



MICHAEL GEIGER

## Food

BY KAREN LEE  
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# A DIFFERENT BARBECUE

*Outdoor grilling is a  
cooking technique that  
transcends international  
and cultural boundaries.*

*Veal chops are marinated  
in French peppercorns,  
Italian olive oil, Spanish  
sherry and Oriental  
seasonings, then barbecued.*

**P**UNGENT AROMAS rising from the grill. Succulent pieces of meat, chicken or fish searing over lighted coals. The American passion for the barbecue is rooted in a primitive instinct.

Whether the repast is cooked by hot rocks and coals buried beneath three feet of earth, which is the tradition of the Plains barbecue and Hawaiian luau, or grilled on a patio grate, the barbecue is a summertime addiction. After all, preparing food directly over a hot fire is the oldest cooking method known to man.

We are so wedded to the barbecue that we sometimes think it is indigenous to the United States, but in fact grilling is a part of several cuisines, including Chinese. One of the first cooking techniques in this 4,000-year-old culture was grilling outdoors, and later indoors, by means of a charcoal brazier. Thin slices of unmarinated meat were cooked at the table, with condiments applied only as the meat was eaten.

The modern Chinese interpretation of bar-

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becuing involves marinating whole ducks, chickens or pigs, or thickly cut pieces of boneless pork butt, and then suspending them in a large oven the size of a walk-in closet. The heat circulates all around, creating a crusty exterior. A shallow pan filled with water is placed below to catch drippings and provide moisture. Most homes in China do not have ovens, so the Chinese purchase barbecued meats or poultry at these barbecue houses, return home with them, and use them in noodle and rice dishes.

Because Americans are infatuated with grilled foods, we have broadened our repertory beyond steak and hamburger with routine marinades. Chinese flavors lend themselves to this kind of cooking, so it is a natural to incorporate their dark soy sauce, hot mustard and the ubiquitous garlic-scallion-ginger combination as a seasoning.

When these Chinese ingredients are blended with American, French, Italian and other Western seasonings, the result is light East-West marinades that belong to the nouvelle wave of Chinese cooking. This cuisine, which has captured the fantasy of our most imaginative contemporary chefs, breaks down the barriers between national traditions and emphasizes simplification and refinement.

Imagine a veal chop, crusty on the outside



## When Chinese

ingredients are blended

with a variety of

Western seasonings, the

result is akin to a

*nouvelle Oriental cuisine.*

and pink within, that was marinated in a blend of briny French green peppercorns, rich Italian olive oil, Spanish sherry and Oriental seasonings. A grainy spicy mustard sauce, with its layering of flavors, enhances the taste and helps the meat develop a crust according to the Western ideal.

The mustard sauce, which is a variation on the hotter and less interesting Chinese mustard that you get in restaurants, is extremely versatile and can be used not only in marinades but also on corned beef sandwiches and in salad dressings, chicken salad, egg salad and omelets.

A swordfish kebab is the kind of dish that goes from the market to the grill to the mouth all in a few hours. The tart taste of the zest and juice of lime combined with the pungency of mustard and ginger balances perfectly with Chinese dark soy sauce, scallions and garlic. Biting into each seared, tender swordfish cube and discovering juice redolent with multitudinous flavors is like capturing the taste of summer.

**A**LIGHT, COOLING SALAD — such as jicama, snow pea, watercress and pear salad — is a satisfying accompaniment to the meal. This crisp salad combines a Mexican radish, which is similar in taste and texture to fresh water chestnuts, with Chinese snow peas. The nouvelle dressing unites French mustard, American and Italian oils, Chinese red vinegar made from rice and malt and the northern Italian treasure called balsamic vinegar, which is made from the juice of unfermented white grapes.

Serve this barbecue with a simple side dish of rice seasoned with saffron, shallots, parsley and butter. Counterpoint your celebration with a California chardonnay, such as Edna Valley or Sonoma-Cutrer Russian River Ranches.

### BARBECUED VEAL CHOPS

4 loin veal chops, 1½ inches thick, about 3 pounds in all

The marinade:

- 1½ tablespoons dark soy sauce
- 2½ tablespoons olive oil
- 1½ tablespoons spicy mustard sauce (see recipe)
- 1 tablespoon light rice miso
- 1½ tablespoons medium-dry sherry
- 1½ tablespoons minced ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- ½ cup scallions, cut into ½-inch rounds, white and green parts included
- 1 tablespoon green peppercorns (in brine), drained and crushed
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ½ cup medium-dry sherry (for deglazing, if broiling indoors).

1. Trim the veal chops, removing most of the outside fat. Then score each chop on both sides by making opposing diagonal slashes about a quarter-inch deep.

2. Combine the soy sauce, olive oil, spicy mustard sauce, miso and one-and-a-half tablespoons of sherry in a bowl. Stir well, then add the ginger, garlic, scallions, green peppercorns and pepper. Mix thoroughly.

3. Place the veal chops in a dish large enough to accommodate them in a single layer. Rub the marinade on both sides of the meat. Marinate at room temperature for four hours, or up to 12 hours in the refrigerator.

4. To barbecue the veal chops outdoors on a grill: Adjust the grill rack so that it is not more than six inches from the coals. Light the coals and allow them to burn about 45 minutes to one hour. When the coals turn white, place the veal chops on the grill rack. Cook for six minutes, then turn over and cook another six minutes. This will produce a medium chop, crusty on the outside and pink within. Allow the meat to sit at least five minutes on a serving plate. Then serve.

To cook indoors in the broiler: Preheat the broiler 20 minutes. Place the veal chops on a rack resting in a shallow roasting pan. Broil them as close to the flame as possible for six minutes. Turn the chops over and carefully sprinkle in a half cup of sherry, which will prevent the drippings from burning and will add flavor to the natural sauce. Broil the chops another six minutes, then remove them to a serving platter. Reduce and deglaze the drippings by placing the pan over a low heat, then stirring until all the juices have been incorporated into the sauce. Pour this over the chops.

Yield: Four servings.

### SPICY MUSTARD SAUCE

- 1 2-ounce tin of Colman's dry mustard
- ¾ cup medium-dry sherry
- ½ cup Dijon mustard
- ½ cup Pommery cracked-seed mustard.

1. Place the dry mustard in the bowl of a food processor.

2. Pulse the machine on and off while pouring the sherry through the feeding tube. Continue processing until you have a smooth, thick paste. Add more sherry if necessary.

3. Add the Dijon and the Pommery mustards. Then turn the machine on and off a few times. Adjust the consistency with more sherry if necessary to achieve a thick mustard sauce.

4. Store in lidded glass jars in the refrigerator for up to two months.

Yield: Approximately one and three-quarters cups.

### JICAMA, WATERCRESS, SNOW PEA AND PEAR SALAD

- 1 tablespoon unhulled sesame seeds
- 2 cups snow peas, strung and cut in half lengthwise
- 2 large ripe pears, peeled, cored and cut lengthwise into ¼-inch-thick slices
- ½ tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 large bunch watercress, stems removed
- 2 cups jicama, peeled and cut into thick strips, 2½ inches in length

The dressing:

- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon Chinese red vinegar
- ½ tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- ¾ teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 small clove garlic, minced
- 1 scallion, cut into ½-inch rounds
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 3 tablespoons corn oil
- 1½ tablespoons olive oil.

1. Dry cook the sesame seeds in a wok or an iron skillet over low heat for three to five minutes, stirring constantly until they turn a darker brown. Remove from the wok and allow to cool.

2. Blanch the snow peas for 30 seconds in boiling water. Plunge into ice water to stop the cooking and hold the color. Drain and dry well.

3. Place the pear slices in a bowl. Add the lemon juice; combine well to prevent the pears from turning brown.

4. To make the dressing, dissolve the salt in the vinegars. Then add the mustard and mix until it is slightly thickened. Add the garlic, scallion, pepper, parsley, corn oil and olive oil. Continue to mix until well combined.

5. Place the watercress, jicama, pear and snow peas in a large bowl. Add the dressing and toss well. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Serve immediately.

Yield: Four servings.

### SWORDFISH KEBABS

2 pounds swordfish fillet, at least 1½ inches thick

The marinade:

- 2 tablespoons dark soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon grated lime zest
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons spicy mustard sauce (see recipe)
- 2 scallions, cut into ½-inch rounds
- 2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
- ½ cup medium-dry sherry (for deglazing, if broiling indoors).

1. Remove the skin from the swordfish. Cut into large cubes, approximately 1 by 1½ by 2 inches.

2. Combine the soy sauce, olive oil, lime zest, lime juice, garlic, spicy mustard sauce, scallions and ginger in a medium-size bowl. Mix thoroughly.

3. Add the swordfish cubes to the marinade and toss well. Marinate at room temperature for one hour, or up to six hours in the refrigerator.

4. To barbecue the swordfish outdoors on a grill: Adjust the grill rack so that it is not more than four inches from the coals. Light the coals and allow them to burn about 45 minutes to one hour. Thirty minutes before grilling the fish, soak bamboo skewers in a bowl of water. Place four swordfish cubes on each skewer, allowing space between each cube. When the coals turn white, place the skewers on the grill. Cook for three to four minutes, then turn the kebabs over and cook another three to four minutes or until the fish has almost cooked through. It should be crusty on the outside and juicy within.

To cook indoors in the broiler: Preheat the broiler for 20 minutes. Place the kebabs on a heat-proof platter and broil them as close to the flame as possible for three to four minutes. Turn the kebabs over and carefully sprinkle in the sherry, which will prevent the drippings from burning and add flavor to the natural sauce. Broil the kebabs another three to four minutes, then remove them to a serving platter. Reduce and deglaze the drippings by placing the cooking platter over a low heat, then stirring until all the juices have been incorporated into the sauce. Pour this over the kebabs.

Yield: Four servings.

Note: Three of our favorite substitutions for the swordfish are fresh tuna, yellowtail or salmon. ■