

BBQ CHICKEN-GRILLED VEGGIE STACKS

serves 4

These gorgeous, filling barbecue stacks are perfect for a show-off outdoor company dinner and have the added attraction of being totally cooked on the grill--making them a go-to for hot nights or summer holidays. They're so simple and diet friendly, though, you'll probably make them for family dinners until the cold shoos you indoors.

- 2 cups (16 ounces) barbecue sauce--homemade (recipe below) or purchased
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- Canola oil ▪ Kosher salt and pepper
- 2 medium zucchini, ends trimmed, and sliced lengthwise into 1/4-inch pieces
 - 2 large sweet yellow or red pepper, trimmed, cored, seeded, and each sliced into 4 "cheeks"
 - 2 large onions, trimmed, peeled, and each sliced into about 4 thick (1/2-inch) pieces (any thinner and they won't hold together on the grill)
- 8 thin slices very sharp cheddar cheese, each cut in half
- 16 fresh small basil leaves or larger ones torn ▪ 1/2

cup each: good quality ranch dressing, crumbled blue cheese dressing, and crispy onions (homemade, or purchased from grocery or Williams-Sonoma)

1. Heat grill to medium-high (375-425 degrees F) and oil with a canola-

oiled paper towel. Place chicken breasts in a small casserole and pour 1/2 cup of the barbecue sauce over them. Turn breasts until covered with sauce and let sit 5-10 minutes to marinate or until grill is hot. Grill for several minutes on each side, turning often and brushing with bbq sauce each turn until temperature is 150-155 degrees Fahrenheit. Remove from heat and cover. The chicken should be moist and tender and the temperature will come up to 160-165 while it rests. (If the chicken is cooking too quickly on the outside, but it still rare; move it to the side to finish cooking.) Do not overcook.

2. Brush all of the vegetables with oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Grill for about 3 - 4 minutes on each side until grill marks appear and the vegetables are tender; remove to a plate and cover to keep warm. Onions may need an extra minute or two; they should be quite tender. Separate the onions into rings for serving.

3. Place breasts on a cutting board, and hold with paper towels while you very carefully slice each into 3 pieces length wise using a chef's or other large knife. The slices should be about 1/4" x 5" or so-- depending on the size and weight of the breasts.

4 Taking your time, place the flat side of one layer of chicken down on a serving plate, and a la lasagna, layer a piece of cheese, a piece of zucchini, a piece of pepper, a few rings of onion, and two or so basil leaves. Repeat. Repeat again, leaving off the cheese-- or using as many pieces of vegetables as you like or have.

5 When each stack is complete, top it with a good drizzle (a couple of tablespoons or as desired) each of barbecue sauce and ranch dressing. Garnish with crumbled blue cheese and crispy onions. Serve with Southwestern Rice salad (below), if you wish.

Barbecue Sauce

2 cups each ketchup and chili sauce 1/4 cup each lemon juice and red wine vinegar 1/2 cup water 2 tablespoons each yellow mustard, Worcestershire, A-1 Sauce 1 tablespoon Soy Sauce 2 cloves of garlic, finely minced 1/4 teaspoon fresh ground black pepper 4-5 Shakes of Tabasco or other hot sauce 1/2 cup brown sugar 3 tablespoons celery seed

Whisk together all ingredients in a medium pot and bring to a boil, stirring, over medium flame. Taste and adjust seasonings. Lower heat to simmer and let cook 30 minutes. Taste and adjust seasonings again. Store leftovers in a tightly sealed jar for up to two weeks in the refrigerator. (This recipe is a riff on a great bbq sauce from the wonderful, but out-of-date Colorado cookbook BYTES–Colorado’s Family Friendly Cookbook. Sometimes there’s a used copy available; check used book sites or amazon.)

SOUTHWESTERN RICE SALAD

6 SERVINGS

A versatile side salad or main dish (add cheese?), this is also a fine use for other vegetables on your counter. Green beans? Carrots? Sautéed eggplant? Don't be shy with the salt, pepper, and other seasonings. You'll be surprised how much it takes to make this taste like you want it to taste. One note: This makes lovely leftovers for lunches or for another grill meal. Eat up! (Requires cooked rice and corn.)

- 3 cups (warm, if possible) cooked rice
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil, divided
- Kosher salt and fresh ground pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon crushed red pepper or to taste
- 2 tablespoons red onion, minced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 orange, yellow, or red bell pepper, small dice
- 1/2 cup cucumber, small dice
- 1 ripe avocado, peeled, cored, and chopped
- 1 large tomato, diced
- 1 ear of fresh corn, microwaved for 4 minutes, shucked/de-silked, and kernels cut off (or 1/2 cup frozen and cooked corn)

- 15-ounce can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 2 tablespoons each fresh cilantro and parsley, minced—or other fresh herbs (mint or basil, perhaps—even oregano, though be careful to not use too much fresh oregano, it's powerful)
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- Juice of half of a lemon
- Juice of one lime

Season the warm rice liberally with just a tablespoon or so of the olive oil, along with the salt, pepper, and crushed red pepper; toss well. Add chopped vegetables, beans, and herbs, and toss again. Stir in vinegar, lemon and lime juices; drizzle with the remaining 1/4 cup or so of olive oil and stir well. Taste and adjust seasonings; you might like more lime, perhaps. Serve warm, at room temperature, or cold. Keeps a day or two in the refrigerator—longer if you add avocado and tomatoes at serving time.

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