

## Grab a wine glass and heat up the grill

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Summer is grilling time in Chicago and the suburbs.

Grilling tends to be the domain of men who offer their contribution to the family meal process with this summertime activity. Men dust off their grills and the backyard deck furniture is readied for Americans to socialize.

### Grilling tips

While our country's regions offer different styles and tastes with outdoor cooking, there are some basics that apply everywhere.

- Selecting a grill: Try charcoal grills when you have the time and desire to build fires and tend to the coals. Gas grills, while not as hot, offer a quicker and cleaner approach.
- Adding smoky flavor: Soak hickory, apple or mesquite wood chips for a half hour and toss directly on hot charcoal or place in metal firebox in your gas grill before lighting.
- Prepare the grill: Start with clean grill grates, brush or spray with olive oil or vegetable oil and start the grill on high heat. Plan to grill at a moderate heat level.
- Direct vs. indirect heat: Cook burgers and steaks directly over heat. For poultry and pork, it is best to cook slower over indirect heat. This is accomplished by having less to no charcoal in the middle of your grill or, if you have a gas grill, do not use your middle burner.
- Prepare your steaks: Hand rub with olive oil and season both sides with salt and pepper or a Montreal-style seasoning.
- Cook times: Timing depends on your preference for doneness and the thickness of the meat you have selected. For best results, avoid slicing into the meat as you will lose the meat's natural juices.
- Grill marks: Create attractive cross-hatching by placing your steak for half of its cook time per side on higher heat, then move to a medium heat area and give the steak a quarter turn. Flip the



*Bill Garlough,  
Level One Master Sommelier*

#### Bill's Picks

1. Milat Cab - Napa: \$20
2. J. Lohr - Paso Robles: \$15
3. Martin Ray - Napa: \$18
4. Twenty Bench - Napa: \$18
5. Provenance - Napa: \$32
6. Kenwood - Sonoma: \$12
7. Avalon - California: \$8

You can test for doneness by using a thermometer (135 to 140 degrees is medium rare).

Experienced cooks have learned how done a steak is by how firm the meat is to the touch. A quick way to learn is by touching the tip of each finger to your thumb. Feel the fleshy part under the thumb. It goes from softer to firmer as you progress through your fingers (forefinger is rare, next finger medium rare, to medium to well done by the time you use your pinky).

A thin steak (1/2-inch thick) only needs two to three minutes per side. A traditional 1-inch cut cooks properly in four to six minutes per side. Thicker steaks take longer.

steak and repeat the process. After removing the meat, immediately scrape the grates with a wire brush to easily clean it, preparing it for next time.

- Flavorful, juicy steaks: It is essential to let the steak rest at least half the time it was cooked before it is served. If you cut into the steak right off the grill, the juices will seep onto the plate and leave you with a drier, tougher experience.

### **Wine pairings**

A quintessential American food and wine pairing is steak and California cabernet sauvignon. Good cabs are described as big, dense, chewy and offer immense structure. This style stands up to the meaty texture and spicy bold flavors of grilled beef.

Other favorable factors for this pairing are the charred oak flavors of barrel aging and cabs have cassis, pepper and oregano notes to provide a great match with steak seasonings. An additional benefit for this pairing is cab's tannic nature, which helps cut through beef's higher fat levels as you taste the meat, and the tannic acid also aids in digestion.

Bill Garlough is a Level One Master Sommelier. He also is part owner of My Chef Catering of Naperville, the 2007 recipient of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's Small Business of the Year Award. He may be reached at [bgarlough@mychef.com](mailto:bgarlough@mychef.com).