

What a Back: Baby Back Ribs

The curvature is perfect: no flab at the spine, and so nice for nibbling, especially the crunchy, charred edges around threads of tender meat. The silky-sweet hoisin glaze pumped up with ginger and garlic is meant for licking.



Ingredients:

3 racks pork baby back ribs (about 1½ pounds each)
3 cups Hidden Pleasures Hoisin-Ginger Glaze (recipe follows)

3 cups hickory or apple wood chips
Disposable foil pan
Vegetable oil for brushing



From: Dressed to Grill
Savvy Recipes for Girls Who Play with Fire
By Diane Morgan

Place the ribs flat in a nonreactive roasting pan, or “roll” the racks and fit them into a 1½-gallon resealable plastic bag. Set aside ½ cup of the glaze. Pour the remaining glaze over the ribs, rubbing it onto both sides like a good back massage. (Get one yourself while the ribs are relaxing in the glaze. Beg, plead, or threaten to withhold ribs.) Cover the pan with plastic wrap or tightly seal the bag. Refrigerate 6 to 8 hours to blend the flavors.

Soak the wood chips in cold water to cover for 1 hour. Set up the grill for indirect cooking. Prepare a medium fire in a charcoal grill or preheat one side of a gas or electric grill on medium. Drain the chips and sprinkle half of them over the coals, or place half in the grill’s smoker box. Place a disposable foil pan under the grate to catch drippings.

Brush the grill grate with vegetable oil. Arrange the ribs, meaty-side down, on the side of the grill without hot coals. Cover the grill and smoke-cook the ribs 45 minutes. Turn the ribs and add the remaining wood chips. Cover and grill another 45 minutes. Brush the ribs with half of the reserved glaze. Using long-handled tongs, slide the ribs onto the grate directly over the hot coals. Grill, uncovered, 5 minutes. Turn the ribs over, baste again, and grill another 5 minutes. Cut between the bones, slicing the racks into individual ribs. Serve immediately.

Serves 4 to 6

Cook and Tell

Leave the smoked-all-day spare ribs to the dudes. Pork baby backs are sweet and tender and good to go by the time you've exchanged war stories from the relationship front.

Hidden pleasures hoisin-ginger glaze

Good fortune comes to those who combine nine classic Asian accents and watch them magically create a thousand layers of sweet, smoky, and pungent flavors.

Ingredients:

cup hoisin sauce
1/2 cup plum sauce
1/2 cup low-sodium soy sauce
1/4 cup pale, dry sherry
1/4 cup Asian sesame oil
2 tablespoons minced fresh ginger
1 1/4 tablespoons minced garlic
1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
1/4 cup honey

In a medium bowl combine all the ingredients. Stir thoroughly to blend. Use immediately, or cover and refrigerate up to 1 month. Your fortune cookie should read: Leftover glaze brings easy meal next time. As a rule, foods should only marinate at room temperature up to 1 hour; beyond this, refrigerate.

Marinating times: baby back ribs, 6 to 8 hours or overnight; whole chicken, 6 to 8 hours; chicken parts including wings, 6 to 8 hours; pork tenderloin, 2 to 4 hours. Grill the coated meats as desired.

Makes about 3 cups

Cook and Tell

Do a power mince of fresh ginger. Pack the extra in a jar, cover with sherry and refrigerate up to two months. Work now pays off later, bringing good luck to the harried cook.