

Kick off barbecue season

By Metro Creative Connection

To many Americans, Memorial Day marks the unofficial beginning of summer. Though summer does not actually begin until later in June, Memorial Day weekend has become synonymous with backyard barbecues and trips to the beach.

Backyard barbecues, in particular, have become a staple of Memorial Day weekend and the focus of many people's festivities. This year, consider the following tips to make your Memorial Day barbecue safe and memorable.

- Place the grill in a safe spot. Before any guests arrive or any fires are lit, make sure the grill is safely located on flat ground. Ideally, the grill should not be on the grass and should be away from trees or shrubs and any other flammable materials. If you need lighter fluid to start a fire, promptly put the fluid back in storage, away from the grill, once the fire has been lit.

- Clean the grill. Memorial Day marks the opening of grilling season for many grillmasters. Make sure the grill has been thoroughly cleaned and that there are no leftover ashes from last season clogging the vents. Even if you thoroughly cleaned the grill at the end of last season, give it a once-over with a soapy sponge at the start of the season to clean any cobwebs, or dirt and grime that might have accumulated over the winter.

- Stock up on charcoal. Falling short in the charcoal department is a backyard barbecue faux pas that can bring the festivities to a halt. Because the weather in late May can sometimes be unpredictable, make sure you have extra charcoal on hand should strong winds or colder temperatures make it difficult to build a strong fire.

- Spice things up. Why not use this year's Memorial Day barbecue to add a little extra flavor to traditional barbecue fare? Soak some dried herbs like rosemary, bay leaves or oregano in water and add them to the grill. These flavorful herbs will make the food taste better, and the grill will likely emit a more pleasant fragrance as well.

- Prepare foods for guests with varying palates. Vegetarians and vegans love a good backyard barbecue just as much as their carnivorous friends and family members. Cook some vegetable kabobs and prepare some salads for guests who don't eat meat. Consider purchasing a smaller grill for veggies only, as vegetarians and vegans might not prefer to eat kabobs grilled on the same grill as meat.

- Keep the forks in the utensil drawer. Never use a fork to do a spatula's job. Poking foods on the grill with a fork allows the juices that make grilled foods so delicious to escape, resulting in drier fare that's not nearly as flavorful. Use a spatula or tongs to flip foods, including burgers, steaks, chicken, and even hot dogs.

- Make sure foods have completely defrosted before placing them on the grill. When cold meat is placed on the grill, it reduces the grill's temperature and prevents juices from getting seared in the food. So make sure all foods have been defrosted to ensure your foods are flavorful and the grill stays hot.



In the market for a new grill?

Before you venture to your local grill store in search of a new barbecue, here are a few things to consider:

What is your favorite grilled food?

If hamburgers, hot dogs, and the occasional steak are as far as you get, there is a wide range of reliable, reasonably featured grills to choose from. If you are cooking a variety of meals, a number of burners will give you more precise control, while side burners and rotisserie capability make it even easier to impress your guests.

How many people are you grilling for?

Most grills can be filed into a few categories. Small, space conscious grills designed for condo living and empty nesters make preparing a meal for four to six people easy enough, but for more than that you will have to get creative. Most grills in this category have a primary grill surface of between 300 and 400 square inches. Grilling for between four and eight people and occasional crowds of 12 or more is better suited to 400 square inches or more. If you're preparing a feast on a regular basis, many grilling surfaces are available with more than 500 square inches.

How will it perform?

Quality construction and sound cooking performance are likely the reason you're replacing your old barbecue, so do some homework for the new one. What kind of burners are in the new barbecue, what are they made of, and how are they shaped? Tube style burners, and 'H' or '8' shaped burners offer even heat distribution and excellent performance. Is there something covering the burners?

This is called the heat medium. Briquettes and lava rock are antiquated heat media; most new grills have stainless or porcelain coated steel vaporizers. They are reliable, durable and easy to look after. It is important that they protect the burner from food residue, promote even heating, and don't have flat spots for grease to pool and flare up. Most importantly, these vaporizers create that smoky barbecue flavor you're looking for by vaporizing juices as they fall through the cooking grids.

What are the cooking grids made of?

Look for cast iron or stainless steel. These cooking grids are heavy enough to retain heat, and promote excellent cooking performance. Either of these options will let you create steakhouse style sear marks to wow your guests, and they are still easy to look after.

Where is it made?

While it is possible to buy foreign-built barbecues that perform well, and are durable, there are domestic manufacturers building outstanding barbecues at a great value. By purchasing from a North American manufacturer you get customer service at your fingertips should you ever need it. When buying, look into the warranty. Any reliable barbecue manufacturer will offer a significant warranty covering all components, and back that up with attentive customer service.

Other questions to consider:

What does it look like? Is it available in propane or natural gas? How much storage and preparation space is available? Does it come with a cover (or can I buy an exact-fit option)? What accessories are available to enhance the grilling experience even more? More details, plus a wide range of barbecue information is available online at www.broilkingbbq.com.



Pick of the Week

Lakewood Vineyards
Riesling
2010



By Brenna Donovan

Why it's worth trying: The 2010 Riesling from

Lakewood Vineyards is a crisp and refreshing wine that pairs nicely with a warm day and a good book. As the recipient of the Finger Lakes Riesling Champion Award at the Golden Nose competition at the New York Wine and Culinary Center in mid-April, this riesling is the perfect choice.

Pale gold in color, this wine is semi-dry with hints of pear in the nose. Citrus flavors, primarily tangerine, explode on the palate, along with white peach and slight floral undertones. The delicate sweetness creates a balance of flavors in the mouthfeel, and it finishes with a refreshingly firm acidity.

Lakewood Vineyards in Watkins Glen was commercially producing grapes for 37 years until 1988, when the first vintage was pressed and the winery was founded. The winery uses a unique blend of current technology and traditional winemaking practices, using this delicate balance to produce quality wines year after year.

Price: \$14.99

Serving tips: For the delightful fruit flavors of this particular riesling to properly unfold, serve chilled (about 45 degrees) to ensure full enjoyment.

Food pairing: This wine is extremely versatile and pairs nicely with numerous dishes. Try it with the classic summertime meal of grilled chicken, or a green salad with a tangy citrus vinaigrette. It's also complex enough to stand up to a spicy meal, or chicken with cream sauce.

You might also want to try: A 2010 riesling from Fox Run Vineyards, or the "First Degree of Riesling" from Three Brothers Wineries and Estates.

Where to buy it: Lakewood Vineyards in Watkins Glen or the New York Wine and Culinary Center tasting room.

Be a hero to your family

Home Hazardous Waste Drop-off

Register May 14-23
12:00 - 5:00 pm
568-0967

Seneca Falls/Waterloo Residents Only
No commercial waste

automotive batteries, car tires (limit of 15), used oil, antifreeze, pool chemicals pesticides, insecticides, oil-based paints/stains, resins, adhesives, home cleaning products, empty BBQ propane tanks, computers, monitors, t.v.'s, compact fluorescents, fluorescent light tubes, microwaves, home air conditioners, cell phones (Cell phones will be recycled to benefit United States veterans!)

Paninis, martinis and wraps

The following is a partial list of upcoming wine and culinary events.

Email events to Susan Porter at sporter@ftimes.com. To register for events at New York Wine and Culinary Center in Canandaigua, visit www.nywcc.com.

Chef's Table: The Ultimate Couple's Class, 6 to 8:30 p.m. May 25 at NYWCC, \$75.

Vertical Riesling Tasting at Knapp Winery, 6:30 p.m. May 26 at the winery, 2770 County Road 128, Romulus. Riesling tasting of Knapp, Glenora Wine Cellars and Zugibe Vineyards from 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. Generous appetizer to be paired with each style. \$19.95.

Artisan Sausage Making Workshop — The Basics, 9 a.m. to noon May 26 at NYWCC, \$120.

Introduction to Sushi Making, 1 to 2:30 p.m. May 27 at NYWCC, \$40

Southern Night at the Bistro at Red Newt Cellars, 5 to 9 p.m. May 28 at 3675 Tichenor Road, Hector. Southern favorites and live bluegrass music. Info: (607) 546-4100 or www.rednewt.com.

Wine and Spirit

Education Trust Level 1: Foundation, 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. May 29 at NYWCC, \$295.

Spring Salads, 6 to 8:30 p.m. May 29 at NYWCC, \$45.

Sophisticated Sauces, 6 to 8:30 p.m. May 30 at NYWCC, \$50.

Paninis and Martinis, 6 to 8:30 p.m. June 1 at NYWCC, \$55.

Red, White and Rosé at Sheldrake and Simply Red, 5:30 to 8 p.m. June 1 at Sheldrake Winery, 7448 County Road 153, Ovid. Picnic snacks, lawn games, live music. Guests who take a dish will receive a complimentary glass of dry rosé. Info: (607) 532-9401

Seneca Lake Wine and Food Festival, June 2 and 3 at Clute Park, Watkins Glen. Info: www.senecalakewineandfood.com.

Wraps Unwrapped, 10:30 a.m. to noon June 2 at NYWCC, \$40.

Summertime Wine and Food Pairing, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. June 2 at NYWCC, \$30.

International Flatbreads, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. June 2 at NYWCC, \$40.

New York Wines vs. the World, 3 to 5 p.m.

June 2 at NYWCC, \$40.

Canandaigua Wine Walk, 4 to 7 p.m. June 2 in downtown Canandaigua. \$5. Info: (585) 396-0300.

A Taste of the Vineyard, June 2 at Keuka Spring Vineyards, 243 Route 54, East Lake Road, Penn Yan. Enjoy wine tasting, paired with gourmet cheese, while walking through the vineyard. Limited space; call 536-3147 for reservations.

A Specially Prepared Mediterranean Picnic by Fabio at Long Point Winery, 2 p.m. June 3 at the winery, 1485 Lake Road, Aurora. \$65. Reservations required at 364-6990.

Cooking and Baking with Lemons, 1 to 3 p.m. June 3 at NYWCC, \$50.

Olde-Tyme Rhubarb Festival and Classic Car Cruise-In, noon to 4 p.m. June 2 at Montezuma Winery, 2981 Auburn Road, Seneca Falls. Rhubarb specialties, Cayuga Creamery ice cream, grape and honey wines and spirits in the Finger Lakes. Call 568-8190 by May 30 to register your classic car (free).

— Compiled by Susan Clark Porter



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