

CHEF'S CORNER

Outdoor dining adds spice to hikes, open-air concerts



My family and I love living in Central Oregon. We love the snowy winters, but we especially love it when the snow melts and the summer sun begins to warm the ground. The trees start to show all their beautiful leaves, and those of us without allergies welcome the smell of juniper and sage that perfumes the air. I know then that it's time to plant the flowers in pots on the deck and clean up the barbecue for summer grilling.

We've lived in Bend for the past five years, and every summer we look for a new place to explore. We never run out of new mountains to climb or a secluded lake to enjoy. One of our favorite ways to spend a sunny Sunday is to pack a lunch and head out for an all-day hike. We find a spot to stop and enjoy our lunch and throw a stick into a river or lake for our dog, Ruthie, to fetch. Central Oregon is a great place to live. In the summer it's almost like being on vacation every day!


The summer also brings lots of outdoor concerts to Bend. A warm summer night is the perfect time to be outside on a blanket in the grass having a nosh and listening to some great music.

A sandwich, a bag of chips or some cheese and crackers might be OK, but I like to make it even better by creating something a bit more special. Here are some great tips for easy and delicious outdoor dining:

- Bring a small tablecloth or a couple of placemats to put under your food – it just looks so much prettier, and we all know we eat first with our eyes!
- Put individual servings of salad, fruit or dessert in screw-top mason jars. Everyone has his or her own serving, and the jars come home and go straight into the dishwasher.
- Cloth napkins add a nice touch and there is much less paper to throw away.
- Sliced chicken breast or smoked fish can be packed separately in a larger container

to add to salads or put between slices of chewy baguette for a sandwich.

- Pack creative sandwich sauces like salsa verde, store-bought pesto, or this roasted red pepper romesco sauce. They add lots of great flavor without the risk of going bad in the heat like mayonnaise.
- Bamboo skewers are great for serving these grilled chicken thighs, cubed fresh fruit or a Caprese salad of cherry tomato, mozzarella and basil. Serve these foods right on the stick to eliminate the need for a plate.
- Pack a plastic bag with a few dampened paper towels for sticky fingers or cleaning up a spill.

And here is a great tip to start off your summer of grilling: I hate the job of cleaning the grill for the season, so this year I packed up my dirty cast iron grill racks and took them to a company that does machine sandblasting. In a couple of days, I picked them up and fired up my barbecue. Talk about money well spent! 



Lisa Glickman is a private chef and lives in Bend. She is a contributing writer and teacher and also does a weekly cooking segment for COTV's "Good Morning Central Oregon." She can be reached via email through her website at lisa@lisaglickman.com.

Grilled Marinated Chicken Thighs with Basil

For the marinade:

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 8 boneless chicken thighs
- 8 leaves fresh basil

Bamboo skewers that have been soaked in water

Place marinade ingredients in a small saucepan and bring to a boil. Turn down heat and simmer for five to 10 minutes until it is a syrupy consistency. Cool marinade. Place chicken thighs in a shallow glass baking dish and coat with half of the marinade. Let chicken thighs marinate in refrigerator for at least an hour. Place each chicken thigh flat on work surface. Place a basil leaf on each thigh and roll up to enclose basil leaf. Thread thighs onto bamboo skewers. Heat grill to medium high. Grill thighs over direct heat until brown on all sides. Move thighs to cool side of grill and continue to cook covered until cooked through, basting with additional marinade, for an additional 30 to 40 minutes. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Roasted Red Pepper Romesco

- 4 dried ancho chiles
- 2 cups boiling-hot water
- 1 large red onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 3 garlic cloves, peeled
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ⅓ cup Marcona almonds*
- 1 cup bread cubes from Italian or French loaf
- 4 bottled piquillo peppers**
- 1 teaspoon smoked Spanish paprika
- ¼ cup sherry vinegar
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ⅛ teaspoon salt

Cover chiles with boiling-hot water and soak until softened, about 30 minutes.

Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 400 °F.

While chiles soak, toss onion and garlic with 2 tablespoons olive oil in a shallow baking pan, then spread out evenly and roast until golden, 15 to 20 minutes. Stir in almonds and bread cubes and roast until almonds are golden, about 10 minutes. Drain soaked chiles in a sieve set over a small bowl and reserve soaking water. Discard stems and seeds.

Blend soaked chiles, roasted bread mixture, piquillo peppers, paprika, vinegar, extra-virgin olive oil and salt until smooth, adding reserved chile water, 1 tablespoon at a time, to thin to desired consistency.

*Marcona almonds are a Spanish almond found at most better grocery stores.

**Piquillo peppers are a Spanish roasted red pepper. Regular roasted peppers may be substituted.



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