
ALISAL RANCH

—BBQ—

BOOTCAMP

FIRED-UP SINCE



TWENTY ELEVEN



WELCOME TO BBQ BOOTCAMP!

Welcome to Alisal Guest Ranch & Resort's BBQ Bootcamp. We are very excited to be collaborating to bring you this unique fire-cooked food event since 2011. Alisal has been a Guest Ranch since 1946 and has been specializing in the local Santa Maria style BBQ since its inception. Now we are letting guests in not only to our secrets but also to those from our favorite chefs and pitmasters.

Throughout the event, we will teach everything we can about BBQ. From lighting the fire through seasoning to dishes and items that you will love to showcase on your home grill. Our favorite BBQ Chefs will walk you through many styles and techniques that will expand your horizons over the fire.

Most importantly of all, this is a time to relax, have fun, and enjoy all the Alisal has to offer in addition to our BBQ and local libations!

**ERIK SANDVEN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CULINARY OPERATIONS
ALISAL RANCH**

CHEFS

— at —

BBQ

BOOTCAMP



ERIK SANDVEN

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CULINARY OPERATIONS AND FOOD AND BEVERAGE

ALISAL RANCH

Erik started working in small restaurants in the Orange County area at the age of 15 and continued doing so until he completed culinary school.

From there, he took a position at the Ritz Carlton, Laguna Niguel in 2011, where he was a lead cook in the Richard Sandoval concept restaurant "Raya" before taking on the role of Hotel Saucier and eventually Banquet Sous Chef.

In 2017, he accepted a Sous Chef position at the Pelican Grill restaurant at the Resort at Pelican Hill. Soon after, he was promoted to Sous Chef at the resort's fine dining Italian concept "Andrea." After less than a year in that role, Erik was promoted to Chef de Cuisine at the resort's three-meal restaurant "Coliseum."

In 2021, The Ritz Carlton Bacara invited him to take on the role of Banquet Chef, where he spent nearly two years overseeing their banquet operations, café, club lounge, and Obar restaurant.

Erik joined the team here at Alisal Ranch in January 2023 as our Hotel Chef and was recently promoted to Executive Chef in September. He is excited to incorporate what he's learned throughout his career, creating a sense of place for our guests through elevated ranch cuisine.



ADAM MEASURALL
EXECUTIVE SOUS CHEF
ALISAL RANCH

Adam Measurall grew up in Port Hueneme, CA. He always had a passion for cooking. Learning a lot of home cooking from his family, he moved to Santa Barbara to attend culinary school. While in school, he worked at a number of restaurants, including The Harbor Restaurant, Emilio's, Seagrass, and Arlington Tavern, where he worked his way up to Executive Chef. He also developed his relationship with local farmers and fishmongers.

Adam then became the Executive Chef of Far Western Tavern, a Santa Maria-style steakhouse in Old Town Orcutt. Here he developed his skills managing a high-volume operation. Following that experience, Adam opened Leroy's Restaurant at the Kinney Hotel in SLO and then managed other properties such as the Inn at the Pier in Pismo Beach and Ocean Point Ranch in Cambria.

Adam joined the Alisal in 2022 as Chef de Cuisine of the Ranch and River Grills. Bringing back the local favorite "After Hours" on Thursday and Friday nights at the River Grill, Adam has offered specials including classic Santa Maria Tri-Tip Sandwiches. When not at work, Adam enjoys spending time with his two young daughters.



DANIEL ALVAREZ
CHEF DE CUISINE
ALISAL RANCH

Daniel was born and raised in Guadalupe, California, a small farm town on the Central Coast. Daniel's grandparents immigrated to Guadalupe in the 1940s from Mexico and opened a restaurant that later inspired Daniel's desire for cooking.

At 15, Daniel began bussing tables and working his way into the kitchen at what was once "Rooney's Irish Pub." He then worked at "Chop Street" in Pismo Beach, CA, and later went on to be a part of opening "The Spoon Trade" in Grover Beach, CA, where he worked his way up to Kitchen Manager at the young age of 22.

Daniel eventually found Alisal Ranch and has climbed the ladder to Chef de Cuisine after 4 years. He enjoys his time here and is excited for what the future will bring. In his free time, you can find Daniel hiking and cooking with his wife.



CHEF NEAL FRASER

Chef Neal Fraser is a celebrated Los Angeles chef and restaurateur known for his refined yet approachable modern American cuisine. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Fraser honed his craft at legendary kitchens including Wolfgang Puck’s Eureka and Spago, Checkers Hotel under Thomas Keller, Joachim Splichal’s Pinot Bistro, and Hans Rockenwagner’s Rox, before opening his own acclaimed restaurants—Boxer, BLD, and Grace. Today, he is chef-owner of Redbird, housed in the historic rectory of Vibiana, a former cathedral turned special events and performing arts venue in downtown Los Angeles.

Located in one of the city’s most treasured architectural gems, Redbird showcases Fraser’s seasonal menus with plates designed to be shared, from playful snacks and “kickshaws” to inventive entrées. The restaurant has earned recognition from the Michelin Guide California and 50 Best Discovery, as well as the Los Angeles Conservancy’s 2019 Preservation Award Chair’s Award, the organization’s highest honor, celebrating the persistence, creativity, and success of the revitalization and adaptive reuse of the cathedral, rectory, and surrounding property.



CHEF DREW DECKMAN

A preeminent voice in ethical farming and slow food culture, Drew Deckman is chef and co-owner of Deckman’s Restaurant Group. Alongside his wife and business partner, Paulina Deckman, their concepts include several MICHELIN-starred and MICHELIN Green Star restaurants in Baja, Mexico—among them Deckman’s en el Mogor and Conchas de Piedra—as well as their newly opened restaurant, 31 Thirty One, in San Diego, CA.

Outside of his kitchens, Chef Deckman applies his passionate ethics and deep knowledge of food systems to his roles as a board member of the Sustainable Seafood Foundation, an active member of the Blue Ribbon Task Force by Seafood Watch, and a culinary advisor for Meals on Wheels. He is also the host and producer of *Ingrediente: Mexico*, a docuseries highlighting Mexico’s rich culinary heritage and local producers, now streaming on Amazon Prime.



CHEF REBECCA KING

Chef Rebecca King is the founder of Rebecca Kooking, a high-touch private chef placement and culinary concierge agency serving clients worldwide. Known for curating unforgettable dining experiences, she has become a trusted culinary partner for families, events, and luxury hospitality groups across the U.S. and abroad.

Before launching her agency, Rebecca was the chef and creative force behind The Bad Jew, a cult-favorite Los Angeles pop-up celebrated for its playful reimagining of Jewish comfort food classics. Signature creations like her “porkstrami” and smoked BBQ dishes earned her a devoted following and national press recognition, cementing her reputation for bold, inventive cuisine.



CHEF DANIEL CASTILLO

Pitmaster and Chef Daniel Castillo, co-owner of Heritage Barbecue, spent seven years as a corporate chef for Whole Foods Market before discovering his passion for craft barbecue. That obsession led to an apprenticeship at Brett’s Backyard BBQ in Texas—and ultimately to leaving his day job to pursue barbecue full-time. With the support of his wife, Brenda, the two began hosting backyard pop-ups and brewery collaborations around Orange County before opening their first brick-and-mortar, Heritage Barbecue, in August 2020 in historic San Juan Capistrano, Calif.

From day one, Heritage drew lines around the block and widespread acclaim—from Food & Wine (“America’s Best New BBQ Spots”) and the LA Times 101 Best Restaurants to OC Register’s Restaurant of the Year and a Michelin Bib Gourmand designation.

This year, Daniel was named a James Beard Award finalist for Best Chef: California. In February, he expanded his vision with Le Hut Dinette in Santa Ana, his take on the classic American diner. When not at the restaurant, Daniel enjoys time at home with his son, while his older children, Benjamin and Karina, both work alongside him at Heritage.

ALISAL RANCH

RECIPES

— at —

BBQ BOOTCAMP

CHEF NEAL FRASER

YUZU KPSHO CHERMOULA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pint Mint, leaves, packed
- 1 quart Cilantro, sprigs, cleaned with stems, packed
- 1 pint Parsley, cleaned with stems, packed
- 1 tablespoon Coriander seed, toasted and ground
- 1 teaspoon Cumin seed, toasted and ground
- 1 teaspoon Paprika, not smoked
- 1 ounce Honey
- 1 ounce Red wine vinegar
- 6 each Lemon, zested
- 6 ounces Canola oil
- 4 ounces Extra virgin olive oil
- As needed Water
- As needed Kosher salt

DIRECTIONS

- 1) Finely chop mint, cilantro, and parsley.
- 2) Combine the ingredients in a mixing bowl.

CHEF DREW DECKMAN

SMOKED BLACK COD TOSTADAS

This dish captures the way we like to cook at Deckman's: seafood with a sense of place, a little smoke, plenty of brightness, and enough texture and chile to keep every bite alive. Black cod is rich and luxurious, so it loves lime, herbs, cabbage, and crunch. This home version keeps the spirit of the dish from the bootcamp while making it approachable and repeatable in any kitchen

INGREDIENTS

Serves 6 Prep: 30 min Cook: 15 min

- 2 lb black cod fillet, skin-on if possible
- 1 Tbsp kosher salt
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp black pepper
- Zest of 1 lemon
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- For the avocado crema
 - 2 ripe avocados
 - 1/2 cup Mexican crema or sour cream
 - Juice of 2 limes
 - 1 small jalapeño, seeded if you want less heat
 - 1/4 cup cilantro leaves
 - 1/2 tsp kosher salt
 - 2-3 Tbsp water, as needed
- For the quick cabbage escabeche
 - 3 cups finely shredded green cabbage
 - 1/2 cup thinly sliced red onion
 - 1/3 cup fresh lime juice
 - 1/4 cup rice vinegar or white vinegar
 - 1 tsp sugar
 - 1 1/2 tsp kosher salt
 - 1/2 tsp dried oregano
 - 1/4 tsp black pepper

To finish

- 12 small tostadas
- 1/3-1/2 cup salsa macha
- 1/2 cup cilantro leaves
- 2 limes, cut into wedges

DIRECTIONS

- ***Method Summary:****
 1. ****Season the Fish****: Mix salt, sugar, black pepper, and lemon zest; rub on black cod after olive oil. Refrigerate for 20-30 minutes.
 2. ****Cabbage Escabeche****: Combine cabbage and red onion. Whisk lime juice, vinegar, sugar, salt, oregano, and black pepper, then toss with cabbage. Let sit for 20 minutes or refrigerate.
 3. ****Avocado Crema****: Blend avocados, crema, lime juice, jalapeño, cilantro, and salt until smooth. Adjust taste with more lime or salt.
 4. ****Cook the Black Cod****: Grill over medium indirect heat for 10-14 minutes or roast at 400°F for the same time until flaky. Let rest, then flake.
 5. ****Build Tostadas****: Spread avocado crema on tostadas, top with black cod, cabbage escabeche, salsa macha, and cilantro. Serve with lime.

*Chef's Notes**:*

- *Avoid overcooking the black cod for a silky texture.*
- *Cabbage should be crisp, and salsa macha should enhance, not overpower.*
- *Substitute black cod with another rich local fish if needed.*

Make Ahead:*

- *Avocado crema is best fresh, but can be made hours in advance.*
- *Cabbage escabeche can be prepared a day ahead.*
- *Cook fish on the same day and assemble just before serving.*

CHEF REBECCA KING

FENNELKRAUT & RUSSIAN DRESSING

Yield 3.54 ish gallons

RUSSIAN DRESSING

This is incredibly simple. We maintain a gluten-free option by substituting fish sauce for Worcestershire sauce.

Ingredients:

1.5 gallons Kewpie mayonnaise
1 gallon Heinz ketchup
1 gallon Heinz sweet relish
½ cup Three Crabs fish sauce

Directions:

- Whisk all ingredients together until completely smooth and uniform.
- Chill before serving to allow the flavors to meld and thicken.

If necessary, adjust the balance with a touch more fish sauce or ketchup.

FENNELKRAUT

Recipe for a 1-Gallon Jar

- Shaved fennel bulbs – enough to fill the jar tightly
- 2 beets – cut into quarters
- 5 g caraway seeds
- 5 g fennel seeds
- 1 g black peppercorns
- 3 garlic cloves – lightly crushed
- 1 g coriander seeds
- 5 g mustard seeds
- Kosher salt – 3% of the total weight (vegetables + water)
- Water – enough to completely cover the ingredients

Method

- Begin by placing all seeds and garlic into a sterilized 1-gallon jar. Pack the shaved fennel in tightly.
- Pour water into the jar until the fennel is completely submerged. Weigh the combined contents (fennel and water only, excluding the jar). Multiply that weight by 0.03 and add the corresponding amount of kosher salt. Stir or shake until the salt is completely dissolved.
- Ensure that all solids remain beneath the brine (use a weight if necessary). Seal the jar loosely or opt for an airlock lid.
- Allow the mixture to ferment at a temperature of 60–70°F for three weeks or longer. Taste it at the three-week mark and continue fermenting if you prefer a stronger acidity. Once the flavor reaches your desired level, refrigerate it.

MEATS



ALISAL'S TOMAHAWK RIBEYE

1 36 oz. steak

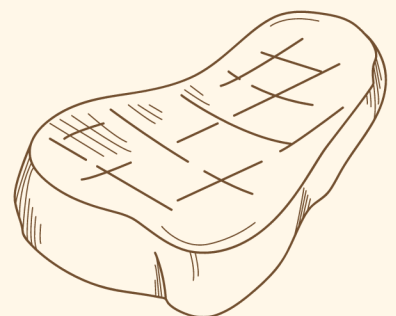
BASTING SAUCE:

5 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
3/4 stick butter
6 cloves chopped garlic

SEASONING SALT MIXTURE:

1 tsp. black pepper
1 tsp. white pepper
1 tsp. cayenne pepper
1/2 tsp. onion powder
2 Tbsp. garlic, granulated
3 tsp. salt

Coat both sides of the steaks with basting sauce and place on the grill. Season the tops of the steaks with the salt mixture. Turn the steaks before the heat pushes juices out the top. Baste and season after each turn, two times per side. Continue turning until done to your liking. Doneness can be determined with a meat thermometer or the simple finger test.



MEATS

ALISAL'S SMOKED BEEF RIBS

Ingredients: Beef Ribs

1 each of 3-bone rack full block cut beef ribs, center cut, trimmed, approximately 5-8 lbs.

Ingredients: Mustard Marinade

2 parts yellow mustard

1 part whole grain mustard

1 part Worcestershire sauce

1 part water

1 part apple cider vinegar

Ingredients: Seasoning Blend

1 part salt

1 part black pepper

1 part garlic powder

1 part lemon pepper

1 part ancho chile powder

Light touch of cayenne

Heat a Big Green Egg to 250 degrees Fahrenheit with the ConvEGGtor in place. Brush the beef with the mustard marinade and season both sides of the beef liberally. Place the seasoned meat in the Big Green Egg and smoke for five hours. Remove the meat from the Big Green Egg.

Ingredients: Glaze

1 cup brown sugar

1 cup honey

1 cup beer, brown ale

½ cup bouillon paste

Slather the smoked meat with the glaze, wrap it in foil, and cook for an additional hour at 250 degrees.

BRINE FOR BBQ CHICKEN

Ingredients:

5 Lemons, Cut in Quarters
5 Oranges, Cut In Quarters
1 cup Bay Leaf
1 bunch Parsley
2 oz. Thyme
5 oz. Rosemary
10 Chile de Arbol
10 Garlic Cloves
1/4 cup Black Peppercorn, Whole
1 cup Salt, Kosher
2 Gallons Water

Combine all ingredients into a clean stock pot. Whisk together and bring to a boil until the salt dissolves. Take the brine off heat and properly cool to 40 degrees. Store in a clean, labeled container with a lid.

OAK GRILLED CHICKEN SPICE RUB

Ingredients:

5 Tbsp. Paprika
4 Tbsp. Salt

3 Tbsp. Ancho Chile Powder
2 Tbsp. Dried Mexican Oregano
1 Tbsp. Dried Chipotle Powder

MAKES
-10-
SERVINGS

SANTA MARIA-STYLE BEANS

*2 lbs. pinquito beans (locally grown beans)**
2 Tbsp. olive oil
2 strips bacon, diced
1 cup ham, diced
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 small onion, peeled, diced
1½ cups tomato purée
½ cup red chile sauce
½ cup chile powder
1 bay leaf
2 Tbsp. sugar
2 Tbsp. kosher salt
2 Tbsp. dry mustard

Sort the beans and remove all dirt and stones. Wash the beans under running water to clean. Soak the beans in a pot of water overnight. Drain, cover with fresh water, and simmer for 2 hours, or until tender. In a saucepan, add olive oil and sauté bacon and ham until lightly browned. Add onion and garlic and sauté for 2 minutes longer.

Add tomato purée, chile powder, chile sauce, sugar, mustard, and salt. If the sauce is thick, add some cooking water from the beans. Drain most of the liquid from the beans and stir in the sauce; cook for a little bit longer to develop the flavor. Keep warm on a very low heat until ready to serve.

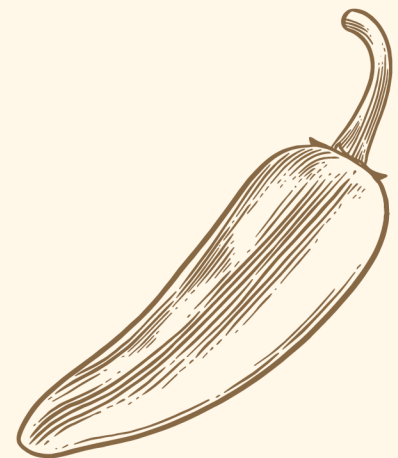
*Can be ordered through a specialty store or online retail outlet.

MAKES
-8-
CUPS

ALISAL SALSA CRUDA

1 cup white onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, chopped
1 jalapeño, medium size, chopped with seeds and membrane
1 Tbsp. fresh oregano, chopped
½ bunch fresh cilantro, chopped
Juice of 1 lemon
1 cup canned green chiles, chopped
6 cups diced tomatoes
1 bunch green onions, chopped
2 Tbsp. sambal oelek (ground fresh chile paste)
Kosher salt and pepper

In a food processor, combine the onions, garlic, jalapeño, green chiles, and diced tomatoes. Pulse blend until chunky. Pour the salsa into a bowl and add the oregano, cilantro, lemon juice, green onions, and sambal oelek. Mix with a spatula and add salt and pepper to taste.



MAKES
-8-
CUPS

ALISAL ROASTED TOMATO SALSA

Set oven to broil

4 tomatoes, medium size, washed, cut in halves
1 white onion, peeled, and cut into quarters
2 jalapeño peppers, cut in halves

4 garlic cloves, peeled
1 chipotle pepper in adobo
1 Tbsp. ground cumin
1 Tbsp. dried oregano
½ bunch cilantro, chopped
Juice from 1 lemon
Kosher salt and pepper

Place the first four ingredients on a metal sheet pan, toss with a little bit of olive oil, and broil the ingredients until blackened or a deep golden brown color.

Transfer the ingredients to a saucepan and then add the chipotle pepper, ground cumin, dried oregano, lemon juice, and add ½ cup water. Bring to a boil and cook for about 3 minutes. Transfer to a blender and blend, adding the cilantro and salt and pepper until mixture becomes smooth. Cool and then refrigerate until ready to use.



ALISAL'S PINQUITO BEANS

Ingredients:

1 pound dry pinto beans, see sources below
Water to cover
2 cups Applewood smoked bacon, diced
1/2 cup smoked cooked ham, diced
1 cup diced white onion
1/2 cup diced roasted Anaheim chilies
2 Tbsp. minced garlic
1 tsp. ancho chile powder, optional
1 tsp. brown sugar
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. dry mustard
1 tsp. paprika
2 cups tomato puree
1 cup Worcestershire sauce
1/2 cup water

Rinse and check through the beans for small stones. Place in a pot and cover with cold water; soak overnight. Drain beans and return to the pot. Cover by 3 inches with fresh cold water, and simmer over medium heat for 1½ hours, or until tender.

While the beans are cooking, make the sauce. Over medium-high heat, sauté bacon in a saucepan until lightly browned. Add the ham, onion, Anaheim chilies, and garlic; sauté 2 minutes longer. Add the ancho chile powder, brown sugar, salt, dry mustard, and paprika—sauté for another minute to toast the spices. Add the tomato puree, Worcestershire sauce, and water—bring to a simmer and reduce to low heat, cooking for 30 minutes while stirring occasionally. Take off the heat and reserve.

When beans are ready and cooked tender, drain all except for one cup of the cooking liquid. Return the beans and the cup of liquid to the pot and stir in the sauce. Simmer on low heat for 30 minutes. Serve with oak-grilled barbecue.

Where to Find Central Coast Grown Pinto Beans:
Lompoc Beans, Lompoc Valley Seed & Milling
1119 West Laurel Ave, Lompoc, CA 93463
805-736-2517; www.lompocbeans.com

THE LOWDOWN

— on —

**GRILLING, FIRE,
BASTING AND ALL
THINGS BBQ**

ALISAL RANCH
—BBQ—
BOOTCAMP
FIRED-UP SINCE  TWENTY ELEVEN

During bootcamp, you will be given a brief introduction to the art of wood-fire grilling that is done here on the Central Coast of California, or, as we call it, "BBQ."

You'll learn basic techniques to a cooking method with its roots tied to the Santa Ynez band, as well as several other national styles.

While every BBQ "expert" has his or her own techniques and unique recipes, we're going to teach you the basics of wood-fire BBQ and offer you recipes from accomplished masters with an array of BBQ perspectives. So, sit back, listen, and prepare to have some fun—learning, eating, and drinking.

CHARCOAL VS. GAS GRILLING

Charcoal is the traditional fuel for grills, but it is time-consuming due to the wait to obtain embers that are ready to use. You will need to plan ahead and light the charcoal about 45 minutes before you put food on the grill.

Grilling with gas is convenient because it is easy to light, cheap to operate, clean, and allows you to grill almost immediately. Gas grills, however, are more expensive than traditional charcoal grills and can be fairly heavy. You must also be careful not to run out of propane.

FUELS FOR THE FIRE

BRIQUETS

Briquettes are traditional square black chunks of charcoal made of sawdust and scrap wood rather than solid wood. Briquettes are cheap and are available in nearly every store or market. They do not get as hot as other fuels, and you'll need to use more of them. Do not use ones infused with starter fluid because they can affect the flavor of the food. Store in a dry place.

HARDWOOD CHARCOAL

Made from oak or other hardwoods (walnut, mesquite, and cherry, for example), hardwood charcoal adds great flavors to the food. It can be found in most hardware stores and is more expensive than briquettes.

WOOD FIRE

Red oak and white oak are both used on the Ranch, but the chefs prefer red oak because it lasts longer. Each burns very hot. It takes about an hour for a wood fire to get hot enough for grilling. Use only seasoned hardwood like oak, alder, hickory, mesquite, and fruit woods (avoid using softwood like pine, which contains a lot of pitch). Never use painted or chemically treated woods.

HOW TO LIGHT A FIRE

METAL CHIMNEY

This is the quickest and the safest way to light a fire. The chimney resembles a large can with a handle on the side and air holes around the lower part.

How to use a metal chimney:

Fill the chamber with crumpled paper on the bottom and charcoal on top.

Light the paper, and the flame will go up into the charcoal area and ignite the charcoal. This should take 10 to 15 minutes.

Dump the coals into the grill. If using hardwood, arrange the wood in a criss-cross pattern over the charcoal. Embers should last about 1 hour.

ELECTRIC STARTER

This is not a convenient option, as you will need an extension cord and an outlet. When you remove the electric starter, it will be very hot. It is unsafe to use around children and guests.

FIRE STICKS

These are small sticks made of sawdust and paraffin. Place one or two under your charcoal and light them.

LIGHTER FLUID

This works very well, but it can be very dangerous. It is illegal in some states. Avoid it if you can.

FLAVORING THE SMOKE

Most kinds of aromatic wood or wood chips can be soaked in water and placed on a charcoal fire. On a gas grill, however, you want to prevent ashes from clogging the line, so place chips in an aluminum pan and poke some holes along the bottom, or purchase a smoker box. The most aromatic wood chips to use to flavor the smoke are:

HICKORY

The king of woods used in BBQ, it is a strong, pungent wood that imparts a smoky, bacon-like flavor. It is best used with ribs and red meat.

ALDER

Has a natural sweetness and delicate flavor that goes well with fish, poultry, pork, and light meats. It is commonly used in the Pacific Northwest to smoke salmon.

APPLE

Provides a mild, sweet, and fruity taste and works best with ham, fish, and poultry.

CHERRY

Good with beef and pork, it tends to turn the meat a rich mahogany color. Best used in conjunction with hickory, oak, pecan, or alder.

GRAPEVINE CUTTINGS

Very nice with fish, poultry, and light beef cuts, such as skirt steak or flank steak.

PECAN

Belonging to the hickory family, it is similar in flavor—fruity and pungent—so use sparingly. Pecan burns cooler than most woods, which makes it ideal for larger cuts.

MESQUITE

Great care must be taken when using this wood or the flavor can be overpowering. The wood is oily in nature, tends to pop embers, and burns hot and fast. It is best used in tandem with another type of wood. (Avoid with large cuts that require a prolonged smoking time.)

OAK

Red oak and white oak are both used on the Ranch, but chefs often prefer red oak because it lasts longer. Oak imparts a strong, smoky flavor when used for cooking that is good with red meat, pork, and game.

WHEN IS THE FIRE READY FOR GRILLING?

Before you light a charcoal fire, you have to know how much charcoal to use. Imagine how much room your food will take on your grill and use enough charcoal to make a single layer below that space, and then throw in a few more briquettes. As a general rule for charcoal, it takes about 45 minutes to get hot enough for grilling. When the coals are covered with gray ashes, spread them into a single layer. Arrange the briquettes closer in the center so the fire will get hotter, and leave some space between the coals on the edges for a cooler fire.

For a hardwood fire, set up your wood in a crisscross pattern, with a few briquettes underneath and then light it with a lighter. It takes about an hour to get the hardwood ready to grill. As with charcoal, spread the wood in the bottom of your grill.

To determine the fire temperature, you can use a temperature gun or your hands. Hold your hand, palm-side down, 5 inches over the fire. If your hand gets hot immediately, the fire is very hot. If you can hold it for 2 or 3 seconds, the fire is hot; for 4 to 5 seconds, the fire is medium; and if you can hold it for 6 seconds or more, the fire is low.

HOW TO PUT OUT A FIRE

To put out a gas fire, simply turn the knob to "off" and close the valve on the gas tank. On a charcoal grill with a lid, close the air vents and replace the cover.

BASIC GRILLING TIPS

1. It is important to establish a hot bed of coals for a wood fire, which takes at least 30 minutes.
2. Always cook with a clean grill. Burn off the old grease by scraping it with a wire brush after starting the new fire, and then re-season the grill with fat or oil.
3. Just as you would always sauté with butter, oil, or stock, you should always baste your food while you grill it (or marinate your items beforehand).

A BASIC SALT/SEASONING MIX IS:

2 parts black pepper
2 parts white pepper
2 parts cayenne pepper
1 part onion powder
5 parts granulated garlic
5 parts salt

1. Grilling is a very simple preparation, and it is important to start with high-quality ingredients.
2. Always season the food as you grill.
3. Historically, our local wood BBQ predominantly features grilled red meats and chicken. With a little ingenuity, however, almost anything can be grilled.
4. Santa Barbara County wines go well with most grilled foods.
5. Grilling is fun! When the fire is lit, the party begins.

CHECKING MEAT TEMPERATURES

Checking the temperatures of meat while cooking is best done with an instant-read meat thermometer. Below are examples of what different meats look like at different temperatures so you can adjust cooking as needed:

BEEF AND LAMB

Rare: cool in the center (120° F)
 Medium Rare: warm, red center (125° F)
 Medium: pink edges, red center (130° F)
 Medium Well: slightly pink in the center (135° F)
 Well-Done: not a trace of pink (145° F)

PORK

Medium: (155 degrees F)
 Well-Done: (180 degrees F)

VEAL

Medium: pink inside (145 to 150 degrees F)

TRADITIONAL SANTA MARIA-STYLE BBQ MENU

BEEF TRI-TIP, CHOICE GRADE, WELL-AGED
 SANTA MARIA-STYLE SALSA
 TOSSED FRESH GREEN SALAD
 SANTA MARIA-STYLE BEANS
 GRILLED GARLIC BREAD
 STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE WITH WHIPPED CREAM

SEASONING BLENDS

BLUEPRINT FOR A SEASONING BLEND:
SALT + SUGAR + FLAVOR + SPICE (HEAT) + COLOR

FLAVOR

You first must consider the protein, and then think about what the result you are looking for is. What flavors do you and your guests enjoy? You can have fun with it as well. Ingredients like onion, garlic, thyme, parsley, cinnamon, cumin, and celery seed are all open game. Once again, consider your application. For example, if you were building a beef stew, what flavors or aromatics would you like to come through (onion, garlic, celery, herbs)? Also consider citrus peel for seafood and chicken. There are no rights and wrongs when it comes to your personal palate likes and dislikes.

HEAT

Hot pepper sensations, often called spicy flavors, are often in blends because they add excitement. Black pepper is common, and so are ground hot peppers such as cayenne or chipotle. Ginger, horseradish, and mustard powder also fit in this category. You can be creative with this as chiles are very unique and different in flavor. Cayenne provides heat without the depth of flavor of an ancho or chipotle (smoky). Always consider the crowd when it comes to spice, as all are at different levels.

COLOR

This can be something flavorful or ingredients primarily just for color, like bright red paprika. Also, keep sugar in mind as it caramelizes over the flame.

SEASONING BLENDS

BLUEPRINT FOR A SEASONING BLEND:

SALT + SUGAR + FLAVOR + SPICE (HEAT) + COLOR

SALT

By far the most important ingredient when seasoning is salt. Salt is an excellent flavor enhancer because it actually opens up your taste buds, and this really wakes up the flavor of meat and vegetables. When creating a blend, it is good to use a light amount of salt and apply it separately by considering the application. Applying the salt separately and in advance is a very important technique called dry brining. Dry brining is simply salting thick cuts the day before cooking and thin cuts an hour or two before. Adding salt in advance is good for the meat because it melts on the wet surface of the meat and penetrates deeply.

Salting applications to consider: You need more salt on a pork shoulder than on pork ribs because a shoulder is thicker. You need more salt on a rib roast than on a ribeye steak, and more on a ribeye steak than on skirt steak. You need more salt on chicken breasts than on thighs or drumsticks. You need more salt on the thick part of a leg of lamb than on the thin part. Keeping salt separate lets you apply the right amount of each.

SUGAR

Sugar will always be the sweet component. It is to provide an element of balance to flavor and spice. When tasting the blend for sugar, it will never taste the same cooked as it does raw. Be careful with the amount used, as it burns easily when grilling, and in most cases, it isn't needed. Sugar works well when cooking low and slow. Look for dark brown sugar to create a darker crust.

PEPPER

BLACK PEPPER

Black pepper comes from a flowering vine cultivated for its fruit, which is usually dried and known as peppercorn. It can be found in different grind sizes. Tellicherry pepper is from India and is the highest grade of them all.

LEMON PEPPER

Lemon pepper is made from granulated lemon zest and cracked black peppercorns. The lemon zest is mashed with the pepper to allow the citrus oil to infuse into the pepper.

WHITE PEPPER

White pepper consists of the seed of the pepper plant alone, with the darker colored skin of the pepper fruit removed. White pepper is mostly used in colored sauces or mashed potatoes.

OTHER SPICES

ALLSPICE

Allspice is a dried, unripe fruit berry from the Antilles, Mexico, or Central America. The English gave it the name allspice because of the combined flavor of cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves. It is usually found in powder form.

ANCHO CHILE PEPPER FLAKES

Fresh ancho chiles are called poblanos. After drying the ancho, it is turned into flakes to use for rubs. For stews or tamales, the ancho needs to be rehydrated and puréed. The ancho is the sweetest of the dried chiles.

CAYENNE

Cayenne is a hot, red chile that gets its name from the city of Cayenne in French Guiana. The fruits are generally dried and ground. It is popular in Europe and Northern Africa.

CHILE POWDER

Chile powder is the ground, dried fruit of one or more varieties of chile, sometimes found as a chile blend (mixed with other spices). The best chile powders are San Andrés, New Mexican, and pasilla. The spiciness of any given chile powder is variable.

CHIPOTLE POWDER

Chipotle powder is made from smoked, dried jalapeño peppers. When the jalapeños are deep red and have lost most of their moisture, they are selected to be made into chipotle. Chipotle peppers are available in powder or in adobo style (peppers are stewed in a sauce made out of tomatoes, garlic, and spices).

DRY MUSTARD

Mustard is a condiment made from the seeds of a mustard plant, usually from black or white seeds. It lacks the yellow color of prepared mustard, which comes with the addition of turmeric.

GARLIC POWDER

Dehydrated fresh garlic bulbs are ground to make this powder. Buy only the best quality garlic you can find; sometimes artificial ingredients are added for color or flavor.

GINGER POWDER

Ginger powder is made from dehydrated fresh ginger. Widely available, ginger powder is also very good for motion sickness and stomach aches.

GROUND CUMIN

Ground cumin is made from dried cumin seeds. It is largely used in Spanish and Middle Eastern cooking.

HUNGARIAN PAPRIKA

Paprika is made from the grinding of bell peppers or chiles, mostly used to add color and flavor to food. Paprika ranges from mild to hot. Hungarian paprika is often used in professional kitchens.

ONION POWDER

Onion powder is made from dehydrated onions that are then ground. The flavor will vary depending on the variety of onions used.

OREGANO

Just like thyme, oregano is sold either fresh or dried. The dried leaves are very popular in Spanish and Italian cuisines.

THYME

Thyme is sold both fresh and dried. Dried leaves are great for your spice blends.

SPICES: FLAVORING YOUR BBQ

SALT

CELERY SALT

Celery salt is made from ground celery seeds and mixed with either table salt or sea salt. Use it in Bloody Mary mix, soups, stews, fish and seafood, and also to season the famous Chicago-style hot dogs.

KOSHER SALT

This salt has a much larger grain size than common table salt. Kosher salt typically contains no additives (iodide) and may include anti-clumping agents in small amounts.

SEA SALT

Sea salt is produced through evaporation of sea water, usually with little processing, which leaves behind some trace minerals depending on its source. These small amounts of minerals add flavor and color to the salt.

TABLE SALT

Table salt is mined from underground salt deposits. It has added iodine and contains an additive to prevent clumping.

BRINING

Through osmosis, the brine's components enter the cells of the protein and impart flavor inside the meat. The result is a flavorful, juicy piece of meat when done correctly. This process works best on poultry and pork. Quick brines (1 hour soak) work well with seafood.

BLUEPRINT FOR BRINE: WATER + SALT + SUGAR + FLAVOR

WATER

H₂O to be scientific. I like a ratio of 1 cup water to 1 tablespoon salt. But you always go with less.

SALT

I always use Kosher Salt.

SUGAR

This can vary from granulated pure cane sugar, brown sugar, honey, agave nectar, or even fruit juice.

FLAVOR

Aromatics—such as fresh garlic, fresh herbs, bay leaf, peppercorns, and once again fresh fruit juices or citrus peels.