

Boozy barbecue sauces

6 scrumptious recipes to make all summer long

By **BEN MIMS**
Los Angeles Times

During the past year, I turned to a daily cocktail (or two) to help get through the pandemic (just me?). I experimented with syrups and bitters, perfected my orange twist and went through many bottles of booze. But now that the world is opening back up again — and we can finally meet up for drinks made by other people and enjoyed with other people — all that booze needs to be put to good use.

As it happens, my colleague Lisa McRee, anchor of Spectrum's "L.A. Times Today," emailed me back at the beginning of May to say she had the same problem and to ask for advice on what she should do with all the excess liquor she had in her bar. So I made plans to go to Lisa's home to spend the day cooking and talking about how she likes to entertain to get a sense of what we might do with the "leftovers."

As it turns out, Lisa is a sauce queen. From barbecue sauces to herb relishes, spicy salsas and everything in between, Lisa likes to make a few different sauces to keep on hand so that when guests come over, either planned or unannounced, she can grill up some ribs, chops or veggies and serve a flavorful dinner. It's a no-stress method of entertaining that takes a lot of work off the host while also allowing guests to customize the food to fit their taste or dietary practice of the moment.

So, to fit with her entertaining ethos and because it's summertime and more and more people will be having backyard barbecues and get-togethers, I immersed myself in using that leftover booze to create lots of flavorful sauces — using the alcohols' distinct flavors and aromas to complement those of the other ingredients — that you can make now and keep in your fridge the whole summer to use at a moment's notice.

For my Jack-and-Coke BBQ Sauce, good old-fashioned whiskey adds a dry punch to a traditional ketchup-and-vinegar-based sauce sweetened with cola and caramelized onions. In the same vein, but with a twist, my Stone Fruit & Scotch BBQ Sauce gets its sweetness from peach preserves (you can use plum, apricot or cherry too) and is balanced with the smoky tinge of blended Scotch.

If you love honey mustard, then try my Golden Honey Mustard Sauce With Rum and Turmeric, which uses the punch of rum for a more complex sweetness that is balanced with the earthy kick (and vibrant color) of ground turmeric.

The sweetness of bourbon works with the heat of fresh chiles and a complex mix of warm spices to bring harmony to the Moroccan-Spiced BBQ Sauce from Zuzu, a Spanish-inspired restaurant in Napa. (It is Lisa's favorite sauce.)

Expanding beyond smooth sauces, my Pineapple Chutney With Mezcal and Vanilla Bean utilizes the booze's tell-tale smokiness to add character to the tropical sweetness of pine-

apple and vanilla bean, pod and all. And my favorite condiment gets a south-of-the-border makeover in Tomatillo & Tequila Chowchow. The relish, typically made with green tomatoes and bell peppers with lots of vinegar and sugar, instead uses tart, firm tomatillos and serrano and habanero chiles for plenty of heat. Sweet at first, then spicy at the end, the earthy agave liquor seamlessly blends each flavor with the next.

I had Lisa try all the sauces, and we discussed the best ways to serve them (you can go to latimes.com/food to watch that video). Some are more traditional barbecue sauces — sweet and tangy and spicy — meant for brushing on grilling chicken or splashing on hearty pulled pork, while others are relishes meant for spooning onto cooked meat, seafood and veggies or using as a spread on the sandwiches you'll make with all the leftovers. Because once you make these sauces, you'll find plenty of excuses to use them, whether your bar is stocked or not.

JACK-AND-COKE BARBECUE SAUCE

Time: 45 minutes

Yields: Makes 3 cups

The sweetness of cola and whiskey are the ideal foundation for a complexly layered barbecue sauce that works brilliantly as a rib glaze as well as a sauce to pass around the table for slathering over grilled chicken, pulled pork or slices of brisket. Be careful to stir the onions often so they brown evenly but don't burn. Otherwise, they'll make the sauce bitter.

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 small yellow onion, minced
2 tablespoons double-concentrate tomato paste
2 large garlic cloves, finely grated
2/3 cup whiskey
2/3 cup ketchup
1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
1/3 cup packed light brown sugar
3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
3/4 teaspoon Diamond Crystal kosher salt
1 bottle or can (12 ounces) Coca-Cola, preferably Mexican

1. Heat the oil in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onions and cook, stirring, until soft and evenly browned at the edges, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the tomato paste and garlic and cook, stirring to combine both with the onions, for 30 seconds. Pour in the whiskey, bring to a boil and cook until reduced to a thick sauce, 2 to 3 minutes.

2. Add the ketchup, vinegar, brown sugar, Worcestershire, salt and soda, and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until reduced by about a third and thickened, 15 to 20 minutes.

3. Remove the pan from the heat and pour the sauce into a bowl. Let the sauce cool to room temperature, then transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate until ready to use.

Make Ahead:

Refrigerate the sauce in an airtight container for up to one month.

STONE FRUIT & SCOTCH BBQ SAUCE

Time: 25 minutes

Yields: Makes 2 2/3 cups

This tomato-based barbecue sauce uses peach preserves to add a fruity sweetness (you can also use apricot, plum or cherry), balanced by the light smokiness

of Scotch, while whole peeled tomatoes add acidity and tang. Brush the sauce on pork ribs or chicken, but also try it on salmon fillets or swordfish.

1/2 cup blended Scotch
1/2 cup chunky stone fruit jam (see note above)
1/2 cup ketchup
1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
1 tablespoon molasses (not "blackstrap")
1/2 teaspoon Diamond Crystal kosher salt
1 can (15 ounces) whole peeled tomatoes, preferably fire-roasted

1. Bring the Scotch to a boil in a small saucepan and cook until reduced by half, about 2 minutes. Pour in the remaining ingredients, crushing the tomatoes with your hand as you add them or with a spoon or potato masher in the pan, and return to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until reduced slightly and thickened, about 15 minutes.

2. Remove the pan from the heat and pour the sauce into a blender, or use an immersion blender, and purée until smooth. Transfer the sauce to an airtight storage container and let cool to room temperature. Refrigerate until ready to use.

Make Ahead:

Refrigerate the sauce in an airtight container for up to 1 month.

GOLDEN HONEY MUSTARD SAUCE WITH RUM AND TURMERIC

Time: 20 minutes

Yields: Makes 2 1/2 cups

Bright yellow, spicy and earthy all at once, ground turmeric adds complexity to regular honey mustard sauce, balanced here with a splash of Worcestershire sauce and golden rum. While it's a great dipping sauce for chicken tenders or anything coming off the grill, try it as a coating for chicken wings or grilled vegetables and as a marinade and grilling sauce for tofu or veggie burgers.

2/3 cup gold rum
2/3 cup yellow mustard
2/3 cup Dijon mustard
2/3 cup honey
1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
3 tablespoons packed light brown sugar
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
1/2 teaspoon Diamond Crystal kosher salt

1. Bring the rum to a boil in a small saucepan and cook until reduced by half, about 2 to 2 1/2 minutes. Stir in the remaining ingredients and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low to maintain a gentle simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, to marry flavors and thicken slightly, about 10 minutes.

2. Remove the pan from the heat and let the sauce cool completely. Transfer the sauce to an airtight container and refrigerate at least 8 hours before serving.

Make Ahead:

Refrigerate the sauce in an airtight container for up to 1 month.

MOROCCAN-SPICED BARBECUE SAUCE WITH BOURBON

Time: 45 minutes

Yields: 2 1/4 cups

This intensely aromatic and spicy sauce comes from Zuzu restaurant in Napa, California, and is filled with 20 ingredients, all of which are essential to its final flavor. Bourbon helps elevate the sweetness of the ketchup and honey to balance out the headiness of the warm spices and fresh chiles.

Serve this sauce with lamb, game, dark meat chicken or any other protein that can match its bold flavor.

1 1/2 teaspoons whole black peppercorns
1 1/2 teaspoons whole coriander seeds
1 1/2 teaspoons whole green cardamom pods
3/4 teaspoon whole cloves
3/4 teaspoon whole cumin seeds
2 whole star anise
1 cinnamon stick
1 cup bourbon
1 cup honey
1 cup ketchup
1 cup rice vinegar
1/4 cup fresh lime juice
1/4 cup soy sauce
1 1/2 teaspoons dried lavender
1 1/2 teaspoons whole green peppercorns (if in brine, drain and rinse before using)
3/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
2 small serrano chiles, stem removed, halved lengthwise
2 small garlic cloves, roughly chopped
2 inches fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced
1/4 bunch cilantro, leaves and tender stems roughly chopped

1. Heat a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the black peppercorns, coriander, cardamom, cloves, cumin, star anise and the cinnamon stick and cook, stirring, until all the spices are lightly toasted (look for the cumin to turn a shade darker), 2 to 3 minutes.

2. Pour in the bourbon to stop the spices from cooking; if using a gas stove, remove the pot from the heat beforehand so the alcohol doesn't catch fire. Bring the bourbon to a boil and cook until reduced by half, 1 1/2 to 2 minutes.

3. Add the remaining ingredients and return to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a steady simmer and cook, stirring occasionally at the beginning and more frequently toward the end, until the sauce is reduced by about half and is syrupy, about 30 minutes.

4. Pour the sauce through a fine strainer into a bowl and let cool to room temperature. Transfer the sauce to an airtight container and refrigerate until ready to use.

Adapted from Zuzu restaurant in Napa, California.

Make Ahead:

Refrigerate the sauce in an airtight container for up to one month.

PINEAPPLE CHUTNEY WITH MEZCAL AND VANILLA BEAN

Time: 1 hour 10 minutes

Yields: Makes 2 1/2 cups

Major Grey's chutney, the Indian-influenced British condiment typically made with mango, serves as the inspiration for this pineapple version, imbued with fragrant vanilla bean and cut through with smoky mezcal. Bright lime, spicy ginger and the mineral sweetness of golden raisins add even more tropical fragrance to the chunky sweet condiment that's best served over smoked meats, grilled turkey or chicken, salmon or grilled lobster and shrimp.

1/2 whole vanilla bean
2/3 cup mezcal
1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1/2 teaspoon Diamond Crystal kosher salt
1 pound peeled and cored pineapple flesh, cut into 1/4-inch dice (from half of a large pineapple)
1/2 cup golden raisins
1/4 cup finely chopped fresh ginger



Christina House-Los Angeles Times/TNS

Cola is used as the sweetener in this whiskey-spiked barbecue sauce based on the ketchup-y sauces beloved in the Midwest.

1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
1 small garlic clove, finely grated
1/2 cinnamon stick

1. Using a paring knife, split the vanilla bean pod in half lengthwise. Using the tip of the knife, scrape out the seeds and transfer them to a small bowl. Very thinly slice the vanilla pod, then run your knife through it a few times to make sure it's very finely minced. Transfer the chopped pod to the bowl as well.

2. Bring the mezcal to a boil in a medium saucepan and cook until reduced by half, 1 1/2 to 2 minutes. Stir in the vinegar, both sugars, the lime juice and salt to dissolve the sugar, then add the reserved chopped vanilla bean and its seeds, the pineapple, raisins, ginger, onion, garlic and cinnamon.

3. Place the pan over high heat, cover and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the mixture is reduced, almost all the liquid is gone and the mixture is glossy and thick, 50 to 55 minutes.

4. Remove the pan from the heat and let the chutney cool completely. Transfer the chutney to an airtight storage container and refrigerate at least 8 hours to thicken before serving.

Make Ahead:

Refrigerate the chutney in an airtight container for up to 1 month.

TOMATILLO & TEQUILA CHOWCHOW

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes, plus 4 hours unattended

Yields: Makes 2 cups

The earthy salinity of tequila adds depth to this sweet, tangy relish, which uses tomatillos instead of the typical green tomatoes, and adds plenty of heat from serrano and habanero chiles. Try to use large tomatillos to make the slicing quicker. This chowchow is wonderful spooned onto grilled meat, but even better paired with grilled fish fillets, oysters or on

sautéed crab cakes.

1 pound tomatillos
1 small white onion, finely chopped
1 large serrano chile, stem removed, minced
1 habanero chile, stem removed, minced
4 teaspoons Diamond Crystal kosher salt
2/3 cup tequila, preferably reposado or blanco
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1/4 cup distilled white vinegar
2 small garlic cloves, finely grated

1. Remove the husks from the tomatillos, then rinse them under warm running water to remove the sticky film on the outside. Cut each into 8 wedges, then thinly slice the wedges crosswise to create triangles. Transfer the sliced tomatillos to a large bowl.

2. Add the onion, serrano and habanero. Sprinkle the vegetables with the salt and toss to combine. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and let sit at room temperature for 4 hours or refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight.

3. Transfer the vegetables to a large sieve set in the sink and press to extract as much liquid as possible, discarding the liquid.

4. While the vegetables drain, bring the tequila to a boil in a medium saucepan and cook until reduced by half, about 1 minute. Stir in the sugar, vinegar and garlic, then stir in the drained vegetables.

5. Cover the pan and bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a gentle simmer and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are very soft, almost all the liquid is gone and the mixture looks glossy, 40 to 45 minutes.

6. Remove the pan from the heat and let the chowchow cool completely. Transfer the chowchow to an airtight storage container and refrigerate for at least 8 hours to thicken before serving.

Make Ahead:

Refrigerate the chowchow in an airtight container for up to 1 month.

FAMILY OWNED

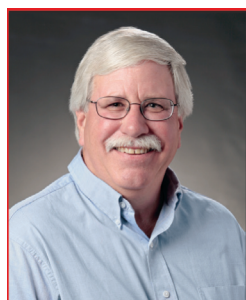
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