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Rockin' Ronnie's Barbecue Times

Improving the quality of your Barbecue Lifestyle.



Photo courtesy Bryan O'Connor

Issue #4, September, 2005

Barbecue is on fire!

Welcome to the fourth edition of ***Rockin' Ronnie's Barbecue Times***. I hope you've had a great summer filled with family, friends, food and fun. Have you noticed? Barbecue has really hit the big time in North America, with new restaurants springing up everywhere from Salmon Arm to New York City. In back yards across the continent, cooks have been busy tending charcoal and hardwood fires to the delight of their guests. And if folks ain't cookin' real barbecue, they're grilling up a storm on cookers that seem to get fancier and more expensive every day.

As you'll see from this edition, I've never been busier. I had hoped to get this issue out sooner, but it was not to be. What a year it's been! My first cookbook, *Barbecue Secrets*, is now in its fourth printing, and I've had an action-packed schedule of cooking classes, workshops and media appearances in Calgary, Kelowna and Vancouver. Now I'm hunkering down to write my next book, ***Planking Secrets***, which will be out next spring. Enjoy this edition of ***BT***. I hope it lights a friendly fire under you! Here goes....

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Rib Tickler

*“How do you steam a clam? Make fun of its parents.”
- Harry Cole, age 9*

Ronnie's Barbecue BLOG

HELP! Recipes Wanted!

I'm up to my neck in cookbook number two and I'm looking for tasty recipes. My next book, ***Planking Secrets: How to Cook With Wooden Planks for Unbeatable Barbecue Flavor***, aims to tear down the Cedar Curtain and make plank-cooking easy and fun for all back yard grillers. I've been busy developing recipes for the book (see the crime scene that is my kitchen below), but I would love to include a selection of recipes from **BT** readers, and that means you!



So, if you have any recipes you'd like to share with me, I'd really appreciate your contribution. I'm looking for your favourite planking recipes (like planked salmon) or any really good grilling recipe (I'm adapting many of my favourite grilling and barbecue recipes to plank-cooking) as well as all kinds of starters, side dishes, desserts and even cocktails. If you have one or two recipes you'd be willing to pass on (with due credit to you if they appear in the book), please send them to me at rockinronnie@ronshewchuk.com. My deadline for getting the draft manuscript to the publisher is Sept. 12, so don't delay!

What I Did This Summer

Kurt Vonnegut said “Be careful what you pretend to be, because you are what you pretend to be.” Well, since I wrote ***Barbecue Secrets*** I have been pretending to be a barbecue evangelist, and as a result I have lived, breathed and eaten so much barbecue that I would taste pretty smoky and tender right now if you were to put me in a pit and cook me low and slow. “Darlin’, put me in a pit and cook me low and slow” -- Sounds like a country song, don’t it? Well, if you can’t eat me, the next best thing would be for me to give you a taste of my barbecue life . . . in pictures.

Big Rock Barbecue Workshop/Indoctrination

Photos courtesy Julie Toyota



One of the first events of the season was the Butt Shredders’ ninth annual all-day Secrets of Championship Barbecue workshop on June 4 at Calgary’s [Big Rock Brewery](#). As always, it was a sell-out crowd and a new generation of barbecue zealots was born.

Calgary’s BBQ Season Kicks Off With ‘Eat Till You Drop III’



The day after the Big Rock workshop, blues legend Amos Garrett was pickin’ the tunes and a corps of volunteers from the [Barbecue on the Bow](#) Society was servin’ up the pig pickin’s at Rouge restaurant for the third annual Calgary barbecue event. It was a great party – and raised enough money to make sure the purse for the September Alberta championship barbecue contest will be a big one. Congrats to all involved. What a fabulous new tradition!

Meat Comas at the Mecca of Barbecue



This was the first class I've ever done that combined grilling and barbecue, a half-day extravaganza held May 29 at [Johnstone's Barbecues & Parts](#) in North Vancouver. Because it was the first class of its kind, I sort of overdid it. Many of the participants fell into a "meat coma" brought on by an overambitious menu of grilled and barbecued delights. Some participants actually had to wobble out early because they could not eat another bite! On hand to help make the belly-filling event a memorable experience were the field kitchen team of Angie Quaale and Jamina Rivero (pictured above), Michael Becker and Andrew Tzembelicos. Of course, what would meat be without something tasty to wash it down? Tim Hutchinson of the Bay and Medallion Wine Marketing Inc., expertly poured delicious Quail's Gate wines to go with the food.

A Marvellous Day at Mission Hill



On Father's Day I started off my first grilling and barbecue class at the incredible [Mission Hill Family Estate](#) in the heart of B.C.'s wine country by proclaiming, "Well, folks, you are about to witness the peak of my career. From here on, it's all down hill." How will I ever top this experience? A gorgeous setting overlooking Okanagan Lake; staring in awe at the fantastic winery kitchen; putting on the pork butts late the night before the class with Winery Chef Michael Allemeier; and grilling lamb racks over a fire made from oak wine barrel staves. Read all about the event, and see lots more pix, in this [great feature on egullet.org](#) by Vancouver foodie and photog Lee Carney.

Layin' It On in Langley



The lovely and talented Angie Quaale, proprietor of [Well Seasoned: a gourmet food store](#) in Langley, B.C. hosted my grilling and barbecue class on June 26. This time John Gerum of [Western Shores Events](#) was on hand to pour lots of tasty B.C. wines. I'll be back to Well Seasoned this fall with fresh selection of dishes from **Barbecue Secrets**. Thanks to Angie's dad Dave McCarthy for taking the pix.

Barbecue Bootcamp in Whistler



My second annual barbecue bootcamp in Whistler at Dusty's Bar & BBQ helped to spawn a new generation of Canadian bubbas. This two-day event included a half-day grilling class followed by an all-day, hands-on barbecue workshop that culminated in a mini-contest. The winning team, Alchemy Aces, went on to compete in the Canadian National BBQ Championship. My heartfelt thanks go out to the crew at Dusty's, as well Chef Bob Haselbach and volunteer supporters Bryan O'Connor (official photog, including the above pix) and barbecuties Barb Walsh, Wendy Watt and Zsuszi Palotai. Special thanks to Mission Hill Family Estate Winery and John Gerum for providing the potables!

Crazy Ozzie Grill



Barbecue aficionado Emmanuel Spiridakis sent me these pictures of a crazy Australian rotisserie grill that apparently runs on a regular flashlight battery. Thanks for sharing, Emmanuel!

History in the Making? Pairing Whiskey and Barbecue



I'm not sure if anyone has tried to pair rare Scotch Whiskies with barbecue, but it turns out to be a tasty combination. On August 10, I teamed up with whisky consultant (how's that for a vocation?) Andrew Starritt of CaskStrength for a evening of grilled and barbecued dishes prepared, and paired with, single malt Scotches. The event was held at Chef Neil Wyles' Hamilton Street Grill in Vancouver's Yaletown, and was put on by Eric Pateman of [Edible Vancouver](#), a new business specializing in food tourism and "personalized food experiences."

One Heck of a Trout



The Greschuk family was on vacation in the Shuswap (B.C. Interior) this summer and got to enjoy some freshly smoked lake trout. "The trout had great flavour right out of the [Big Chief electric] smoker," writes Carolyn, whose daughter's boyfriend, Jamie, caught the 12.5-pound hawg. "We followed your directions exactly from your Barbeque Secrets book." Glad I could be of assistance, but sorry I couldn't be there to help eat that fish.

Whooping it up in Whistler



Whistler-Blackcomb's Paul Street and the gang at Dusty's did it again, hosting Canada's biggest barbecue contest with grace and style. With 29 teams competing and thousands of enthusiastic observers, it was a carnival-like atmosphere, with great live music and beautiful sunny weather. Alas, a repeat victory for the Butt Shredders was not in the cards, although we won the pork shoulder category, which at this point we own. The good news: we managed to snag our third consecutive invitation to the world's most prestigious barbecue contest based on our reputation as Western Canada's best barbecue team. Lynchburg, here we come! The contest will be held Oct. 20 and 21.

An Inspiring Letter

Ron,

I only started low and slow smoking about three or two years ago.

Producing bacon, maple cured, maple smoked bacon was my aim, and after a number of tries I got it right.

I knew how right it was when at about 02:00 one morning I awoke to the sound of bacon cooking in a frying pan. There was my (Kiwi) partner Belinda, a committed and almost militant vegetarian, preparing a generous bacon sandwich for herself.

As politely as possible at that hour of the morning, I asked what she was about. She could not sleep another wink without a bacon sandwich, she said, and henceforth bacon (but only my bacon) would officially be considered a vegetable.

Many other things which never produced a leaf in their lives have since been designated officially as vegetables in our household. I suspect that application of brines, marinades, rubs, smoke, gentle heat and patience have something to do with this.

What a wonderful combination is a lump of muscle, a melange of spices, a little imagination, some charcoal, a lot of patience, and an anticipatory appetite.

Keep up the good work. We may be able to guide a generation of vegetarians to the next best physical pleasure after the other one.

Regards,

Rod

Recipe: PLANKED PORK LOIN ROAST WITH WHISKY-APRICOT GLAZE

I have been having a lot of fun these days developing recipes for my next cookbook, ***Planking Secrets***. One of the things I've been finding out is that pork is great when baked in the grill on a cedar plank. The aromatic, spicy, mildly astringent flavour of the cedar smoke nicely complements the sweetness and richness of the pork. Because you've had to wait so long for this newsletter, I'm giving this recipe its world premiere in ***BT***.



The trick with plank-cooking a roast this big is to get the plank smoldering on a high or medium-high heat, and then turn it down to medium as soon as you get the meat on. NOTE: Keep a spray bottle of water nearby, and if you get any flare-ups around the corners of the plank, just spray them with water to put them out. If you try this recipe, let me know how it turns out! Serves 4 – 6.

- 1 cedar cooking plank, soaked at least 2 hours, preferably overnight
- 1 3 - lb. pork loin roast with a 1/8 inch fat cap
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1/4 cup Dijon mustard
- 1/4 cup Jack Daniel's
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/4 cup apricot jam
- a pinch of cayenne pepper
- 1 14-oz. can apricot halves in light syrup
- Sprigs of fresh parsley thyme sprigs for garnish

Open the can of apricots and drain the syrup into a medium-sized saucepan, reserving the apricots. To the syrup, add the Dijon mustard, Jack Daniel's, brown sugar, apricot jam, and cayenne. Over medium heat, bring the mixture to a low boil, stirring to melt the sugar and the jam. When it looks like a smooth, fairly thick sauce (about five minutes), take it off the heat and set it in a bowl of ice cubes to cool. When the mixture has cooled, divide it in half. Combine half of the sauce with the apricot halves and store them in the fridge in a plastic container.

Lightly score the fat cap of the pork loin in a diamond pattern, season it with salt and pepper, and set the meat on a sheet of heavy duty aluminum foil. Spoon the remaining half of the mustard-whisky mixture over the loin and pat it all over to coat. Wrap the foil around the meat, sealing it as best you can and place the wrapped loin in the meat drawer of your fridge. Let it sit for a couple of hours at least, but overnight if possible.

Prepare your grill for direct high heat and place the soaked plank on the grill, closing the cover. When the plank starts to crackle and smoke, place the marinated pork loin on the plank fat-side up and immediately reduce the heat to medium. Cover the grill and cook for one hour, checking periodically for flare-ups.

At the one-hour mark, take the apricots out of the sauce mixture and place them on the plank next to the roast. Baste the roast with some of the sauce and cook for about another ten or twenty minutes, until the internal temperature of the roast reaches 140°F/60°C. Take off the roast and lightly tent it in foil. Transfer the apricot halves to a cutting board and coarsely chop them. Warm the remaining sauce on the stovetop or in the microwave and add the chopped apricots. Let the roast rest for at least 15 minutes (while it's resting, roast some vegetables on the grill). Carve the roast into 1/2-inch slices and serve on warmed plates with a spoonful of the sauce and the roasted vegetables on the side and, if you like, some mashed potatoes. Garnish with a sprig of parsley or thyme.

A couple more things....

It's been an incredible summer. Through my cooking classes and workshops I've met hundreds of enthusiastic grillers and new barbecue converts. But I would not have been able to do it without the support of my friends at [Johnstone's Barbecues & Parts](#) in North Vancouver (you can order online from anywhere in Canada at www.bbqparts.ca). Johnstone's has the biggest barbecue showroom I've ever seen, staffed by the friendliest, most helpful people in the business. If you need a grill or smoker, or need to repair or maintain your backyard cooking equipment, give Gary Johnstone and his team a visit.

I also want to thank my friends at [Westcoast Lifestyles](#), manufacturers of the best cooking planks I've ever used, for providing me with cedar, alder and maple planks for recipe development and samples to share with attendees at many of my classes. Plank on, guys!

And, finally, I want to express my gratitude to barbecue entrepreneur Hendrik vand der Walt, a South African expat living in North Vancouver who imports and distributes lump charcoal from Namibia under the Nam-Char and HardCoals brands. Hendrik has been my official charcoal supplier and he's kept me smokin' all summer long. If you like using charcoal and want to make the leap to lump, check out this great product. Visit www.hardcoals.com to find out more.

Well, that's another edition of **Rockin' Ronnie's Barbecue Times**. Till next time, happy cooking!

Rockin' Ronnie



Rockin' Ronnie's Barbecue Times is published as often as I can get around to it. To get on or off the mailing list, just drop me a line to listmanager@ronshewchuk.com.

For more about me and my world of barbecue (including more recipes and a photo gallery), visit www.ronshewchuk.com.

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