

Prime Cuts Recipes

Fire Up the Grill for the Start of Summer

Few things mark the official start of summer more than lighting the grill and inviting some friends over for a backyard barbecue. With grilling season upon us once again, the following recipe for "Grilled Tri Tip with Black Olive Aioli" from Bill Niman and Janet Fletcher's "The Niman Ranch Cookbook" (Ten Speed Press) is sure to be a hit at your first barbecue of the summer.

Grilled Tri Tip with Black Olive Aioli Serves 4 to 6

1 tri tip steak, 2 1/2 pounds
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons fresh rosemary leaves, chopped
1 tablespoon freshly cracked black pepper
1/4 cup finely chopped pitted oil-cured black olives
1 cup aioli (see below)
1 tablespoon coarse sea salt
Cayenne pepper

Place the steak in a small, nonreactive baking dish. Combine the olive oil, rosemary and black pepper in a small bowl and stir well. Rub the mixture evenly over the tri tip. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 8 hours or up to 24 hours.

Remove the tri tip from the refrigerator 11/2 hours before cooking.

Prepare and light a charcoal grill for direct cooking.

Add the olives to the aioli and season with cayenne.

When the grill is at its hottest (when the coals are red and glowing and too hot to hold your hand over the grill for more than a couple of seconds), remove the tri tip from the marinade, wipe off any excess marinade, and season on both sides with sea salt. Place the steak on the cooking grate directly over the coals, cover the grill, and cook, turning once, for about 20 minutes, or until a thermometer inserted into the thickest part reads 130 F for medium rare. Transfer to a cutting board and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes.

Cut the tri tip into thin slices across the grain and arrange on a platter. Serve with aioli.



CAPTION: With grilling season on the horizon once again, a classic such as "Grilled Tri Tip with Black Olive Aioli" is sure to be a crowd pleaser.

Aioli Makes about 1 cup

1 small clove garlic
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
2 egg yolks
1 cup olive oil

To make by hand, chop the garlic and salt together on a cutting board until a paste forms. Transfer to a deep mixing bowl and wrap a damp towel around the base of the bowl to keep it from sliding around the counter as you work. Whisk in the mustard, lemon juice and egg yolks. While whisking continuously and vigorously, add the olive oil in a slow, thin, steady stream until all of it has been incorporated and the mixture is thick and completely emulsified.

To make the aioli in a food processor, place the garlic and salt in the work bowl and process to chop as finely as possible. Add the mustard and lemon juice and pulse to combine. Add the egg yolks and, with the motor running, add the olive oil in a slow, thin, steady stream until all of it has been incorporated and the mixture is thick and completely emulsified.

Cover and refrigerate for up to 24 hours until needed.

Start Off With Salad

Though family gatherings around the dinner table aren't as much of a tradition as they once were, that doesn't mean families can't enjoy some quality meal time together. While the entree is still cooking, consider the following starter for "Antipasto Salad" from Joy Manning and Tara Mataraza Desmond's "Almost Meatless: Recipes That Are Better for Your Health and the Planet" (Ten Speed Press) to get things going around your dinner table.

Antipasto Salad Serves 4 to 6

1 head garlic
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon water
2 red bell peppers

Balsamic Vinaigrette
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/2 teaspoon honey
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
Pinch of kosher salt

Salad

1 small head escarole, chopped or torn
1 small head red leaf lettuce, chopped or torn
2 ounces (sweet or hot) sliced soppressata, cut into small strips or chunks
1/2 cup thinly sliced red onion
1/2 cup chopped artichoke hearts
1/3 cup pitted Sicilian (or your favorite variety) olives, chopped
2 medium tomatoes, cut into 1/2-inch dice, or 1/2 cup slow roasted tomatoes
2 ounces provolone, cut into 1/4-inch dice (about 1/4 cup)

2 ounces mozzarella, cut into 1/4-inch dice (about 1/4 cup)
Freshly ground black pepper
Italian bread, sliced

To roast the garlic and peppers, preheat the oven to 450 F. Cut the head of garlic in half horizontally. Place on a piece of aluminum foil (about 6 inches long) and fold up the sides to make a vessel. Pour the olive oil and water over both halves of the garlic, and fold and pinch the foil sides, making a pouch to enclose the garlic. Transfer the garlic pouch and the 2 bell peppers to a rimmed baking sheet and into the oven. Roast for 45 minutes, turning a few times to blacken evenly.

When the garlic and peppers finish roasting, transfer the peppers to a bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Let them rest until they are cool enough to handle. Then peel and discard the blackened skins and slice them into strips. Let the garlic cool and then pop the cloves out of their skins.

To make the vinaigrette, whisk together the vinegar, mustard, honey, and a pinch of salt. Add the olive oil and whisk until an emulsion forms.

To assemble the salad, toss the lettuces, soppressata, onion, artichoke hearts, olives, tomatoes, and cheeses together in a large bowl. Add the bell peppers and the garlic cloves. Drizzle the vinaigrette over the salad and toss to coat and combine. Season with freshly ground black pepper and serve on a large platter with slices of Italian bread.

Dessert Fit for the Diner

Meals are not truly complete until dessert has been served. Before pushing yourself away from the table at your next get-together or family meal, serve up the following "Devil's Food Counter Cake with 7-Minute Frosting" from Jennifer Joyce's "Diner" (Ryland, Peters & Small).

Devil's Food Counter Cake with 7-Minute Frosting Serves 8 to 10

11/2 cups boiling water
1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
4 eggs (at room temperature)
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
3 1/2 cups cake flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking soda
2 1/4 cups sugar
11/2 cups unsalted butter, softened
7-minute frosting
11/4 cups sugar
2 egg whites (room temperature)
11/2 tablespoons light corn syrup
1/4 teaspoon cream of tartar
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease the cake pans and line them with waxed paper. Grease the paper, then dust with flour, and shake off any excess.

Beat together the boiling water and cocoa in a medium bowl until smooth. Let cool until it is at room temperature. When it is cool, beat together the eggs, vanilla extract and 1/3 cup of the cocoa mixture.

Sift the flour, salt and baking soda into the bowl of an electric mixer, and stir in the sugar. Mix on low speed for 30 seconds, then add the softened butter and remaining cocoa li-

quid. Mix on low speed, then turn up to medium and beat for 11/2 minutes. Add the egg mixture in three batches, beating each one for 30 seconds. Don't overbeat or the cake will be heavy. Scrape the batter into the cake pans and smooth the surfaces.

Put two cakes in the middle of the oven and one in the lower part. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes or until a skewer inserted into the center of the cake comes out clean. Rotate the cakes halfway through cooking. Let cool in the pans for 10 minutes, then turn out onto wire racks, remove the paper and let cool completely. Wrap in plastic wrap for up to two days before frosting.

To make the frosting, put 6 tablespoons water and all ingredients except the vanilla extract in a large glass bowl. Put the bowl over a saucepan of simmering water (the bottom of the bowl shouldn't touch the water). Beat with an electric beater on high speed for 7 minutes. Remove from the heat, add the vanilla extract and beat for 2 minutes more, until stiff and glossy.

Put one cake onto a plate. Secure the cake with a bit of frosting underneath. Top with about 1/2 cup of the frosting. Place another cake on top and spread another 1/2 cup of frosting over. Top with the last cake, frost the sides and finish with the top. Use the back of a spoon to create peaks in the frosting. The cake can sit, covered, at room temperature for up to two days.

Effortless Cooking for Those on the Go

Everyone loves a home-cooked meal. Unfortunately, most people don't have the time or the energy to prepare a home-cooked meal too often. Such was the case with British food columnist Diana Henry, who sought more than just quick cooking. Henry, author of "Pure Simple Cooking" (Ten Speed Press), wanted effortless cooking. So she set about creating a cookbook that provided just that: a collection of classic recipes enhanced with simple food and fresh ingredients, such as the following recipe for "Chermoula Lamb with Hot Pepper and Carrot Puree."

Chermoula Lamb with Hot Pepper and Carrot Puree Serves 4

Chermoula

6 tablespoons olive oil
11/2 teaspoons ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon sweet paprika
1 medium fresh red chile, seeded and finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, crushed
Finely grated zest and juice of 1 lime
Leaves from 1 small bunch of cilantro, chopped
Small handful of fresh flat-leaf pars-



Chermoula Lamb with Hot Pepper and Carrot Puree

ley leaves, chopped
Salt and pepper
1 (3 lb.) butterflied leg of lamb (boned weight), trimmed of excess fat

Pepper and Carrot Puree

2 red bell peppers, halved and seeded
1/4 cup olive oil
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 lb. carrots, chopped
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper or paprika

2 tablespoons heavy cream
Salt and pepper

1. Mix all the chermoula ingredients together. Pierce the meat all over on both sides with a sharp knife and put in a roasting pan. Pour on the chermoula and rub it all over, making sure it gets into the little cuts. Cover with plastic wrap and marinate in the refrigerator; a couple of hours is fine, but overnight is better.

2. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Put the peppers in a roasting pan, drizzle with olive oil and vinegar, and season with salt and pepper. Roast for 45 minutes, until soft. Meanwhile, barely cover the carrots with water and boil on the stovetop until soft. Drain and keep the cooking liquid. Increase the oven to 450 F.

3. Puree the peppers and their cooking juices with the carrots and cayenne, adding enough of the carrot cooking liquid to create a smooth puree. Add the cream, if using.

4. Roast the lamb, flesh-side down, for 15 minutes. Turn the heat down to 400 F and roast for 15 minutes. Cover with aluminum foil and a couple of kitchen towels and leave to rest for 10 minutes.

Carve and serve with the puree.