

Grilling with Herbs

In Montana, we like our fires in grills, not in the land around us. Many will grill year-round to get that great flavor. We did a little research online to collect some of the best ideas on using fresh and dried herbs on the barbee.

Summertime can be short around here to be able to use fresh herbs, but so rewarding. We liked this list of 7 unexpected ways to use fresh herbs on the grill.

Meat Skewers: Not all herbs are tough enough to be used as skewers however rosemary is a very “stalky” herb and is perfect for skewers of beef, chicken and lamb. Soak stalks first so they do not catch on fire while grilling.

Baster: Bunches of thyme, oregano, tarragon and rosemary also make excellent basters. If you give them a bit of a pounding with the butt of a knife you will release the oils and as you baste with your favourite marinade, sauce or glaze some of the flavour can be passed onto the meat or veggies you are grilling.

Herb Bed: If you are slow cooking meat and want to infuse more flavour you can create a bed of herbs to help keep the meat from charring. You must first soak the herbs and then place them directly onto the grill. Lay the meat on top and when it comes time to flip the meat check the herbs and see how they look. If they seem too charred remove them and replace them with a new batch in order to avoid getting too smoky or charred a flavour on the meat. Rosemary and thyme work well for this but you can also do a blend of herbs using woodier ones on the bottom and then layering more delicate leaves such as sage or basil on top just beneath the meat.

Smoking: If you have a charcoal barbecue you can soak herbs such as rosemary, thyme, oregano and tarragon in water and then place them directly on the coals for a subtle hint of their smokier flavour. Make sure you soak them or they will catch fire which will of course ruin your meal.

Parchment Paper Packed Veggies: For an easy, no fuss infusion of fresh herb flavours, place the herb(s) of your choice in parchment paper packs with mixed veggies. Add olive oil and any mix of vegetables (we like corn, jalapenos with fresh cilantro and red pepper, zucchini and eggplant with fresh basil). Once grilled, you can just remove the bunch of herbs before serving.

Stuffed Whole Fish: For the perfect flavouring for whole grilled fish stuff bunches of fresh lemon thyme, lemon slices and shallots into the belly and place on the grill.

Baby Potatoes: Gently par boil baby red potatoes in their skins until they just give to a fork. Use the sturdiest rosemary stems you can find and thread three or four potatoes onto the stems like a shish kebob (Once threaded you can add an actual bamboo skewer for support). Brush them with olive oil and place them onto the grill to get a nice golden char and then sprinkle with cracked pepper and sea salt.

As you can see fresh herbs are very versatile and can be added in a number of ways to infuse your grilled and barbecued meals with exceptional summer fresh flavour.

Tip: No matter how you use the herbs be certain to give them a quick pounding to release the oils for more intense flavour. <http://recipegeek.com/food-talk/foodie-files/6-unexpected-ways-use-herbs-grill>

Make a marinade or basting sauce: There are lots of recipes on this that have these main components in common to make about 2 cups: 1/2 cup chopped fresh herbs, 1/3 cup acid (vinegar, lemon, lime juice), 1teaspoon salt (or soy sauce, salt substitute) 1 teaspoon pepper (red or black) 1 teaspoon chopped garlic. Put all into a glass container in this order to best release all the flavors. Choose herbs that pair with your meat or veggies and be sure to set a little aside for a drizzle after.

If you want to use herbs year round, or just like the convenience, some of the best ways to use dried herbs on the “barbee” is to:

Make a rub: Simply take your favorite herb blend (preferably chunky or hand crushed), add salt, pepper and garlic at about 1/4 teaspoon to each tablespoon of blend. Rub some fat (oil or melted butter) on your food. Then rub evenly on top of your meat or under the skin of fish or poultry. You can sprinkle it over and toss veggies and smaller food pieces. You may want to crush or blend your mix to release the flavors better for short grilling times of some foods.

Make a Marinade: Use the same proportions as the marinade above but use 1/3 the amount of herbs (3 tablespoons).

The ratio between fat and acid is subjective and often the source of much controversy. Generally, only a small amount of acid is needed and a ratio of 3:1 oil to acid is often used. Too much acid or too much time exposed to the acidic marinade can cause more tender cuts to become mushy. <https://www.thespruceeats.com/anatomy-of-a-marinade-1328682>

Make a Drizzle, Sauce or Dipping Oil: For your grilled meat and veggies, put 1 and 1/2 tablespoons each dried herbs and vinegar or lemon juice in a bowl then add 1 cup Olive or light oil for veggies or a sour cream/cream chees mix, or plain yogurt for a creamier sauce or dip.

Whatever you do, have fun and success with these tips for some great eats with fire and food!