

Family Living Focus

by
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Seafood Grilling Made Easy

Grilling fish and seafood is a natural and takes literally minutes to cook. It couldn't be easier!

It's a sure cure for that "same old thing" syndrome, too. All fish and seafood species can be grilled, and this incredible variety provides a world of easy-to-prepare grilled meals. Delicious plain or with just a squeeze of lemon, fish and seafood meld perfectly with your favorite herbs, spices, and enticing but healthful marinades and salsas.

• For the charcoal grill, standard briquettes are readily available and work well. Hardwood lump charcoal, which is almost pure carbon, starts quickly and burns very cleanly. Hardwood logs are fun, but unpredictable. Group the briquettes into a pyramid and ignite. When the flame dies

down and coals are covered with gray ash, spread the coals in a single layer with a surface area slightly larger than the food being grilled.

Fish cooks best over a medium-hot fire. Allow 40 minutes after lighting for the flame to die down and glowing coals to develop a light layer of ash. Hint—when you can hold your hand 5 inches above the cooking surface for 3-4 seconds, the fire is ready.

• For the gas or electric grill, turn the heat source on about 10-15 minutes before you want to start grilling so the grill grid has a chance to heat up. Since gas and electric grills do not get as hot as wood or charcoal fires, it is safe to use the highest heat setting when grilling fish or seafood.

• Fish fillets grill 6-12 minutes per inch of thickness. When cooking fillets, tuck the thin

ends under to ensure even cooking. Thicker fillets should be turned once, while thinner ones will cook through without needing to be turned. Some cooks like to place fillets on aluminum foil that has been punctured to allow air flow, while others prefer using hinged wire baskets or fine-mesh wire grills oiled slightly before use.

• Before grilling a whole fish, make 3 deep cuts with a knife diagonally along each side to ensure even cooking. You can flip smaller whole fish with a large spatula, but any fish over 2 pounds should be cooked in a hinged wire mesh basket, oiled slightly before use. Follow the rule of 6-12 minutes per inch thickness, checking the interior for doneness periodically after the initial cooking time has elapsed.

• Clams, oysters, and mussels provide their own timers, popping open when they're done. Wash them, put them on the grill, cover and check after 5 minutes. When the shells pop open (usually between 5-8 minutes), they're ready to eat. If any fail to open, discard them.

The mild flavors of fish and seafood are perfect for marinades, relishes, salsas, and spices. Here are some basic ideas, but feel free to explore your own. There really is no "right" or "wrong" — only what

tastes delicious to you.

Marinate fish up to six hours, covered, in the refrigerator, turning every hour or so. The longer fish marinates, the more flavor it will absorb. Drain fish before grilling; discard leftover marinade.

For a fresh, summery taste, simply marinate fillets of fish with a higher fat content such as mackerel, bluefish, or kingfish, in lime juice (3 tablespoons juice per pound of fish) for 1 hour,

sprinkle with pepper to taste, and grill.

From delicate and mild to hot and wild, there is no limit to the relishes and salsas for fish and seafood. Take a tip from the topics and combine fish and shellfish with fruit; or use fresh tomatoes and herbs from the garden.

So, start up the fire, sit back, and get ready to enjoy one of nature's great tastes — seafood on the grill.

Cooking For A Crowd

DAUPHIN (Dauphin Co.) — Are you a member of a church group, fire company, or public service organization that occasionally serves meals to a crowd?

Do you volunteer to prepare or serve food at family reunions, banquets, festivals, pancake breakfasts, pig roasts, soup kitchens, or day cares?

If the answer is yes, you should attend the Penn State Cooperative Extension workshop **Serving Safe Food For A Crowd**. This three-hour workshop is being offered twice this summer — on Tuesday, July 14, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. and again on Tuesday, July 21 from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Dauphin County Ag & Natural Resources Center, located two miles north of Dauphin on Route

225 at 1451 Peters Mountain Road.

The workshop will be a refresher on the basics of safe food handling. It is designed especially for volunteers who prepare, serve or otherwise handle food at any event. It could make the difference between a great fund-raiser or social activity, and a food poisoning outbreak that could damage your group's reputation and finances. The registration fee is \$5 which includes a manual, handouts and refreshments. Registration deadline is July 7.

For more information or a registration form contact Penn State Cooperative Extension in Dauphin County at (717) 921-8803, or 1-800-DAU-0058 and ask the operator for Penn State Extension.

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