

The Blue Guitar

Smoker Screen Mod for Gas BBQ

Overview

As mentioned in many of the articles on this site, fine cuisine is **the key** to mental health and will unlock the portals to your spiritual well-being. While a gas BBQ is more convenient than its charcoal counterpart, it does not add as much flavor to your cooked entrees. Adding a smoker screen filled with your choice of hardwoods below the cooking grate will add much flavor to your barbequed meals.

The Details

To add a smoker screen to your gas bar-be-que you should first make a template out of cardboard (or whatever) that will fit snugly approximately 2 to 3 inches below the cooking grate. The screen itself is made out of 22 or 20 gauge perforated stainless steel (the ss sheet I used has 1/4" diameter holes spaced 3/8" center-to-center.) The cut sheet should have a lip of 1/2" to 1" bent up at right angles to add strength to the screen.

When heating up the gas barbeque, leave the cooking grate off so that hardwoods can be added to the smoker screen once the lava rocks are red hot. After the hardwood chunks have been placed on the smoker screen, put the cooking grate on to allow it to heat up as the wood heats up. The burning characteristics of the different hardwoods are not all the same; some woods start to burn faster and generally burn out sooner. In any case, you will generally want to start cooking once the hardwood chunks start to smoke. If you are cooking a thick cut of meat with a quick burning hardwood you may need to add some thinner chunks to the smoker screen by dropping them through the cooking grate.

The Recipes

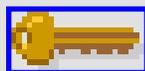
You will want to soak the hardwood chunks from 10 to 30 minutes before you add them to the smoker screen. You can soak them in water, or you can soak them in wine or a marinade. Different hardwoods will add different flavors to your cooking. Hickory is the traditional choice for southern style cooking and adds a very smoky flavor. Oak will burn for much longer and has a more subtle flavor. You may be tempted to try mesquite because of its popularity in barbeque potato chips, but the experienced chefs tell us that it burns out very fast and the flavor turns bitter after a few minutes. One hardwood that yields surprisingly good results is cherrywood, which adds a sweet and subtly fruity flavor to choice cuts of steak. It does burn fairly fast so you might want to mix in some oak chunks.

As for my own secrets in preparing a great steak, I start off with a choice cut like rib-eye (boneless or bone-in, depending on whatever is on sale). I will puncture it with a fork on both sides and let in marinade in worcestshire

sauce for at least 20 minutes while the barbeque heats up. Once the lava rocks are red hot I will add a generous handful of soaked cherrywood chips and chunks for each steak I am cooking. When the cherrywood starts to smoke I put the rib-eye steaks on, pouring the marinade on top. One secret for barbequeing steaks is to turn them every 90 seconds and pouring marinade on top each time you turn them to keep them from drying out.

As for burner settings and cooking times, they will vary according to the btu output of your grill and your own preferences for rare, medium or well-done. I have a cheap gas BBQ that cost \$100 ten years ago so I set the burner to high and cook a 1 1/4" thick steak for maybe 12 minutes for medium-rare, turning it over maybe 6 times.

Steve Ahola
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(Revised 3/14/98)
steve_ahola@yahoo.com
<http://www.blueguitar.org/>



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