

# Barbecuing Chicken

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*Barbecued chicken is a popular favorite at meals prepared for all kinds of occasions. Whether the gathering is a social or business event and no matter what size group, barbecued chicken lends itself to filling the need. Since chicken is economical, it is also a good choice for fundraisers.*

There are a few simple rules that can make a chicken barbecue successful and easy to prepare.

## **Selecting and Preparing Chickens**

Ready-to-cook broilers weighing 2 to 2½ pounds are best for barbecuing. Uniformity of size of birds is important to assure even cooking. At least one-half a chicken should be prepared for each person. The chicken should be cut in half by cutting along one side of the backbone (the backbone can be removed entirely if desired), nicking the front of the breast, breaking the rest of the breast, and pulling the chicken halves apart. If quarters are desired, cook the chicken first, then separate the halves into a leg portion and breast portion.

## **Cooking Tips**

The chickens should be placed on the grill bone side down. The position not only reduces burning, but also helps assure that all pieces are turned together. Chickens should be placed close

together to conserve space, but should not be overlapped or cooking will be uneven. A convenient way to arrange the chickens is in rows, alternating left and right halves in each row.

Chickens should be turned about every five minutes, depending on the speed of cooking. Clean gloves may be used if turning is to be done by hand. Forks should never be used to turn the chicken since puncturing the skin allows moisture to escape. Barbecue sauce should be added during the last 30 minutes of cooking each time the chickens are turned. A plastic garden sprinkler can make an excellent sauce applicator. The birds should be sprinkled with salt during the cooking process. Salt both sides allowing about ½ teaspoon salt per bird half.

## **Food Safety Tips**

Like most foods, chicken is perishable and should be handled and stored safely to preserve optimum quality and reduce the risk of illnesses associated with bacterial infections.

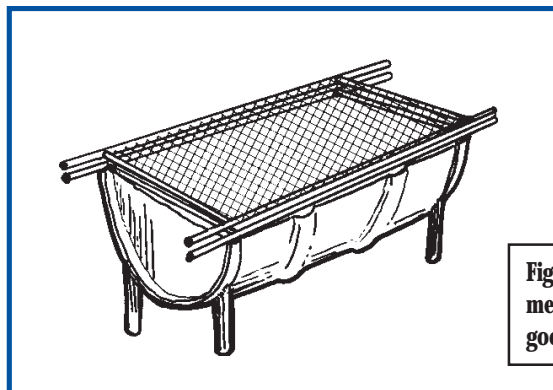


Figure 1. Smaller-sized metal drums make good portable pits.

### General safety tips:

Refrigerate uncooked chicken at all times. Freeze the chicken if you don't plan to use it within two days.

Thaw frozen chicken in a refrigerator and not on your countertop. It will take about 24 hours to thaw a 4-pound chicken in the refrigerator.

Chicken may also be thawed in cold water. Place it in a watertight bag or the original package in cold water for about two hours for a whole chicken.

Remember to always wash hands, countertops, cutting boards, knives, or any other utensils used to handle uncooked meat with hot, soapy water. None of the items should be allowed to come into contact with other foods in preparation.

When barbecuing chicken outdoors for large groups, do not keep the pieces on the grill. Store them in refrigerated containers until they are placed on the grill.

After the pieces are cooked, place them on clean plates. NEVER allow them to come into contact with the plates used to transport raw chicken to the grill.

Any marinades used for preparing raw chicken should NEVER be used on the cooked chicken or other foods. Discard it!

Chicken should always be cooked well done. The internal temperature should reach 180°F for a whole bird, 170°F for bone in parts and 160°F for boneless parts.

Pierce chicken with a fork; the juices should run clear, not pink or cloudy.

Never leave cooked chicken at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep it hot or refrigerated.

If you are transporting the chicken, put it in an insulated container such as an ice chest. The rule of thumb is to keep it below 40°F or above 140°F.

### Pit and Grill

The barbecue pit may be constructed of a number of different readily available materials. Blocks, bricks or sheet metal may be used. A portable pit is often the most desirable because of its versatility. Pits constructed from small- or medium-sized metal drums are well suited for a small barbecue. The

barrel should be split lengthwise with legs mounted underneath. For larger groups, a sheet metal pit is convenient, since it is relatively light, easy to handle, and the size is easily adjusted to fit the needs of the occasion. The sides should be staked securely enough to support the grills.

The grill can be made from steel rods, welded wire, or hardware wire. A frame covered with welded wire is convenient to use with the sheet iron pit. A sandwich-type grill allows all the halves to be turned at the same time. Pivot points on each side of the sandwich grills allow easy turning by one person. This is timesaving and ensures the turning of all the chicken. The size of the grill, depending upon need, may be determined by allowing approximately 1 square foot for each four chicken halves. A number of grills can be used side by side on a single pit to provide facilities for additional chickens.

Charcoal briquettes are the most convenient and satisfactory fuel for chicken barbecuing. They produce an even heat without smoke. One-half to ¾ pounds of charcoal should be allowed for each half of chicken being prepared.

The charcoal should be piled in a row down the middle of the pit. Charcoal lighter fuel can be used to start the fire. When flames have disappeared and the briquettes are burning evenly, a garden rake can be used to evenly distribute the briquettes over the bottom of the pit. Any lighter fuel odor should be completely gone before any chicken is placed near the heat. Twenty to 30

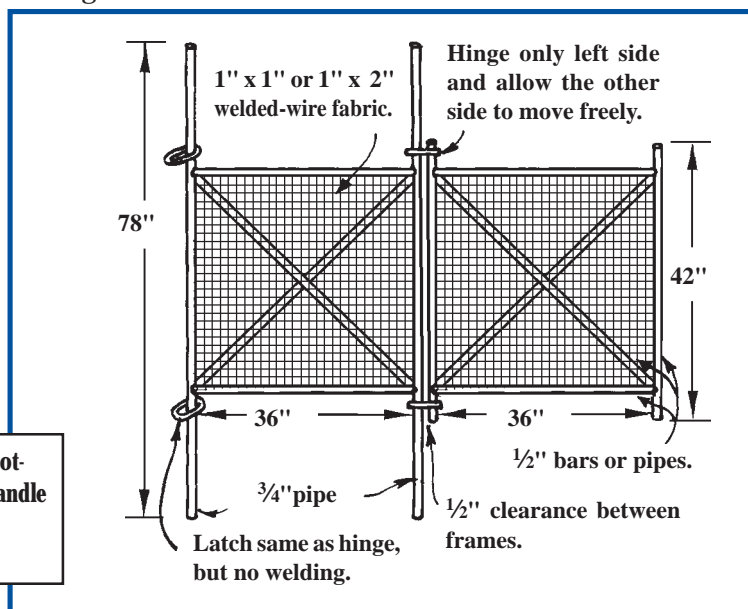


Figure 2. This 3-foot-square grill will handle 30 to 40 chicken halves.

## K-State's Savory Chicken Barbecue Sauce

	<i>Number of Halves</i>			
	<b>10</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>250</b>
Butter or vegetable oil	1/8 lb.	3/4 lb.	1 1/4 lb.	3 lbs.
Water	1 cup	5 cups	10 cups	7 qts.
Vinegar (Malt vinegar, if available)	1/2 cup	2 1/2 cups	5 cups	3 1/2 qts.
Dry mustard	3/4 tsp.	1 1/2 tbs.	2 1/2 tbs.	6 1/4 tbs.
Sugar	1 tbs.	5 tbs.	10 tbs.	1 2/3 cups
Salt	1/2 tsp.	5 tsp.	10 tsp.	1/2 cup
Chili powder	1/2 tsp.	2 1/2 tsp.	5 tsp.	1/4 cup
Black pepper	1/2 tsp.	2 1/2 tsp.	5 tsp.	1/4 cup
Paprika	1/2 tsp.	2 1/2 tsp.	5 tsp.	1/4 cup
Onion powder	1/2 tsp.	2 1/2 tsp.	5 tsp.	1/4 cup
Garlic powder	1/8 tsp.	5/8 tsp.	1 1/4 tsp.	1 tbs.
Worcestershire sauce	1 1/2 tsp.	2 1/2 tbs.	5 tbs.	6 oz.
Tabasco sauce	1 1/2 tsp.	2 1/2 tbs.	5 tbs.	6 oz.

*Combine the butter, water, vinegar, Worcestershire sauce, and Tabasco sauce and bring to a boil. Combine the dry ingredients and add to boiling liquid. Boil gently for 1 hour. The amount is for medium-sized birds. Plan for more sauce if large birds are used. For small family barbecues the sauce may be brushed on with a pastry brush or similar applicator. For large numbers, the sauce is more easily applied by being sprayed on the birds, using a stainless-steel sprayer, usually 3 or 3 1/2 gallon capacity. The sauce should be kept hot and stirred frequently to keep an even mixture.*

minutes should be allowed to start the fire. Some cooks prefer to use hard wood to start the fire. After the fire dies down, they then add a few briquettes. No matter how you do it, be sure to get started well in advance of your serving time.

For best results, the grill should be 20 to 24 inches from the fire. When using the small home barbecue grill, the chickens should be as far from the heat as possible. This prevents the chicken from cooking too rapidly on the outside, leaving it rare on the inside, which is not desirable. The most optimum flavor results from slow cooking.

Allow at least one hour of cooking time. This will vary some depending upon the fire and size of the chicken. Be sure the chicken is well cooked. An easy way to test for 'doneness' is to twist the

leg. When the leg twists easily at the joint, the chicken is done.

### **Barbecue Sauce**

Barbecue sauces are readily available at most retail grocery stores. Most of these sauces will give satisfactory results. However, charring and burning are common if the sauce contains tomato products.

Almost everyone who has prepared food on an outdoor grill uses a different sauce recipe. The recipe listed above is one that will add greatly to the flavor of the birds; it has been used by the K-State Animal Sciences and Industry Department for many successful chicken barbecues. Remember, any barbecue sauce or marinade used in the preparation of the chicken should not be used after the meat is cooked.

### **Serving**

Chickens should be served while hot. If serving is delayed, holding in an insulated container or ice chest will keep the chicken warm.

### **Suggested foods for combinations with barbecued chicken are:**

- Hot rolls
- Cottage cheese
- French bread
- Potato chips
- Baked beans
- Cherry or apple pie
- Tossed salad
- Ice cream and cookies
- Cole slaw
- Coffee
- Relish plate
- Tea
- Potato salad
- Milk

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**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service**

MF-2306

December 1997

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File code: Poultry Science-1