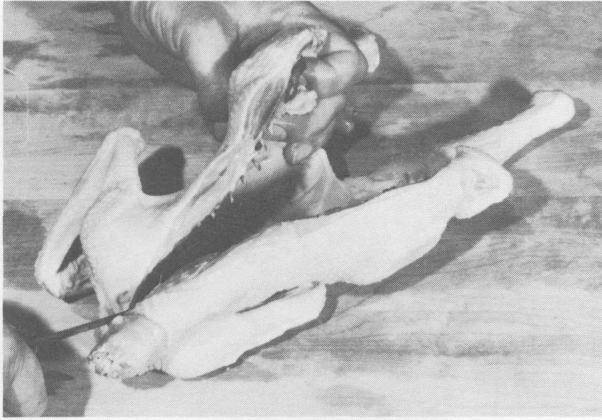
- An adult should serve as barbecuing chef but all ages enjoy being a part of the cooking team. Youngsters especially like being involved.
- Use broilers that weigh 2½ to 3½ pounds.
- Have your butcher split the birds into halves, or do this job at home.
- Use a 2 or 3 quart saucepan with handle for preparing the basting sauce.
- Have a clean grill and pit.

- Use a basting brush or homemade dauber to place sauce on meat.
- Be prepared to use two kinds of sauce—one during cooking and the other for finishing. (Recipes are given).
- Use charcoal or any hardwood such as oak, hickory, pecan or mesquite for fuel.
- Use kerosene or charcoal lighter fluid to start the fire.
- Metal tongs are best for turning chicken halves, but a fine-tined fork is also suitable.
- Have plentiful serving and eating space.

Having made the above preparations, you are now ready to barbecue. Place the charcoal or wood in the pit on a nest of newspaper and saturate it with starting fuel. *Gasoline or cigarette lighter fluid are not recommended as a starter.* Light the fire. Allow about 30 minutes for charcoal or an hour for wood to burn down to a bed of white hot coals. Use six to eight charcoal briquettes for each broiler half. More can be added later, if needed.

The ingredients for both the finishing and basting sauce along with needed utensils are arranged before cooking begins. An improvised dauber (fork wrapped with clean cloth) is shown with the other items. Remember that all tomato or sugar products should be used only in the finishing sauce. *See recipes.*





The broiler is split by firmly drawing a sharp knife beside the back bone, starting in the little indentation beside the tail. If this cut is made properly, it is not difficult since most of the cutting is of cartilage rather than bone.

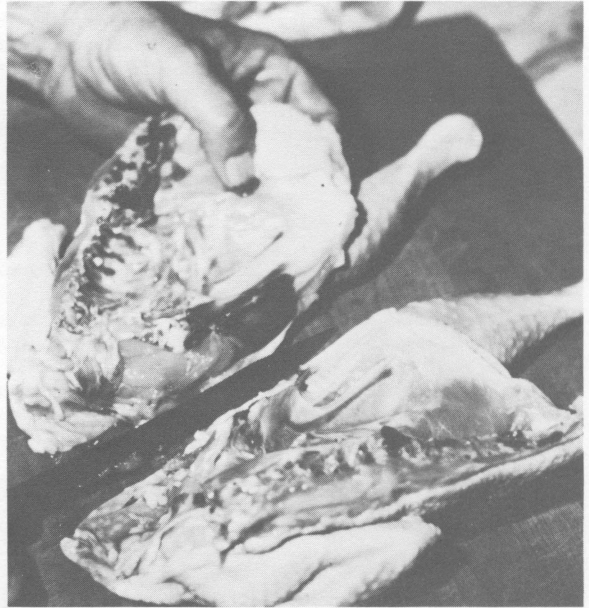
Usually the coals should be 12 to 14 inches below the grill but this will vary somewhat depending on the pit and fuel used. Charcoal or hardwood is used to cook the meat and give it a distinctive smoked flavor. Although leaping flames may be picturesque, the secret of successful barbecuing is a solid bed of glowing coals.

THE BASTING SAUCE

While the fire is burning down to a bed of coals, split the broilers into halves and prepare the basting sauce. Place 1 tablespoon salt, 1 teaspoon black pepper, 1 stick butter or oleo, 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce and a few drops of hot sauce, if you like, into a 3 quart sauce pan. Melt the butter or oleo with the other ingredients over a slow flame. When melted, add the juice of one lemon (vinegar may be substituted), fill the pan with water to a convenient level and heat. Do not boil. This sauce is used for basting to preserve natural meat juiciness and for adding a basic subtle flavor. Notice that no tomato product or sugar is used in the basting sauce. Such products scorch easily and turn the outside of the meat very dark or even black if used from the beginning.

SPLITTING THE BROILERS IN HALF

Wash the birds thoroughly as they are split. Sprinkle generously with salt and black pepper at this time. Place them in a large tray or pan for carrying to the pit. Place broiler halves on the grill with the skin side up. If the coals are "white hot," it is normal for much smoke and steam to occur. A "white hot" bed of coals absorbs much moisture before it will go out.



To finish splitting, place the knife on the center of the breast bone and press down firmly toward the board. This cut is not easy but the breast bone is soft, porous and will cut. Leaving the breast bone in place rather than removing it will help protect the breast meat from excessive drying while cooking.

Turn the broiler halves every 5 to 10 minutes and baste them at each turning. Watch the skin side to prevent skin blistering or it will burn black. Some blistering simply means that the fire is too hot for the turning schedule. If the fire becomes too hot, apply water using a hand sprayer or a pop bottle with a sprinkler head.

Use the basting sauce generously. It helps preserve the meat's natural juices and by using it excessively it controls the heat better. Never let the coals burst into flame. When this happens the meat sometimes catches fire. This causes crustiness and may give the meat an undesirable flavor. When little flames erupt, flick the basting mop or applicator on the meat just above. The fast drip-off of basting material will normally control the flame, although sometimes it is necessary to sprinkle with water for adequate control.

Actual cooking time varies depending on the fire, the pit and the turning and basting schedule. A good job may be completed in as little as 1½ hours. However, 2 hours with less heat gives a juicier product with better flavor.

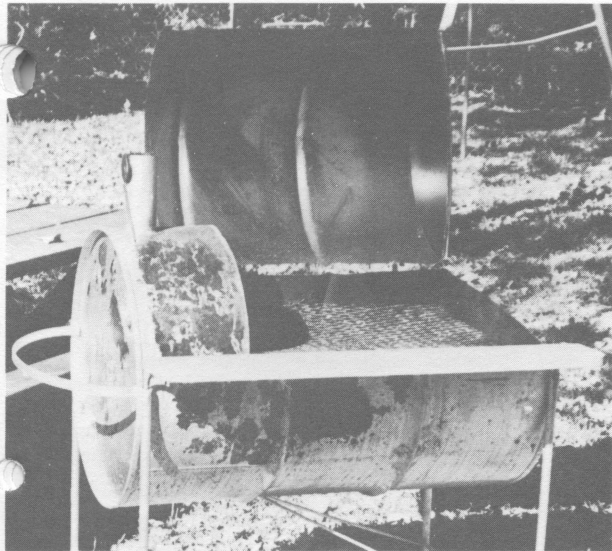
THE FINISHING SAUCE

Apply finishing sauce about 20 to 30 minutes before the meat is done. Prepare enough of the finishing

Small portable pits such as this one are widely available and do an excellent job when used properly. This model has the built-in automatic turner. When the automatic turner is not used, the grill can be adjusted up or down for placing broiler halves desirable distances from coals.

There are many types of pits that can be used for barbecuing. A permanent backyard installation can be the center of activity for family functions.

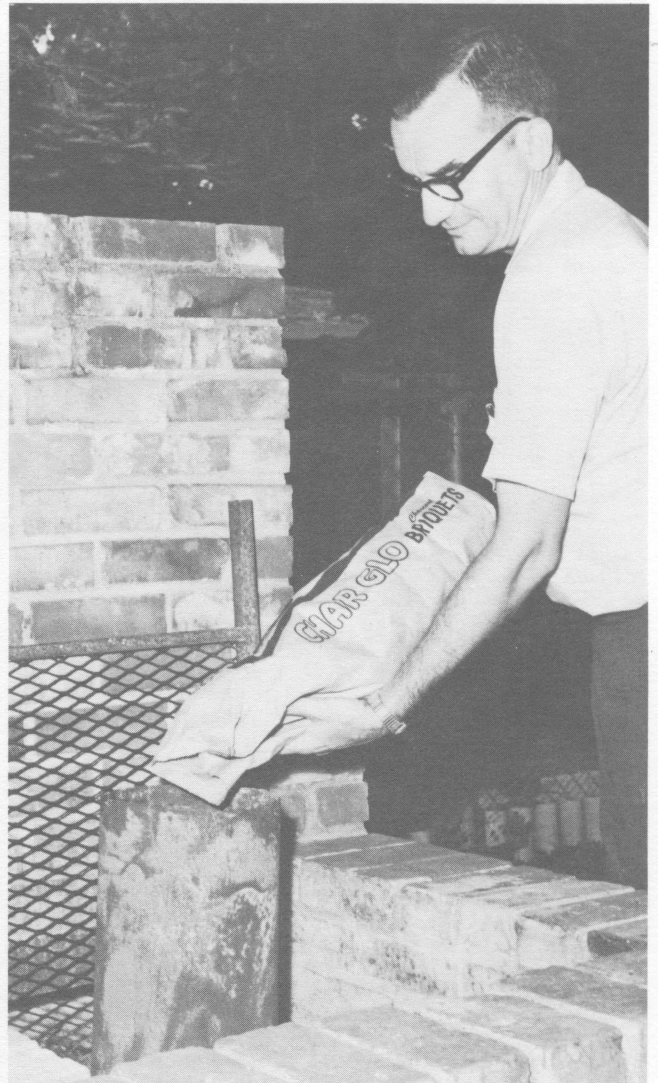


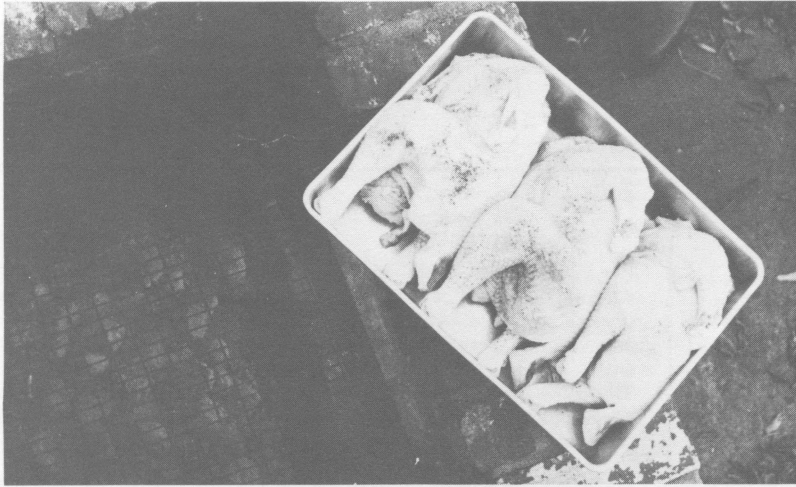


A common 55-gallon drum may be turned into an excellent barbecue pit. Note the pipe which can be welded to the top of the barrel to promote draft for keeping the coals smoldering.

For ease in starting and speed in achieving a glowing fire, a stove pipe may be used as a chimney. The stove pipe is placed on the firebase and filled with the needed amount of charcoal. The pipe is then raised slightly from the firebed (1 to 2 inches) to allow air to enter. Saturate the charcoal with charcoal lighter fluid and ignite. The stove pipe acts as a chimney and creates a good draft to encourage burning. After coals are burning well (10 to 15 minutes) the pipe can be removed with pliers and the coals spread.

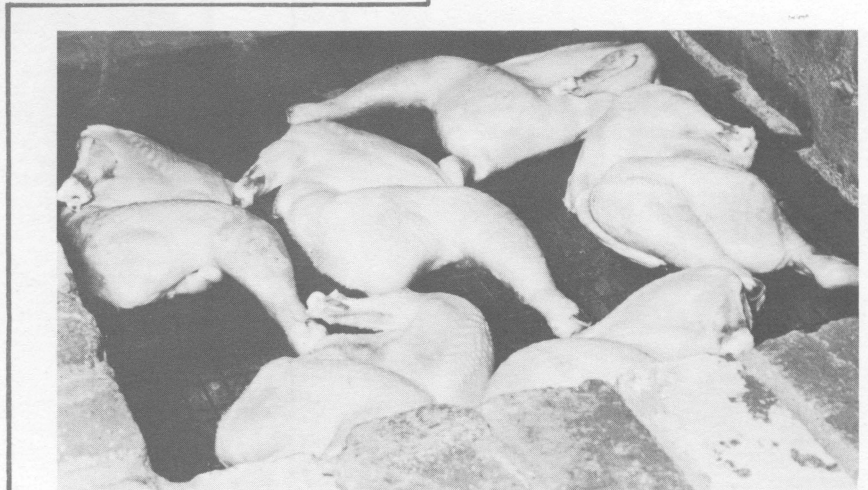
A simple grill or oven rack set over bricks or stones makes a satisfactory barbecuing grill. Notice the heaped charcoal on a nest of newspaper. After saturating with charcoal lighter it is ready to ignite. About 30 minutes later the charcoal will be white hot and may be spread to allow for even heat distribution.





Hot coals, after reaching white hot, glowing stage, are spread and the seasoned broiler halves are ready to be placed on the grill. Place meat on the grill with the skin-side up to begin cooking.

Broiler halves on grill, skin-side up. Apply basting sauce immediately.



sauce to completely cover each broiler half twice. Many finishing sauces are available at your grocery store. Most of these are red in color and have excellent flavor that varies from mild to hot. Use them if you prefer. A tasty finishing sauce may be prepared in your own kitchen. Enough sauce for 10 broiler halves is prepared as follows: 1 cup cooking oil, 1 cup vinegar, 1 cup catsup, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup water. Add salt, tobasco and Worcestershire to taste. Some prefer to use mustard in place of the catsup, but only half the amount should be used. It is always fun to develop a secret recipe. Remember though, not everybody enjoys the highly-seasoned flavor imparted by the finishing sauce. For this reason, cooking some pieces with only basting sauce may be preferred.

TESTS FOR DONENESS

Nothing is quite so rare as undercooked poultry. On the other hand, overcooking tends to dry the meat,

preventing maximum taste and tenderness. When in doubt cook it a little longer. With added experience you can better judge the doneness of the meat.

Some tests which may help determine doneness are:

Twist test—The joint between the thigh and drumstick is usually the last point to cook completely. Grasp the end of the drumstick bone and twist it. If it is loose the meat is done.

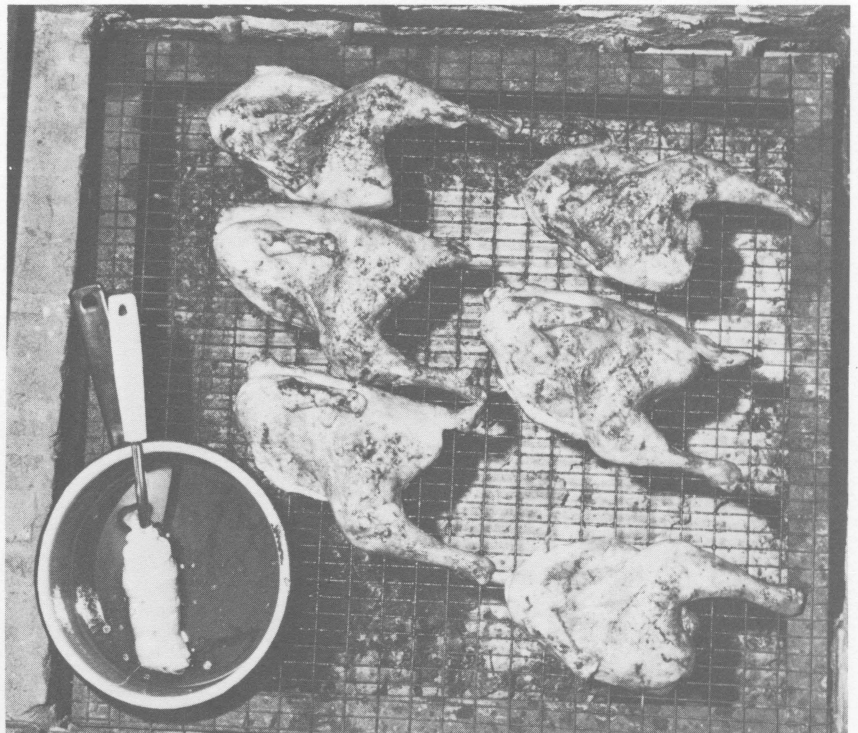
The moisture test—Take the broiler half which looks to be the least done. Using a sharp knife, open the meat and tissue down to the joint where thigh and drumstick meet. If the moisture in the joint runs clear, the meat is done.



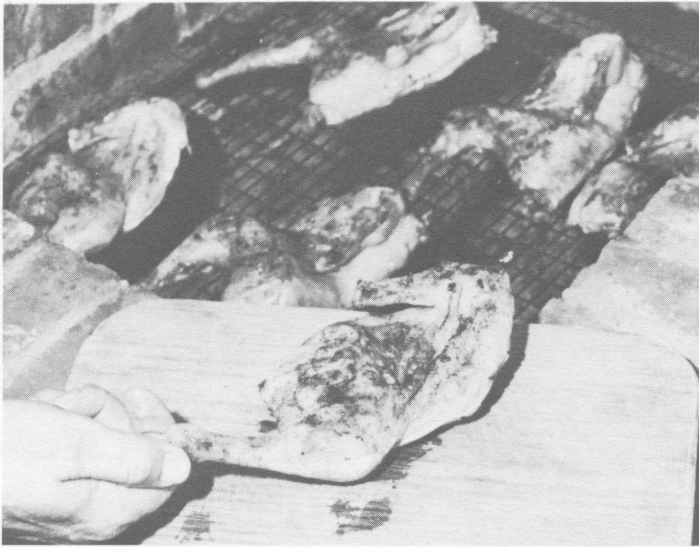
Basting and turning the broiler halves every 5 to 10 minutes is very important to insure evenly cooked, juicy and flavorful meat. Keep the basting sauce hot by placing the pan on the grill between basting.

Serving—Remove some of the halves from the grill at this time and cut them into 2 portions. Most youngsters find quarter servings sufficient and they can have their choice of light or dark meat. Most adults can eat an entire half comfortably.

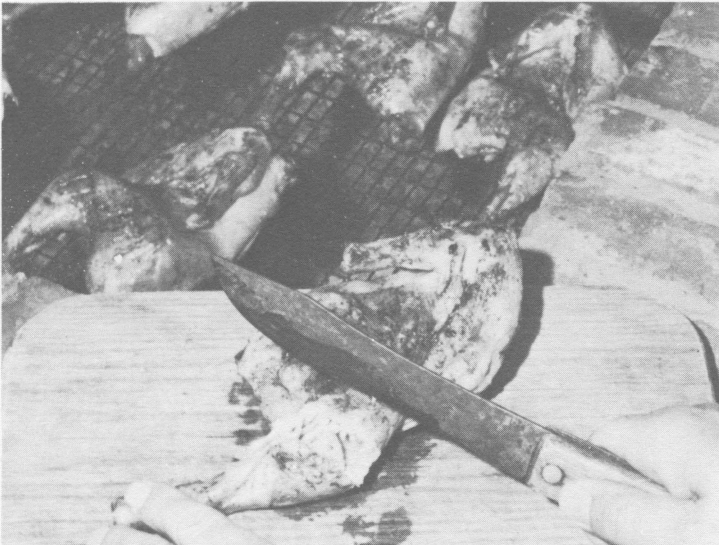
Do not leave meat on the grill for extended periods or it will dry out. A common styrofoam ice chest with tight fitting lid may be used for temporary storage. Be sure the box is clean. Line it with aluminum foil or paper towel material. This keeps the broilers warm and wholesome for at least 2 hours.



Broiler halves are turned and basted frequently. To prevent burning or drying, the basting sauce is used before each turning. Turning is most easily done with tongs. Baste with a brush or dauber.



The twist test—The end of the drumstick is grasped between thumb and forefinger. If the bone turns easily, the broiler is done. When making this test, select the broiler half which appears the least cooked.



The moisture test—Cut into the joint between the drumstick and thigh. If the liquid runs clear or is absent, the broiler is done. If liquid is pink or red, the bird needs more cooking.



Finished broiler ready for serving. The darker-colored halves have had finishing sauce applied, while the lighter-colored ones have not. Most folks like the taste of the spicy finishing sauce. Notice that one half has been quartered to serve the younger members of the household.



Some broiler halves may be quartered for the youngsters or people with smaller appetites. Cut the bird just in front of the thigh. Note that the wing has had the end removed. The last two sections of the wing do not contain much meat and they have been cut off prior to cooking to allow more uniform cooking of the breast.

TRICKS FOR THE CHEF

- Barbecuing offers an opportunity to be original. Try different types of poultry such as turkey, duck, quail, guinea hen or pheasant. Also include other meats for variety.
- Become an authority on seasonings such as herbs, spices, sauces and combinations of seasonings, offered with a flourish in tall decorative shakers.
- Impress guests with large, leafy and colorful salads, garnished with your own secret salad dressing.
- Serve crisp vegetable relishes and help-yourself appetizers.
- Keep menus simple and serve foods hot.
- Serve a boat or pitcher of your finishing sauce with the cooked meat.
- Try marinating the broiler or turkey parts for 2 or 3 hours before cooking.
- Make the clean-up time a cooperative project.



Both broiler halves are ready to eat. The one on the left has been cooked completely with the basting sauce only. The half on the right has been basted with finishing sauce before removal from the grill.

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