

Cooking 101: Reasons to marinate your meats

Protein is marinated for two reasons. First of all, to add flavour. Second, to tenderize it. I say protein, because not only do we marinate beef, pork, lamb and chicken, but also fish.

A marinade has three main ingredients: an acid, which helps breakdown the protein— so this could be citrus juice, wine or vinegar. A fat, which helps moisturize the protein— usually an oil of some kind. And, last but not least, the flavouring ingredients— so this could be the zest of the citrus, garlic, herbs, spices, hot peppers, etc. A marinade does not usually have salt in it, because if the protein will be in the marinade for a long period of time, the salt will toughen it.

Delicate foods like fish and seafood are already tender, so they are really only marinating for flavour and should not be marinated for more than an hour or so. Chicken needs to marinate for two to eight hours, depending on the cut you are using and the flavourings in the marinade. If it is left to marinate for too long, the meat can become pasty in texture (because the protein has broken down too much) or the flavourings could overpower the taste of the meat. Beef and pork can marinate for four hours to two days, depending on the cut of meat being used.

All marinating should happen in the refrigerator— do not leave it on the counter!

The easiest way to marinate is to put the marinade and the meat into a resealable plastic bag and seal it up tight! Lay it flat in the fridge. Periodically, you can turn the whole bag over so that all sides of the meat are getting equal exposure to the marinade. I often put marinating meat into the freezer— so that it makes a quick meal— you just thaw and cook the meat, the marinating is already done!

Once you have used the marinade for the meat, it

Lori Gysel & Gerry Kentner



should be discarded. Technically, you can bring the marinade to a boil on the stove to kill any bacteria and then use it as a sauce, but I prefer the “better safe than sorry” approach and just get rid of it. If you want some of the marinade for a sauce, make a double batch— use half to

marinate the meat and half to turn into a sauce!

A properly marinated, inexpensive cut of meat can be more flavourful than an unmarinated, expensive cut. So, the next time you are buying meat, leave the pork tenderloin on the shelf and try buying a whole pork roast. Cut into cubes (large enough for a bite or two), marinate it in a homemade marinade for the day, then grill it up for dinner— see what you think. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at how tender and tasty it is— and less expensive!

Have fun and keep cooking!

Lori and Gerry can be reached at whatscookin@independentfreepress.com

Flank Steak with Asian Marinade

Ingredients

- 1 lb flank steak
- 3 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 1/2 tbsp fish sauce
- 3 tbsp lime juice
- 4 tsp minced ginger root
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tbsp dry sherry (or red wine)
- 1/2 tsp curry paste
- 1/2 tsp sesame oil



Method

1. Place steak in a resealable plastic bag.
2. Whisk together remainder of ingredients and pour into bag with meat.
3. Seal bag securely and shake around to ensure meat is all

covered.

4. Place in refrigerator and marinate for at least 8 hours, or as much as 24 hours. Turn the bag occasionally to ensure all meat gets marinated.

5. After marinating, remove meat from the bag and grill over a medium heat barbecue until desired doneness. Medium rare should take about 10 minutes.

6. Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, heat marinade until boiling.

7. Once meat is done, allow to rest for 10 minutes.

8. To serve, slice meat thinly on the bias. Serve with a spoonful of the marinade over top.

**Note: it is important that the meat has a chance to rest after cooking and it is very important that this meat is sliced thin and on the bias otherwise it will seem tough. This meat is delicious on its own or over a salad or on a crusty bun.

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