

# Seattle Post-Intelligencer



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PHIL JOSEPH BROWN / P-I  
Tiki beef kebabs can be grilled as guests arrive or let them grill their own.

## Gather round the **GRILL**

Get everybody fired up for a summer party with a welcoming batch of hot appetizers

BY SARAH JHO  
Special to the P-I

My last backyard party went something like this: The guests arrived and made a beeline to the deck while I spent what felt like an eternity preparing appetizers – alone – in my kitchen.

Sound familiar?

There is a solution, says Steven Raichlen, chef and host of the PBS show "Barbecue University" and author of "The Barbecue Bible" series: Avoid hostess isolation and guest neglect, and save time by grilling your appetizers.

"Not only does it set a relaxed pace, but there's less of that frantic relay-running between the kitchen and the grill," he says. "Seeing food coming off the grill within minutes of their arrival puts guests at ease and assures them they'll be fed well."

When it comes to grilling appetizers, Raichlen offers these tips:

► **Avoid burned skewers:** Anyone who has had an unfortunate incident with charred skewers (mine involved scorching a batch of chicken saté) knows that bamboo skewers are prone to burning.

But the standard advice to soak them in water prior to grilling doesn't always hold true, says Rai-

chlen. "In my experience it does very little to prevent them from scorching," he says.

Instead, Raichlen folds a 12-by-18-inch piece of heavy-duty foil into thirds, like a business letter, and slips this foil shield under the exposed ends of the skewers.

He adds that it helps to thread the food tightly, leaving less of the skewer directly exposed to heat.

► **Set up an outdoor prep station:** While you probably won't be able to avoid dashing in for an ingredient or two, minimize the to-and-fro by setting up a small table by your grill that's stocked with essentials for preparing, serving and plating your starters.

"Have platters, garnishes and dips waiting so the appetizers can be served hot," says Raichlen.

► **Make the menu interactive:** You can place a small hibachi on a heat-proof base in the center of the outdoor table. The guests can grill their own skewers.

"Later, they can grill fruit kebabs or make s'mores," Raichlen says. ► **Get creative:** Grill foods you normally wouldn't think to grill, such as cheese or shellfish. Raichlen suggests grilling Greek halloumi, which doesn't melt and acquires the telltale grill marks. Just cut the cheese into slabs and grill on both sides. The cheese is great on crusty bread.

For shellfish, arrange them on the grate and let them cook until the shells open. Serve them with lemon wedges, condiments and bread.

► **Mix it up:** While a sampling of grilled starters can make a complete meal, it's nice to mix up your appetizers with a salad, some assorted cheeses and maybe a plate of watermelon. That just leaves drinks for consideration.

The margaritas are calling.

### GRILL GEAR

Here are some new products and gadgets that will help you get your grill on this summer.

► **Griddle-Q:** This griddle attachment can turn your grill into an outdoor stove for pancakes, bacon, eggs, you name it. We love the idea of tuning to the grill for

breakfast, especially on a warm summer morning. The griddle is made of heavy-gauge stainless steel and is available for \$179.95 at Williams-Sonoma.

► **Flavored skewers:** Add some liveliness to skewered chicken, beef and veggies with Callisons Fine Foods' Seasoned Skewers. This local company infuses its wooden skewers with 100 percent natural flavors such as honey bourbon, citrus rosemary, and garlic herb ([www.callisonsfinefoods.com](http://www.callisonsfinefoods.com)). The new appetizer-size skewers are now available at Metropolitan

Market and will soon debut at Williams-Sonoma.

► **The Picnic Grill:** This is a portable grill that folds down to the size of a briefcase. It's made by the Swedish company Segaforn and retails for about \$40. Look for it online at [aplustrstore.com](http://aplustrstore.com).



SEE GRILL, C3

# GRILL: Aluminum protects skewers from burning

FROM CI

## TIKI BEEF KEBABS

SERVES 6-8; MAKES 36 KEBABS

1 clove garlic, coarsely chopped

1 scallion, trimmed, white part coarsely chopped, green part finely chopped

1 piece (½ inch) fresh ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped

2 strips lemon zest (each about 1½-by-1½-inches)

¼ cup soy sauce

3 tablespoons sugar

3 tablespoons Asian (dark) sesame oil

3 tablespoons dry sherry

2 pounds strip, sirloin or top round steaks (each about 1-inch thick)

About 36 long slender (8- to 12-inch) bamboo skewers

Heavy-duty aluminum foil

▮ Place the garlic, scallion white, ginger, lemon zest, soy sauce, sugar, sesame oil and sherry in a blender and puree until smooth. Or you can make the marinade in a food processor: Place the garlic, scallion white, ginger, lemon zest and sugar in the processor bowl and process to make a fine paste. Add the soy sauce, sesame oil and sherry and process to mix.

▮ Using a very sharp knife, cut each steak on the diagonal into about 36 thin slices (about ¼-inch thick). Weave each strip of meat like a ribbon onto a skewer. The meat will bunch up as it goes on the skewer; gently spread it out with your fingers.

▮ Arrange 12 of the kebabs in a single layer in a non-reactive baking dish. Pour one-third of the marinade over the kebabs in the baking dish. Turn the kebabs to coat both sides with the marinade. Arrange 12 more kebabs on top of the first layer, pour half of the remaining marinade over these, and turn this layer to coat evenly. Arrange the remaining kebabs on top of the second layer, pour the remaining marinade over these, and turn to coat evenly. Cover the kebabs with plastic wrap and let them marinate in the refrigerator 1-2 hours.

▮ Set up the grill for direct grilling and preheat to high. When ready to cook, brush and oil the grill grate. Tear off a piece of heavy-duty aluminum foil that is roughly as long as the grill is wide. Fold the piece of aluminum foil in half lengthwise. Place the folded aluminum foil flat on the grate at the edge closest to you. Arrange the kebabs on the grate so that they are over the fire but the exposed ends of the skewers are on the foil shield to keep them from burning. Depending upon the size of the grill, you may need to cook the kebabs in batches. Grill the kebabs until nicely browned, 1 to 2 minutes per side for medium. Transfer the grilled kebabs to a platter and sprinkle the scallion greens over them.

From "The Barbecue Bible"

## BY THE NUMBERS

▮ All thumbs when it comes to grilling? You're in good company; 54 percent of Americans admit they're below average when it comes to running the grill.

▮ When invited to a barbecue, do feel OK about bringing your own sauce, 49 percent of grillers say it's acceptable, but don't touch the grill: Sixty-one percent of those surveyed say only the host/hostess should 'man' the grill. As a guest you can look, but don't touch.

Source: The Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association

## GRILLED EGGPLANT "POPPERS"

MAKES 12-14 PIECES

2 cups ricotta cheese  
1 cup of Parmesan cheese,  
grated  
¼ cup of chopped basil  
¼ cup of chopped chives  
A sprinkle of red pepper  
3 cloves garlic, grated or finely  
chopped  
2 eggplants, sliced into ¼-inch  
sections and brushed with  
olive oil  
Salt and pepper, to taste  
Optional: 8 slices Italian salami

▮ Mix ricotta cheese, Parmesan, basil, chives, red pepper and garlic in bowl. Refrigerate until just before serving.

▮ Brush the eggplant with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill both sides, just until tender, but not soggy, and grill marks appear (about three

minutes on each side). Remove eggplant and let rest on a plate for a few minutes until cool, then fill each piece with a dollop of the ricotta filling mixture and a slice of salami (optional). Roll up and place on a serving plate. Add a spoonful of prepared marinara sauce to each popper if you like.

*From Sarah Jio*

## GRILLED HALIBUT GORDITAS

MAKES 25-30 GORDITAS

1 pound 12 ounces masa harina  
½ cup milk  
1 tablespoon salt  
3 to 4 cups warm water  
½ cup rendered bacon fat or  
vegetable oil  
2 pounds halibut cut into  
1-ounce pieces

### LIME CREMA:

½ cup of sour cream  
1 teaspoon of lime zest  
1 tablespoon of freshly squeezed  
lime juice  
Salt and pepper to taste  
chili powder  
olive oil  
Condiments: pico de gallo, queso  
fresco, shredded iceberg  
lettuce, cilantro

▮ Mix together masa harina, milk, salt and warm water. Form dough into flat little 2-inch rounds. Brown on both sides in a pan in bacon fat or oil.

▮ Season each piece of halibut with salt and a sprinkle of chili powder. Roll in olive oil and grill until just done (approximately 3 to 4 minutes).

▮ Place halibut on gorditas and top with fresh pico de gallo, a little queso fresco cheese, shredded iceberg lettuce and a sprinkle of cilantro and lime crema.

*From Lisa Dupar of Pomegranate Bistro*