

Smoked Tropical Chicken Salad

Serves 8 to 12

This salad has just about everything going for it: a mosaic of tropical flavors, crunchy textures, and great color. The recipe is really easy to assemble in stages. The Lime Marinade can be made a few days ahead of time. The chicken can be smoked or grilled up to a day before. Or if your favorite charcuterie happens to have some interesting-looking chicken breasts in the case, save time and substitute. The Tropical Slaw with the vinaigrette can work on its own as a side.

3 whole chicken breasts, boned, halved, and skinned

2 cups Lime Marinade

To prepare the chicken, place the chicken in a nonreactive container or a 1-gallon resealable plastic bag, pour the marinade over the chicken, and refrigerate for 4 to 6 hours.

Grill or smoke the chicken breasts until the meat is firm. Cool the chicken to room temperature and cut into small strips.

Tropical Slaw

1 red bell pepper, seeded and julienned

1 yellow or orange bell pepper, seeded and julienned

1 fresh mango, peeled and julienned

1 pound jicama, peeled and julienned

2 or 3 carrots, julienned

Vinaigrette

Makes 1 cup

Grated zest and juice of 2 limes (about 1/4 cup)

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro

1 to 2 tablespoons chopped fresh herbs (tarragon, lavender, etc.)

1/4 teaspoon ground cumin

1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom

1 clove garlic, minced

6 to 8 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

To make the vinaigrette, combine the lime zest and juice, vinegar, cilantro, fresh herbs, cumin, cardamom, and garlic in a food processor or a blender. Process until all the ingredients are blended.

While the motor is running, drizzle in the oil a little at a time. Pour into a small bowl. Set aside.

Garnish

Assorted greens (endive, arugula, radicchio, etc.)

To prepare the chicken, place the chicken in a nonreactive container or a 1-gallon resealable plastic bag, pour the marinade over the chicken, and refrigerate for 4 to 6 hours.

Grill or smoke the chicken breasts until the meat is firm. Cool the chicken to room temperature and cut into small strips.

To assemble the salad, toss the bell peppers, mango, jicama, and carrots with the chicken and set aside.

To serve, toss the chicken and salad with the vinaigrette. Line the plate with the greens and add the tossed salad.

Grilled Portobello Burgers with Gorgonzola

Serves 4

This is a vegetarian hamburger helper is so good that it has carnies dive for it.

4 portobello mushrooms, stemmed and brushed

1 cup Balsamic-Herbal Marinade

1 cup crumbled gorgonzola (dolci)

4 round Italian or thick-crust rolls

Toppings of your choice: mushrooms, raw onions, fried onions, sautéed sweet red and green peppers, pizza (tomato) sauce

In a large nonreactive saucepan or a skillet, heat about 1/2 inch water until boiling, add the mushrooms, gills down, cover, and steam for 5 minutes. Put the mushrooms in a nonreactive mixing bowl and toss with the marinade. Let them sit for 15 minutes. On a covered grill over medium coals, grill the portobello mushrooms tops for about 5 minutes. Turn the mushrooms, add ¼ cup of cheese per serving, and grill the portobello mushrooms, stem-side down for 4 to 5 minutes longer or until the cheese has melted. The grilled portobello mushrooms should be tender and nicely browned.

To serve, slice the rolls and open them like a book. Add the mushrooms and toppings of your choice. Serve immediately.

Balsamic-Herbal Marinade

Makes 1-1/2 cups

Timetable: Tuna steaks, swordfish steaks, red snapper, catfish, sea bass, halibut, or scallops: 2 to 4 hours, Shrimp or chicken breasts: 3 to 4 hours, Mushrooms: 8 hours.

1/2 cup balsamic vinegar

Grated zest and juice of 1 lemon

5 cloves garlic, chopped

2 anchovies, salt-packed if available

3 tablespoons capers, drained

2 or 3 green onions, white part only, chopped

1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

1 to 2 tablespoons freshly cracked black peppercorns

Coarse-grain salt

2/3 cup extra virgin olive oil

Combine the vinegar, lemon zest and juice, garlic, anchovies, capers, green onions, parsley, pepper, and salt to taste in a blender or a food processor and process until all the ingredients are blended.

While the motor is running, drizzle in the oil a little at a time. Use the marinade within 5 days of making.

Grilled Pork Tenderloin with Cocoa-Chili Rub

Serves 6

Cocoa-Chili Rub

Makes about 1 cup

2 tablespoons firmly packed brown sugar

2 tablespoons ancho chile powder

1/3 cup good quality cocoa

2 tablespoons garlic powder

1 tablespoon onion powder

1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Grated zest of 1 juice orange (about 1 tablespoon)

1 tablespoon coarse-grain salt

1 tablespoon black peppercorns

Grated zest of 1 juice orange (about 1 tablespoon)

Combine the sugar, chile powder, cocoa, garlic powder, onion powder, cinnamon, orange zest, salt, and pepper in a spice mill or a blender and grind to a coarse powder. Stored in a clean, airtight container, this will keep in the freezer for 3 to 4 months.

For the pork:

2 to 3 pounds lean boneless pork loin

Massage the rub into the meat. Wrap tightly in a double layer of plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, but no longer than 72 hours. Remove the meat from the refrigerator and let it stand at room temperature for 1 hour prior to cooking.

To grill: On a gas or charcoal grill, sear the tenderloin on all sides over high. Move the loin to an unheated part of the grill, cover, and roast for 10 to 15 minutes, until the internal temperature reaches 140° to 150°F.

Remove the tenderloin from the grill and let it rest for 10 minutes before slicing.

To cook indoors: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Drain the pork, discarding the mojo, and pat dry. In a small roasting pan, roast the pork for 30 to 40 minutes, until a meat thermometer inserted into the center registers 160°F. Transfer the pork to a cutting board and let it rest for 10 minutes.

Coconut Corn Salsa

Makes: 3 cups

3 ears fresh corn, cooked and cooled (about 3 cups)

1/2 cup toasted coconut

2 tablespoons chives, finely chopped

1 teaspoon fresh thyme, chopped

2 tablespoons shallots, finely chopped

1 tablespoon diced serrano chile

3 tablespoons olive oil

2 to 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Grated zest and juice of 2 limes (about 1/4 cup)

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

Cut the corn kernels from the cobs and toss the kernels with the coconut, chives, thyme, shallots, serrano, oil, cilantro, lime zest and juice, and balsamic vinegar in a nonreactive bowl. Refrigerate the salsa until serving. This will keep for up to 1 week in the refrigerator.

MAPLE-POMEGRANATE GLAZE

MAKES: ABOUT 1-CUP:

TIME TABLE: 5 to 10 minutes.

This is my three ingredient wonder that will work with grilled chicken breasts or kabobs, wings, thighs, or legs; Cornish hens; turkey breast; pork tenderloin, chops; baby back or spareribs. You can also use it with salmon, shrimp, and scallops. Make it ahead, grill up some food, and add it during the last few minutes you're cooking. To jazz it up even more, try adding some citrus zest, chipotle chile, or a tablespoon of your favorite rub. A true bag of licks.

1/2 cup maple syrup

1/4 cup pomegranate molasses (available in Middle Eastern grocery)

1/3 cup light olive oil

Combine the maple syrup, pomegranate molasses, and olive oil in a blender or food processor and process until the ingredients are blended. Store in a clean air tight jar and refrigerate until ready to use. The glaze can be made ahead and will keep in the refrigerator for 3 weeks. To use the glaze after refrigerating, warm over medium heat, stirring occasionally.