

Add spicy Thai flavor to grilled ribs

By JeanMarie Brownson
Chicago Tribune

I don't need food to be hot. But I do like it spicy. Even comfort food. I add chile flakes to pasta, hot sauce to mashed potatoes, black pepper to scrambled eggs.

The penchant for warm spice stems from college days enjoying skewers of chicken satay and pad Thai noodles with classmates. Later, a research meal with Cuisine magazine colleagues at Chicago's Thai Room opened our eyes to even bolder heat. A menu item, "original hot number one," challenged us mightily. Gradually, I built tolerance for its searing green curry heat and licorice-y notes of Thai basil. Someday soon, we hope to encounter zesty new flavors dining out with friends.

In the meantime, I'll cook with bold flavor as much for challenge as nostalgia for shared meals with fellow food adventurers.

Memories of that Thai-style satay, grilled and skewered highly seasoned meat, inspire these recipes. I skip the skewering and opt instead for meaty, flavor-packed pork country ribs. You can use bone-in or boneless country ribs — whatever you can get at the meat counter or butcher. Trim off excess fat, but leave enough for flavor and browning. This recipe also works beautifully with bone-in chicken pieces, beef sirloin steak and lamb shoulder chops.

Refrigerated purees make easy work of the flavor-filled marinade. You can substitute fresh ginger and lemongrass



Abel Uribe/ChicagoTribune-TNS

Pork country ribs marinate in a mixture of onion, garlic, ginger and lemongrass purees, fish sauce, chile, salt, pepper, coriander, cumin and turmeric before being grilled and then served with fresh lime and bottled peanut sauce.

if it is available. If you are missing any of the ground spices, just use a little more of each of the ones you have on hand or substitute some garam masala or curry powder.

For grilling, charcoal adds the most flavor, but a gas grill will suffice. I prepare the grill to have a cooler area so the ribs can cook more slowly to tenderness. A sear over the hottest part of the grill adds a browned flavor that keeps us coming back for more. Be sure to serve the pork with wedges of fresh lime for squeezing over the meat. Bottled peanut satay sauce can be served alongside if you wish. I like to sprinkle lots of fresh cilantro over everything for its fresh flavor.

A slightly sweet and spicy slaw makes a crunchy contrast to the rich meat. In lieu of peanut sauce, I simply add a handful of dry-roasted peanuts to the slaw. Steamed green beans or broccoli spears, tossed with Chinese

chile crisp (or melted butter and crushed pepper flakes) makes a gorgeous side dish.

I'm always playing around with ways to flavor brown rice. Here, I add a little unsweetened coconut milk to the cooking water and a generous amount of unsweetened coconut flakes for texture. I just love to sprinkle the finished rice with hot sauce — especially when it's the basis for a bowl topped with leftover shreds of the pork and spoonfuls of the slaw.

THAI-STYLE GRILLED PORK COUNTRY RIBS

Prep: 20 minutes
Marinate: 1 to 24 hours
Cook: 30 minutes
Makes: 6 servings

Look for prepared lemongrass and ginger purees in refrigerated cases at the grocer.

8 bone-in or boneless country-style pork loin ribs, each about 1-inch thick OR bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs, 2¾ to 3 pounds total
½ small white onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, peeled
1 tablespoon lemongrass puree or 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh lemongrass
1 tablespoon ginger puree or grated fresh ginger
1 tablespoon fish sauce (or 2 teaspoons soy sauce)
½ small serrano chile, seeded (or 1 teaspoon hot sauce)
½ teaspoon each: salt, black pepper, ground coriander, ground cumin, turmeric
Chopped fresh cilantro, lime wedges, bottled peanut satay sauce

1. Put country ribs into a large bowl or baking dish. Put ¼ cup water, onion, garlic, purees, fish sauce, chile, salt, pepper, coriander, cumin and turmeric into a blender. Process until smooth.
2. Pour the marinade over the ribs; turn to be sure meat is coated well on all sides. Refrigerate covered at least 1 hour or up to 24 hours.
3. Heat a gas grill to medium hot or prepare a charcoal grill and let coals burn until covered with gray ash. Turn off burners or arrange coals at sides of grill for indirect cooking.
4. Put the chops, with marinade that clings, directly over the heat or coals. Cook, without turning, until nicely browned, about 10 minutes. Flip chops to the cooler portion (not directly over the heat) of the grill. Cook without turning, until meat is almost firm

when pressed with the tip of a knife (about 150 degrees on an instant read thermometer), about 20 minutes.

5. Transfer to a serving platter; tent with foil and let stand about 10 minutes. Serve garnished with chopped cilantro and lime wedges for squeezing over meat. Pass the peanut satay sauce if you wish.

•Variation — Thai-style grilled sirloin steak: Marinate 2 to 2½ pounds boneless top sirloin beef steak (about 1-inch thick) as directed. Grill the steaks directly over the heat the entire time as follows: 6 minutes on the first side and 4 to 6 minutes on the second side for medium-rare.

LEMONGRASS AND PEANUT SLAW

Prep: 20 minutes
Chill: 30 minutes
Makes: 6 servings

Crunchy chow mein noodles can be substituted for the peanuts.

¼ cup unseasoned rice vinegar
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon each: sugar, dark Asian sesame oil, lemongrass puree
6 cups finely shredded cabbage, about 11 ounces (one-quarter of a medium-size head)
2 large carrots, peeled, trimmed, shaved (about 1 cup or 2.5 ounces)
¼ medium white onion, finely diced, rinsed
½ teaspoon minced fresh green chile (such as jalapeno or serrano) or ¼ teaspoon crushed

red pepper flakes
2 to 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
½ cup roughly chopped roasted peanuts

1. Put vinegar, soy sauce, sugar, sesame oil and lemon-grass puree into a large bowl. Mix until the sugar dissolves.
2. Stir in shredded cabbage, carrots, onion and chile until well mixed. Refrigerate covered about 30 minutes or up to several hours.
3. Stir well. Add cilantro and peanuts. Toss and serve.

COCONUT BROWN RICE

Prep: 10 minutes
Cook: 45 minutes
Makes: 6 to 8 servings

2 cups long grain brown rice
1 cup shredded unsweetened coconut, optional
½ cup unsweetened coconut milk
2 cloves garlic, crushed
¾ teaspoon salt
Toasted coconut for garnish, optional
Chinese chile crisp or red pepper hot sauce (such as peri peri), for serving

1. Put 3 cups water, rice, coconut, coconut milk, garlic and salt into 3-quart saucepan. Heat to a boil. Reduce heat to very low. Simmer, tightly covered, stirring once or twice, until water is absorbed and rice is tender, about 40 minutes. Let stand off the heat, 10 minutes.
2. Fluff rice with a fork. Garnish with toasted coconut. Serve hot jazzed up with hot sauce.

GARDEN

Continued from Page 1B

- Water turf as needed to prevent drought stress.
- Turf grass grown in shaded conditions should be mowed at higher levels.
- A mailbox mounted on a nearby post makes a handy place to store and keep dry any small tools, seeds, labels, etc. that are

- frequently used in the garden.
- Provide water in the garden for birds, especially in dry weather.
 - Newly planted trees and shrubs should continue to be watered thoroughly, once a week.
 - Prune climbing roses and rambléd roses after bloom.
 - Keep weeds from making seeds now. It will mean less weeding next year.

- Plant zinnias now for late blooms in the annual border.
 - Stop pinching mums back after mid July or you'll delay flowering.
 - Apply no fertilizers to trees and shrubs after July 4. Fertilizing late can cause lush growth that is apt to winterkill.
- If you have garden questions or comments please write to greengardencolumn@yahoo.com.

CORN

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Add the yuca or potato, broth, tomatoes with their juices, and corn cobs. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer until the yuca is tender, about 30 minutes. Add the corn kernels and cook just until heated through and still crisp-tender, about 3 minutes. Discard the corn cobs. Using an immersion blender or

stand blender (working in batches if necessary), puree about half of the soup until thickened. It should be creamy but still have bits of vegetables throughout. Stir the puree into the remaining soup.

Serve with the crema, lime, avocado and cilantro.

Makes 6 servings.

— “Carla’s Comfort Foods” by Carla Hall (Atria Books; April 2014)

COOL IT

Continued from Page 1B

- Creamy pops: A cup of Greek yogurt and ¼ cup of milk can serve as the base for creamy pops. Feel free to use coconut water, soy, or almond milk. You can add whole fruit to this base, or put all the ingredients into a blender and puree, then pour into molds.
- Layered pops: Let each layer of fruit puree or creamy pop mixture set in the freezer for at least 20 minutes before adding the next flavor. Be sure to keep other purees refrigerated while layers are setting.

1½ cups (12 ounces) Greek yogurt
¾ cup (6 ounces) full fat coconut milk
4 tablespoons granulated sugar, divided
1½ cups fresh or frozen blueberries

•Honey can be used instead of sugar, and adjust to taste

In a large bowl, combine the Greek yogurt with the coconut milk and 1 ½ to 2 tablespoons of sugar or honey. Stir vigorously until you have a smooth consistency. Taste and add more sweetener, if desired. Set aside.

Make the blueberry sauce by combining the blueberries with the remaining 2 tablespoons of granulated sugar or honey in a small pot. Cook over medium heat until the blueberries start to break down. Stir and continue cooking until it reaches a

jamlike consistency. Remove from heat.

Place a tablespoon of the yogurt mixture in each mold. Add a tablespoon of blueberry sauce. Top with another tablespoon of the yogurt. Continue alternating until the mold is nearly full. Place the top on the mold and add the sticks. Freeze for six hours.

Once the ice pops are completely frozen, place the mold under running water so that they will loosen. Remove and enjoy immediately, or place in the freezer in an air-tight container with parchment paper dividing each row. These are an easy grab-and-go breakfast for summer, or a cool treat for any time of day.

— Recipe courtesy of Vallery Lomas; foodieinnewyork.com

LEMON ICE POPS

Makes about 10 pops

This ice pop recipe can be adapted for any fruit you have on hand. You can also add lime or coconut. For pretty pops, drop thin slices of lemon and lime into the mold before adding liquid.

¾ cup sugar or ½ cup honey
1 cup water
½ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
Zest of 2 lemons

Using a saucepan, dissolve sugar into water, stirring continuously. Add juice and zest and bring to a simmer. Remove mixture from heat and allow to cool. Taste and adjust sweetener, if needed.

Pour lemon mixture into molds, add sticks and freeze for 6 hours.

STRAWBERRY CREAM POPS

Makes about 10 pops

Any fruit you have on hand can be made into a creamy pop. For a mocha version, replace fruit with 2 tablespoons of unsweetened cocoa powder and 1 tablespoon

of espresso powder. For a refreshing floral pop, use honey and replace fruit with a pinch of culinary lavender.

2 cups strawberries, hulled and quartered
1 cup Greek yogurt
½ cup whole, coconut, soy, or almond milk
¼ cup sugar or honey (to taste)
½ teaspoon vanilla
Pinch of salt

Using a blender, puree all ingredients until smooth, scraping down sides, if necessary. Taste and adjust the sweetener.

Pour mixture into ice pop molds, add sticks, and freeze for 6 hours.

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