

Chick-N-Que

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Chick-N-Que!

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it's good eating;
and it's so very
economical.



Virginia Cooperative Extension



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Let's have a Chick-N-Que! It's fun; it's easy; it's good eating; and it's so very economical. It suggests the tantalizing aroma of golden, crusted chicken lying lazily over pit and grill – the cheer of glowing coals and gay chatter of family and friends pleasantly hungry – appetites sharpened by fresh air and bright sunshine – good fellowship warmed outwardly by glowing coals and inwardly by the aroma of pungent sauce.

A Chick-N-Que is fun for all ages. It turns an ordinary picnic into a feast. Plump, tender-meated broiler chickens become delicious birds dripping with heavenly flavors. A Chick-N-Que is for the outdoors: patio, park, woods, or beach.

A Chick-N-Que is also a wonderful idea for larger groups, such as church organizations, 4-H clubs, community celebrations, and business firm outings.

Equipment

Grills and Pits

Small grills on tripod legs are best for backyard barbecuing. About 8 halves of chicken can be barbecued on a 2-foot diameter round grill. It is easily cleaned and quickly stored. This is particularly true if the grill bowl is lined with aluminum foil. A stationary outdoor grill can be built and used for a variety of outdoor cooking. It also may double as a trash burner. Stationary grills must be given quite a lot of attention to keep them attractive and clean enough for cooking.

Pits can be used when barbecuing for a group. The pit can be made as large as needed to feed the group. Allow from 25 to 35 square inches per one-half chicken depending on the size of the chickens used. The inside measurement of the pit should be 40 inches wide, 24 inches deep and in multiples of 30 inches in length (or whatever the space required by each rack).

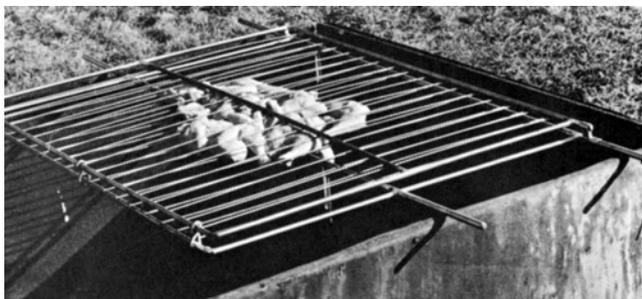


Figure 1. Double rack over pit

A portable pit can be constructed by using a 10-foot-by-2-foot sheet of galvanized tin for the sides and 40-foot lengths for the ends (see figure 1). A similar size pit can be constructed with 60 18-inch-by-8-inch cinder blocks stacked three layers high. This will be enough pit to handle three 30-inch-by-36-inch racks where each rack is turned by two people and left in the same position on the pit (see figure 2). Each rack will hold from 30 to 40 halves of chicken, depending on the size of the chickens and how tightly they are packed on the rack.



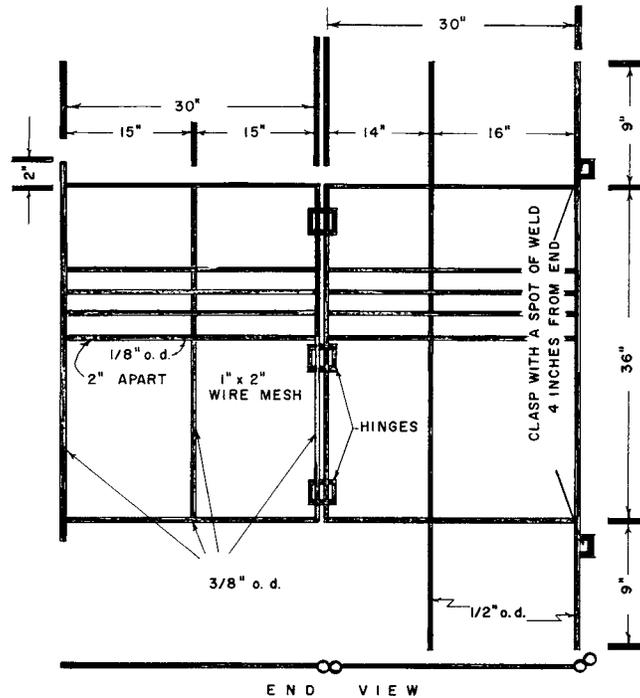
Figure 2. Men turning rack

There are two types of racks used over open pits, the double rack and the single rack. The double rack is a two-sided rack hinged together on the side (see figure 3). The chicken can be placed on one side of the rack and the other side folded over on top of the chickens and the two sides clamped together, holding the chickens firmly in place. The advantage of the double rack is that one person can turn the chickens by simply flipping the rack over. This is possible because the center brace is offset 2 inches from the center. Construction cost of the double rack is much higher than for the single rack. The single rack is equivalent to one side of the double rack and requires a spare rack for turning each rack loaded with chicken. They are much less expensive to construct, but require two people to turn them when barbecuing chicken.

Equipment for Turning Chicken

Chicken on stationary racks should be turned with a pair of tongs or with a gloved hand. Make certain that the jaws of the tongs are smooth and will not tear the skin of the chicken. Never use a fork for turning chicken. When the skin is broken, valuable juices leak out into the fire and tasteless chicken results. No equipment is needed to turn chicken on racks where the racks themselves can be turned.

Figure 3. picture of barbecue rack



Equipment for Applying the Sauce

A 2- or 3-gallon stainless steel garden-type pressure sprayer is ideal for applying barbecue sauce to chicken over an open pit where a large amount is cooking. It can be sprayed on quickly and uniformly, thus avoiding the necessity of spending a lot of time over the heat while brushing it on by hand. The sprayer does restrict the use of some of the coarser seasonings as they will stop up the nozzle. To avoid food contamination, the sprayer used for this purpose should not be used for other purposes.

For backyard barbecuing, a small kitchen basting brush is adequate for applying the sauce to the chicken. If, however, a couple of racks of chicken are being barbecued, applying sauce with a kitchen brush is too slow, yet there is not enough sauce to justify using a sprayer. In such situations, a clean, soft, string dish mop makes an excellent sauce applicator. Both the kitchen basting brush and the dish mop require a small container to hold the sauce.

Fuel and Fire

Heat is necessary to cook (coagulation of protein) the chicken and to act as a catalyst for flavor. Therefore, building and managing the fire are very important to a successful Chick-N-Que.

The racks on small backyard grills should be raised as high as they can. This will be 18 inches or less from the fire. Pit depth varies from 18 inches to 30 inches. Most pits are about 24 inches in depth. Three layers of cinder blocks made an excellent pit 24 inches deep.

Charcoal – Amount Needed

Charcoal briquettes are so common and plentiful on the market that they are the major source of fuel for barbecuing chicken. There are grills, however, that are equipped to burn gas. Others have an electric heating element. The amount of charcoal needed is influenced by the following factors:

1. The quality of the charcoal briquettes. Some will catch fire easier, give off a hotter heat, and last longer than others.
2. The tightness of the pit or whether the grill has a hood. Where the pit is tightly enclosed or a grill has a hood over it, maximum use of the heat will be realized.
3. The height of the rack from the fire will also affect the amount of charcoal needed. The higher the racks the more charcoal required.
4. How tightly the pieces of chicken are packed on the rack also determines how efficiently the heat is con-

sumed. Tightly packed chicken helps to contain the heat, thus requiring less charcoal.

5. Larger chickens take longer to cook than smaller ones. Consequently, more charcoal is required.
6. Weather conditions also affect the amount of charcoal required. It will take more on cold or windy days than on warm or still days. High humidity also will result in the use of more charcoal.

As a rule of thumb one-half to three-quarters of a pound of charcoal is needed per whole, dressed chicken when the chickens are halved. Experience with your own grill will help you to determine the amount of charcoal you need of a given brand. It would not be wise to attempt a large Chick-N-Que over a pit until you have worked with someone who has had a little experience. For best results, one should be familiar with the pit and type of charcoal to be used.

Lighter Fluids

Like charcoal, there are a number of brands of lighter fluids on the market that are quite satisfactory for starting a fire with charcoal briquettes.

There are a couple of easy ways to start a fire in a backyard grill. One way is to stack the briquettes in a pyramid on one side of the grill and squirt a little lighter fluid on it. Wait a few minutes to allow the fluid to soak into the briquettes. Then squirt a little more fluid on the briquettes and light immediately. Another method is to take a 1- or 2-gallon can (depending on the amount of charcoal required). Cut both ends out of it and then with a can opener make 3 or 4 openings around the side at one end. Place this in the grill – holes down – and fill it with charcoal. Apply the starter and light the fire through the holes at the bottom of the can. This creates a chimney effect and causes the charcoal to catch fire quickly. Once the fire is caught, the can is lifted off and the charcoal spread evenly over the bottom.

When charcoal is used in pits it should be piled in a narrow band down the center and length of the pit. The lighter fluid should then be applied the same way as in a grill. If a few dry wood shavings are handy, place them on the floor of the pit and under the charcoal to aid in getting the fire started a little quicker. As soon as most of the briquettes have turned gray, take a rake and scatter the briquettes evenly over the floor of the pit. Charcoal will generally take from 20 to 30 minutes to turn gray; then it is ready to cook chicken.

Selecting and Preparing the Chicken for Barbecuing

Size – Quality

An approximately 2-1/2-pound ready-to-cook broiler is an ideal size for barbecuing. Other sizes; however, are suitable. The smaller the broiler the less time it will take to cook, while larger broilers take longer. Always select “A” quality broilers for barbecuing, a little advance planning, particularly where large amounts of chicken are needed, can save on cost. Do not sacrifice uniformity of size, however, when selecting chicken for barbecuing. Halves of equal size will help to insure that all pieces are done at the same time.

Amount

One-half of a 2-1/2-pound broiler makes an ideal serving for one adult person. For small children, a quarter of a chicken may be enough. Quartering is accomplished easily after cooking by simply breaking the halves into quarters.

Preparing the Chicken for Barbecuing

When group barbecues are conducted, the supplier usually halves the chickens. Most people buy whole ready-to-cook chickens for backyard barbecuing and cut them themselves.

The following steps are suggested as an easy and safe method for halving a 2-1/2-pound broiler, keeping the skin evenly proportioned on each part.

- Step 1. Grip the right wing and leg of the chicken firmly with the left hand and with the right, position the knife for splitting the back (see figure 4)

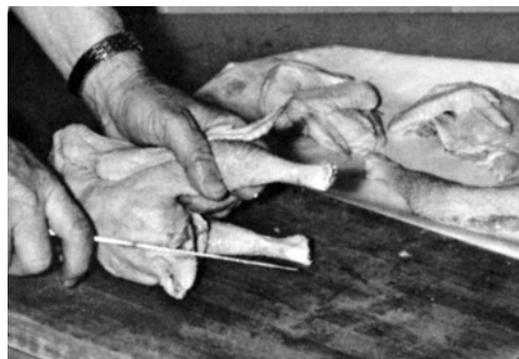


Figure 4.

Step 2. Draw the knife along the back bone of the chicken (figure 5).



Figure 5.

Step 5. Then grip the wings of the chicken firmly with the left hand and sever the breast in half (see figure 8).



Figure 8.

Step 3. Spread the body cavity apart and apply pressure to release breast bone (see figure 6)



Figure 6.

If chicken quarters are desired, one may quarter each half in the following manner.

Step 1. Place the half chicken on cutting board skin side up. Then pull the thigh backwards and cut the skin just in front of thigh (see figure 9).



Figure 9.

Step 4. Remove the breast bone for easy halving of the breast (figure 7).



Figure 7.

Step 2. Hold the front quarter firmly in the left hand and sever the backbone.

Step 3. Break backbone and cut skin free (see figure 10)



Figure 10.

Cooking Procedure

Backyard Barbecuing

If you plan far enough ahead, the barbecue sauce can be prepared and the chicken can be marinated in the sauce for an hour or so prior to barbecuing. This permits the chicken to absorb some of the sauce, enhancing the flavor.

When the fire is ready, place the chicken halves on the clean rack, skin side up. The skin serves as a protective coating against excessive losses of moisture and flavor during cooking. It is, therefore, important that the skin is not broken by unnecessary blistering or burning. Thus, if the chicken is placed on the fire skin side up, it can be basted prior to exposing it directly to the fire. On the other hand, if chicken halves have been marinated prior to cooking, the skin will be well covered with oil from the sauce and either side may be turned down. The fat globules will help shield the meat from the heat, permitting cooking instead of burning. Baste the chicken with the sauce at once if it has not been marinated. Turn with tongs or gloved hands every 5 to 10 minutes and baste it with the sauce at each turning. Also watch for air bubbles that may occur under the skin, particularly in the early stages of cooking, and turn the chicken when this occurs. Cook slowly to avoid burning the outer surface. A slow, steady drip of the juices from the chicken onto the fire, but not enough to cause the fire to flame up, is a good gauge of the proper cooking speed. It is, however, important to retain as much of the juices as possible to enhance the flavor, texture, and appearance. Allow two hours for cooking, even though you may be able to do it in an hour on a backyard grill. Chicken meat must be thoroughly done to be tasty. The internal temperature (near the bone will be about 185°F when it is done). The leg and wing bones will turn easily in their sockets when they are twisted if the chicken is thoroughly cooked.

Barbecuing Over a Pit

It is not practical to marinate the amount of chicken that is usually needed for large groups. Therefore, the chicken is packed tightly on clean racks and placed over the fire and basted with the sauce at once. Keep the sauce well stirred since all ingredients do not go into solution. Turn the racks every 5 or 10 minutes and baste the chicken at each turning. The time required for proper cooking until it is thoroughly done is about 2 hours. It may require 3 hours to cook chicken done over a pit if unusual conditions exist. Generally, 1 1/2 to 2 1/4 hours will be adequate. The size of the chicken, the type of pit, weather

conditions, and the intensity of the heat will influence the time needed to do a good job of cooking.

Managing the fire to prevent the chicken from cooking too rapidly, thus causing excessive blistering or burning of the skin and meat, is very desirable in order to get doneness clear to the bone and to have a pleasing and appetizing appearance. Should the fire become too hot and flame up, it can be brought under control by spraying a little water on it from a garden-type sprayer or small plastic squeeze bottle. Do not use a large stream of water. This will cause ashes from the fire to fly up and get on the chicken, spoiling both appearance and taste.

If help is scarce or if you wish to be certain that the chicken is done on time, start well ahead and allow yourself plenty of time. Chicken can be removed from the racks when done and stored in a tight container for an hour. Its own heat will keep it warm and yet let it cool enough to easily be handled with your hands – the best way to enjoy a Chick- N-Que.

Recipes for Chick-N-Que Sauce

There are many recipes for Chick-N-Que sauces. Every connoisseur has his or her favorite recipe. This is the real fun of Chick-N-Quing. Each person or family should try various recipes or modification of them until they find their favorite. When Chick-N-Quing for large groups, however, a milder sauce will please more people in the group since likes and dislikes vary greatly.

Most judges of barbecued chicken frown on sauces that are so over-powering in flavor that the chicken flavor is lost. On the other hand, sauces that enhance the chicken flavor and give the finished product a pleasing appearance are favored by judges.

You should also bear in mind that certain sauce ingredients make the barbecuing sauce more difficult to manage than others. Oil and water will separate if allowed to stand for a short period and other ingredients will not go into solution (dissolve). They must be stirred frequently, certainly prior to each application, to insure proper and uniform seasoning of the chicken. Other ingredients containing sugar or tomato sauce, for example, will cause the chicken to burn more quickly. These ingredients do, however, enhance the appearance in the eyes of some judges and many people love the flavor these ingredients add to barbecued chicken. Sauces that require sugar can be managed easier if the sugar is omitted from the sauce until the last half hour of cooking.

Mild Chick-N-Que Sauce

Item	Number of People		
	10	25	100
Cooking oil, butter or margarine	1/2 pt. or 1/2 lb.	1 1/4 pt. o 1 1/4 lb.	5 pt. Or 5 lb.
Vinegar	1 pt.	1 1/4 qt.	1 1/4 gal.
Water	1 c.	2 1/2 c.	10 c. (2 1/2 qt.)
Salt	5 Tbsp.	3/4 c.	3 c.
Pepper	1 tsp.	2 1/2 tsp.	3 1/3Tbsp.
Poultry seasoning	2 tsp.	5 tsp.	7 Tbsp.

The above sauce is well adapted to large quantity Chick-N-Quing. It can be brushed or sprayed on during cooking. This is based on one-half chicken per person. Keep sauce stirred.

For a more highly flavored sauce, try these.

3 c. tomato juice	2 Tbsp. paprika
1 c. water	2 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
2/3 c. lemon juice	2 tsp. sugar
1/2 c. butter or margarine	2 tsp. salt
2 medium onions, finely chopped	1 tsp. pepper
Mix ingredients together in a sauce pan.	

Bring just to a boil. Keep the sauce hot for basting. Stir sauce before basting.

NOTE: Tomato juice in sauce gives a delicious flavor but it scorches more quickly than other types. Turn chicken often and be sure to cook slowly 10 to 12 inches from coals.

The proportions in this recipe will make enough sauce for 10 broilers.

Spicy Chick-N-Que Sauce

1 c. salad oil	2 tsp. paprika
2 1/2 c. water	2 tsp. pepper
4 Tbsp. chopped onion	1 tsp. dry mustard
2 cloves of garlic, crushed	dash cayenne
3 tsp. sugar	1/4 c. vinegar
2 tsp. salt	2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
2 tsp. chili powder	2 tsp. Tabasco sauce

Combine all ingredients. Simmer 30 minutes. This sauce cannot be sprayed on chicken. Use a kitchen brush or soft string dish mop. Stir before basting.

The proportions in this recipe will make enough sauce for 10 broilers.