FLAVOR MEAT WITH MARINADES

Most are aware that grilling, broiling, baking, and roasting are the preferred preparation methods for meat, fish, and poultry since little to no added fat is required. Anyone who has tasted plain baked chicken, however, can attest to its bland flavor. How to add flavor without increasing calories and fat? Try marinades and spice rubs!

Marinades can tenderize tough and moisten dry cuts of meat. For lean fish, game, and beef, a marinade is a must. Using marinades can stretch your food dollar, also. Tough, less-expensive cuts of meat can be transformed into tender, moist, and flavorful entrees with the help of a marinade.

Marinades are a combination of three ingredients: an acid such as vinegar, tomatoes, buttermilk, yogurt, soy sauce, or citrus juice; oil, and flavorings.

The acid is the tenderizing agent; it breaks down muscle fibers to reduce toughness. The best choices for high-acid marinades include flank and round steaks, and shanks.

Oil adds moisture to the marinated food. The most popular oil used in marinades is olive oil but any oil can be used, depending on taste preference. Try sesame, nut, or herb-flavored oils for a different and distinct flavor.

Sugars are commonly used to flavor marinades. Honey, molasses, and brown or granulated sugar not only lend flavor, but also reduce the sharpness of the marinade’s acid. Basting with a sweetened liquid produces a rich, brown crust but care must be used to prevent burning.

The length of time needed for marinating depends on the acidity of the marinade as well as the flavor and texture of the food to be marinated. For example, fish should set in a lightly flavored marinade that will not overpower it. Due to the delicate texture of fish, marinate no more than 30 minutes. Lean, strongly flavored venison, however, can rest in a highly flavored marinade overnight.

Always keep marinating foods chilled in the refrigerator. If you plan to baste food with the marinade as it cooks, reserve two to three tablespoons for that purpose before marinating. Basting with a marinade that has been in contact with raw meat, poultry, or fish, could mean brushing harmful bacteria onto your food. Likewise, never reuse any marinade.
Rubs are mixtures of several dry spices and herbs that, when mixed, are worked into the surfaces of meat, poultry, or fish using the fingertips. This is an excellent way to add fat-free flavor especially when time is short. Unlike marinades, rubs require no standing time to allow flavors to be absorbed. Once the rub is applied, cooking may begin. Simply grill, broil, or bake your flavored meat, fish, or poultry.

There are numerous spice combinations that work well as a rub. For example, try mixing ground ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon, and allspice to flavor chicken. Crushed black peppercorns, ground coriander, paprika, and thyme can be mixed and rubbed into beef tenderloin or steak. Quantities of each spice are flexible, according to individual taste preference.

The easiest of rubs can be achieved by applying a single dry spice or herb to the surface of meat, poultry, or seafood. For example, rubbing the cut side of a peeled and halved clove of garlic over the surface of beef perks flavor tremendously. You may also try rubbing fresh or dried tarragon over chicken prior to cooking. Let your imagination be your guide.

Whether you marinate or rub your entrees prior to cooking, you are guaranteed a flavorful meal that can be a welcome change to the ordinary. Try the recipes below to get you started and happy dining!

**MYRON’S MARVELOUS MARINADE – For Grilling Beef**
(Myron Martin of Peace Hollow Farm says this marinade is ever evolving. Here is the most recent version which he likes on everything from tenderloin to sirloin steaks. Recipe from July 2014 in the Maryland Grazers Network calendar.)

- 1 cup ketchup
- 1 cup cider
- 3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 6 tablespoons lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons Season-All or seasoned salt
- 3 tablespoons freshly ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons sea salt

Mix together as a marinade and place meat in marinade in refrigerator over night, or just brush it on the meat as you are grilling it. Grill 8 minutes on each side on a hot grill, but with no flames. Cut in half to check for preferred doneness.

**MARINADE FOR CHICKEN**
*This is a favorite family recipe. Whenever I open a can of pineapple I drain off the juice and freeze it so I have on hand since I use the recipe so often.*

- 1 cup water
- 1 cup soy sauce
- 1/2 cup pineapple juice
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon fresh garlic
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger
Combine ingredients and pour over chicken. Marinade for 1 to 4 hours. Discard marinade after use.

Chicken can be grilled or baked at 350°F for 45 minutes or until done. I use both cooking methods to save time. I bake for 20 minutes and transfer to the grill to finish cooking.

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