

Let's Do Some Grillin'!



Today, 11:33am [By Laura Anhalt](#)

Mmmmm!...spices. What would the culinary world be without them? And to think that centuries past, they were coveted for their healing powers and for use in the conjuring of magic spells. Later on they were also used as food preservatives and to make perfume and dyes. It wasn't until the Middle Ages that they began to be used as food condiments.

Most spices are originally from the Far East, and at one point in time they *removed* the economy of the world. Extraordinary stories and legends have been told about adventurers who set sail to find new lands and remote places that would provide them the opportunity to discover and collect new and exotic spices that would, ultimately, be worth more than gold itself.

Some adventures came back with a full cargo and became wealthy individuals. Others discovered new lands and places, as is the case of Christopher Columbus, who made history by leading an expedition to find another route to India in order to avoid tax duties. Instead, he accidentally bumped into the American Continent. There were also those that never made it back; they either died at sea or fell prey to bandits and thieves.

Exotic properties have been attributed to spices. Let's take black pepper for instance. The Egyptians used it as an aphrodisiac as it was said to produce a sensation of heat and

voluptuousness in the body. But once it made it into Greece and Rome, it began to be used as a food enhancer, totally displacing the commonly used silfion; a bitter herb that doesn't make for a very pleasing condiment and isn't used in present times.

Cinnamon had many uses, and most of them are still practiced today. It was used in the preparation of cosmetics but also to aromatize wine and prepare desserts. The infusions prepared with it are said to have the powers of a stimulant or aphrodisiac. Once it was discovered that it was great tasting when pulverized, Europeans began using it on everything.

I believe what our ancestors did--that herbs and spices have a magical nature. They have the power to alter flavors and invigorate the senses. To me, the aroma they produce puts a spell on me, and binds me with memories of places, times and people. Cooking with spices is alchemy at its best!

Since summer is quickly coming upon us, I thought I'd share a couple of recipes for meat rub made (of course) with spices, and a few funky tips that will make for memorable moments at the grill.

The ingredients of most rubs begin with the basics: salts and sugars. I always encourage the use of coarser salts such as kosher or sea salt. Every year I see new types and colors of rock salts, so you have a lot to choose from. The Village Beer Merchant on Elmwood has a really good collection of reasonably priced salts from around the world. As for the sugars, regular white will do, but I prefer to use the dark brown sugars because they tend to have moisture. In some cases I substitute the sugar for molasses syrup and it works quite well. This gives the meats a deeper flavor.

The following recipe works best on beef cuts but will also work well with pork. This recipe can also be made ahead of time and in larger batches. It is easy to store and it lasts for about a year if stored in an airtight container. It will still be good, but the flavors may start to mellow. Rubs are phenomenal because they also tend to seal the meat, allowing the juices and flavors to stay inside.

The following recipe will thoroughly cover approximately 24 oz. of beef.

Laura's Dry Rub for Beef

2 tbsp coarsely ground salt (kosher or sea) • 2 tbsp cracked black pepper • 2 tbsp dark/light brown sugar • 1 tbsp freshly ground coffee (not too fine) • 1 tbsp paprika, 1 tbsp dry coriander • 1/8 tsp cayenne pepper • 2 tbsp olive oil • 2 tbsp red wine • 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
Combine the dry ingredients and set aside. In a separate bowl, combine the wet ingredients.

Before putting the rub on the meat, make sure it is well thawed. Begin by poking the meat with a fork. Add the olive oil mixture and massage well into meat for about 2 minutes, making sure you coat everything. Then, a little at a time, take a handful of the dry ingredients and rub it into the meat

very well, repeat the process until the meat is covered thoroughly. Place on a platter and cover until ready to grill.

Laura's Dry Rub for Pork Ribs

2 tbsp ground coarse salt, (kosher or sea) • 2 tbsp ground black pepper, 1/4 cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped • 2 tbsp honey • 2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce • 1 garlic clove, finely chopped • 2 tbsp olive oil • 1 tbsp red wine vinegar

Mix all of the ingredients together to form a paste. Place the pork ribs on a platter and rub the meat with this mixture. After massaging for a minimum of 5 minutes, cover and cool until ready to grill.

Cool tips for the grill:

--Soak small wood pieces in red wine and allow to dry overnight. You can purchase them flavored already, but it's great to make your own!

--If you don't feel like soaking wood in wine, once you have the coals in your grill stoked, add 2 cinnamon sticks to the coals and enjoy the aroma and flavor it produces.

--If you want to get really exotic, serve red wine with cinnamon sticks as a garnish, your guests (and you!) will be delighted.

Laura Anhalt and her business partner Beverly Barry make up [A Taste of the World](#), a business that offers not only a very popular series of intimate cooking classes, but also a line of gourmet sauces which are available at Premier Gourmet and other area retailers with a passion for products made locally.