

SCOTLAND

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flaming good

Sue Lawrence lights the fires and chucks another shrimp on the barbie



Do you know, I used to hate barbecues. It was the inevitability factor. You knew there would be chops, ribs and sausages with rice and pasta salad. The males, armed with barbecue tongs and unmanly aprons, would drink copious amounts of beer while sharing tales of derring-do on the golf course and stabbing either the raw or the burnt meat in front of them. The females drank far too much wine while impatiently waiting. Because, no matter how well planned the great Scottish barbecue was, we never seemed to get it quite right. All too often the barbecue recipes were way too complicated which is why the meat ended up burnt or dangerously raw inside. Also, the accompaniments were dull and boring, the fire was never lit in time, the rain stayed away until just before the first shrimp was being thrown on the Barbie then a downpour ensued.

Thankfully, we have moved on. With more

and treat them as simply as possible – perhaps a little marinade of olive oil and seasoning – but then serve with interesting sauces and salads.

And strange though it seems, I often take my lead from the countries hotter than Scotland for these accompaniments. During a recent trip to Mexico – to the fabulous Casa de Sierra Nevada in San Miguel de Allende north of Mexico City – I learned at their cookery school how to make the most wonderful salsas and sauces that are perfect adjuncts to simply barbecued meat or fish. Chef Gonzalo Martinez taught me how to sear chillis and tomatoes first before combining either with avocado or fresh coriander and lime, to make a perfect sauce to go with grilled meat or chicken or seafood. He also made a cactus salad flavoured with oregano and coriander, although I reckon that Scotland has yet to find an everyday use for cactus!

This approach though, helped me realise that

I know the ideal barbecue in Scotland is using our local beef, lamb or fish – cooked and served with aplomb

experience and better equipment, the doomed Scottish barbie is a thing of the past. You can virtually cook anything on barbecues, especially if you have an all-singing, all-dancing model. I recently barbecued a whole fillet of beef (about 1.2 kilos). It was marinated in olive oil for one hour, seared on a high heat for 10 minutes then wrapped in foil and cooked over a lower heat for 30 minutes. After 10 minutes' resting, it cut into beautifully tender slices. A whole chicken can be cooked in the same way, but for longer, until the juices run clear. Prawns, langoustines and scrubbed mussels can be placed directly on the grill in their shells and barbecued until the mussels open and the langoustines and prawns are cooked. But keep the whole thing simple – no fancy cooking methods or marinades that make everything stick to the grill!

For, since in Scotland we have such good raw ingredients, you can buy top quality meat or fish

really, barbecues are all about quality local ingredients simply treated on the heat of the barbecue coals, and accompaniments in the shape of salads and salsas being really interesting and perhaps a little exotic. And if you don't like too much chilli, just take a smaller spoonful of salsa with your perfectly grilled Scottish rib-eye steak or seared West Coast lobster.

So now I know: the ideal barbecue in Scotland is using our local beef, lamb or fish – simply moistened with olive oil and perhaps a few garden herbs – cooked then served with aplomb – and with good bread and fiery Mexican-style salsas. Perfect. I am now a convert to the barbecue. Now all we need is a long hot Scottish summer

The following recipes are from Chef Gonzalo Martinez from Casa Sierra Nevada, San Miguel de Allende, Mexico.

www.casadesierranevada.com