

SUMMER GRILLING

As temps heat up, so will the desire to cook outdoors.
The host of 'Man Fire Food' shows you how to do so effortlessly.

by CHARLOTTE LYONS

ROGER MOOKING IS A CHEF, television personality and cookbook author who can be seen heating things up on *Man Fire Food*, which airs on the Cooking Channel and teaches audiences inventive ways to cook using custom-made grills and small campfires.

The show features Mooking as he visits home cooks, pit masters and chefs who love both fire and food. And the 44-year-old chef, who studied at George Brown College of Hospitality in Toronto, likes to prepare an assortment of dishes, such as grilled octopus. Once when he was in Texas, he served the seafood to a group of serious meat eaters—and they loved it.

No matter how nontraditional some of his dishes may be, the author of *Everyday Exotic: The Cookbook* would not classify his cooking style as fusion.

“Not really, because I grew up eating and cooking all types of food from around the world,” he says. “Because of my diverse family. They came from the Caribbean, Africa, China, Spain, Europe and Canada.”

Mooking, part Chinese and part Caribbean, was born in Trinidad and moved to Canada at age 5. His love of cooking came honestly; his family was in the restaurant business, and his mother introduced him to European flavors. She would prepare recipes passed on by her Ukrainian neighbors. It was not unusual for him to eat three different types of cuisines in one day, from pancakes to roti.

“From age 3, I knew I wanted to pursue food for my life,” Mooking says. “I’m not sure how I knew it, but it was clear.”

Naturally, he gravitated to cooking with fire. The backyard is where Mooking creates many masterpieces, and he believes people should not be intimidated by cooking outdoors, whether it’s on an open flame or a Weber grill.

As far as trends, “I see more and more live-fire cooking,” says the chef. “Lots of restaurants and hotels are grilling over live fire. People are always looking for more reasons to cook and be outside and try new cooking techniques.”

When not setting food to flame, Mooking and his wife, Leslie, enjoy meals with their four beautiful daughters. Dinnertime is always an adventure in their household, as the family enjoys international cuisine with a twist. For instance, the meal might include his Sichuan Peppercorn Steak with Green Onions, Grilled Corn with Five Spice and Lime, and Chicken with Papaya Barbecue Sauce.

Get out your grill, and try these delicious recipes:



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE COOKING CHANNEL



CHICKEN WITH PAPAYA BARBECUE SAUCE

Marinade

Seeds of 1 large papaya
1 clove garlic, minced
Zest and juice of 1 lime
Zest and juice of 1
lemon
1/4 cup canned coconut
cream, skimmed from
the top of the can
2 tablespoons freshly
chopped cilantro leaves
1 tablespoon minced
fresh ginger
4 boneless, skinless
chicken breasts

Chicken

1 tablespoon vegeta-
ble oil, plus more as
needed
1/4 cup Papaya
Barbecue Sauce (recipe
follows)
1/4 cup Spiced Cashew
Nuts, coarsely chopped
(recipe follows)
1 tablespoon fresh
cilantro leaves for
garnish, optional

Papaya Barbecue Sauce

1 tablespoon vegetable
oil
1 sweet onion, finely
diced
3/4 cup sugar
1 Scotch bonnet pep-
per, seeded, deveined
and quartered
Zest and juice of 2
limes
Zest and juice of 1
lemon
1 cup water
1/2 cup seasoned rice
wine vinegar
5 cups large diced
papaya
2 teaspoons kosher salt

Spiced Cashew Nuts

1 teaspoon butter
1/2 cup unsalted
cashews
Pinch ground paprika
Pinch kosher salt

Directions

Chicken:

For the marinade: In a bowl, combine the papaya seeds, garlic, lime zest, lime juice, lemon juice, coconut cream, cilantro and ginger; mix thoroughly. Add the chicken breasts to the bowl, and toss to coat in the marinade. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap, and place in the refrigerator to marinate for a minimum of 1 hour or up to 24 hours.

Heat a grill over medium-high heat, and lightly grease the grate with oil. Remove the chicken from the marinade and lay the breasts on the hot grill. Discard the marinade. Baste each chicken breast with 2 tablespoons of Papaya Barbecue Sauce and continue grilling, turning once and basting occasionally with the remaining sauce, until the meat is cooked through. Transfer the chicken to a serving platter, and garnish with the chopped Spiced Cashew Nuts and cilantro leaves, if using.

Papaya Barbecue Sauce:

Heat the oil in a pot over medium heat and add in the onion. Cook until the onions are translucent, stirring continuously to ensure the pieces do not brown. Sprinkle the sugar, Scotch bonnet, lime zest and lemon zest over the onions, and stir until the sugar dissolves. Pour in the lime juice, lemon juice, water and vinegar. Bring the ingredients to a boil. Add in the diced papaya and adjust the seasonings with the salt, if desired. Bring the mixture to a boil again, reduce the heat and allow the mixture to simmer for 15 minutes. Take the pan off the heat, and let the mixture cool slightly. Carefully transfer the mixture to a blender, and puree the sauce until smooth. Transfer the barbecue sauce to a bowl, and set aside.

Spiced Cashew Nuts:

In a small frying pan, melt the butter over medium heat. Drop the cashews into the pan and toast until golden brown. Remove the pan from the heat, then sprinkle with the paprika and salt, and gently toss to coat.

SICHUAN PEPPERCORN STEAK WITH GRILLED GREEN ONIONS

Sichuan Peppercorn Spice Mix

3 tablespoons black peppercorns
3 tablespoons Sichuan peppercorns
2 tablespoons dried papaya seeds, optional

Sichuan Peppercorn Crusted Steak

4 (8-ounce) beef strip loins, at room temperature
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
Kosher salt

Grilled Green Onions

2 bunches green onions, roots removed
1 tablespoon vegetable oil, plus more for greasing the grill grate
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions

For the spice mix:

Place the black peppercorns into a mortar and pestle, and grind. Add in the Sichuan peppercorns and papaya seeds, if using, and grind. Transfer the spice mix to a container.

For the steak:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Heat a cast iron pan or skillet over high heat.

Press the Sichuan peppercorn spice mix into all of the sides of the steaks, coating entirely and ensuring the spices adhere to the meat. Add the vegetable oil to the cast iron pan and heat. Season the steaks with salt to taste.

Once the pan is smoking hot, add the steaks. Sear the steaks for 2 minutes or until golden. Do not move. Turn the steaks over and transfer the pan to the preheated oven for 5 minutes or until desired degree of doneness. Remove the pan from the oven, turn over the steaks and set them aside. Before serving, allow the meat to rest for 10 minutes so the juices redistribute.

For the onions:

Heat a grill over medium-high heat, and lightly grease the grates with oil. Toss the green onions in the vegetable oil, and season them with salt and pepper to taste. Grill the green onions for 1 minute. Flip the onions over, and continue cooking for 1 minute or until onions have softened and are slightly charred.



GRILLED CORN WITH FIVE-SPICE AND LIME

Ingredients

4 ears corn, husked
2 limes, halved
1 tablespoon five-spice powder
Kosher salt

Directions

Preheat a grill to medium-high, and lightly oil the grate. Arrange the corn on the grates, and let them cook through and char, turning frequently, approximately 15 minutes. Rub the grilled corn with the limes and season with five-spice powder, then salt to taste.

SUREFIRE GRILLING TIPS

- Try something different, such as using wood instead of charcoal.
- Use both direct and indirect heat, according to what you cook. If you are cooking a steak, use direct heat. But if you are cooking something such as chicken or ribs, use indirect heat.
- Depending on the weather and the wind, you may have to make adjustment to your cook time.
- Invest in a must-have grilling tool, such as long-handled tongs.