



Backyard Pizza Party

Grill Scrumptious Pizzas and Flatbreads

by Claire O'Neil

Summer is high season for grilling when just about anything sizzled over high heat tastes great. Grill masters Karen Adler and Judith Fertig recently put this theory to the test when they fired up their grills—gas and charcoal—to cook bruschetta, panini, flatbreads and pizzas. The results tasted so good that they created a cookbook: *Patio Pizzeria: Artisan Pizza and Flatbreads on the Grill*.

Here are a few pointers using a backyard charcoal-style approach, with toxin-free hardwood lump charcoal, or a barbecue gas grill. Grill grates can be plain or fancy, from a pizza stone to a high-heat pizza oven—all can bring out that charcoal earthiness.

Great Grilled Breads

“No patio pizzeria repertoire is complete without a signature grilled bread. It’s one of the easiest and most flavorful appetizers ever,” says Adler. This dish starts with good whole grain bread, liberally brushed with extra-virgin olive oil on both sides, and then grilled and topped with any number of vegetable mixtures, from fresh sliced tomatoes to sautéed bell peppers or broccoli rabe

and garlic. “The bread slices should be big enough to manage on the grill grates with long-handled grill tongs,” she says. “Simply cook on each side until the bread has good grill marks, then add toppings.”

For flatbread, Fertig suggests starting with a pound of fresh pizza dough—healthy grain, if preferred—cut into four pieces. Pat each piece into an oval on a floured surface. “The good thing about flatbread is that it can be just about any shape, so the pressure is off to make it perfectly round.” Brush each oval with olive oil before transferring it directly onto the hot grill grate. When the dough bubbles up like a pancake, turn it with grill tongs and cook the other side. Then top the grilled flatbread with mixtures like honey, pistachios and chive blossoms or freshly chopped herbs and grated pecorino cheese. “Grilled flatbread can go vegan, vegetarian or ‘omnivore-ean’,” she says.

Tiny Pizzas with Big Flavor

Another variation is to step up from flatbread to small, individual pizzas, or *pizzettes*. For this, use the same

fresh pizza dough, but roll it into four perfect rounds. One by one, the rounds go on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper and brushed with olive oil.

“Placing the dough on the oiled parchment paper first and then flipping it upside-down on the grill grates helps keep the dough’s shape better than placing it directly on the grates by hand. This quick flip-and-peel motion is easy once you do it a time or two. Keeping the pizzas small also makes them easier to maneuver on the grill,”

advises Adler. After each pizzette bubbles up like a pancake, it needs to be turned and moved to the indirect, or no-heat, side of the grill. There, it gets pizza toppings and can sit for a while with the grill lid closed, so the toppings melt.

Served with a fresh salad or summer fruit, a flatbread or pizzette makes for a perfect summer meal on the grill.

Claire O’Neil is a freelance writer in Kansas City, MO.



Broccoli Rabe and Garlic Bruschetta

Yields: 8 servings

Hearty greens such as broccoli rabe, kale, Swiss chard and spinach are interchangeable here. A quick sauté until greens are wilted keeps dark colors brilliant. Pile the greens, still dripping with olive oil, atop the toasted bread for an appetizer or delicious side with pasta or pizza.

For the sautéed broccoli rabe:
8 oz broccoli rabe, chopped
1 large garlic clove, thinly sliced
2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1/8 tsp kosher or sea salt
Pinch of red pepper flakes
(less than 1/8 tsp)

For the bruschetta:
8 slices (1/2-inch-thick) of Italian country
(or gluten-free) bread
2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

For the sautéed broccoli rabe, in a large skillet on the stovetop, heat 2 tablespoons of water and add the broccoli rabe and garlic. Cook until soft, 6 to 8 minutes. Drizzle with the olive oil and season with the red pepper flakes and salt. Adjust the seasonings to taste.

For the bruschetta, prepare a medium-hot fire in the grill. Brush each slice with the olive oil and grill 1 to 2 minutes per side, or until it has good grill marks.

Spoon a heaping tablespoon of the wilted broccoli rabe on each bruschetta and serve warm.

Pizzeria Recipes



Baby Arugula, Ricotta, Sea Salt and Olive Oil Pizzas

Yields: 4 (6-to-8-inch) pizza servings

Fresh baby arugula on top gives this pizza a fresh first bite, with creamy, tangy, salty and grill-icious to follow.

1 cup ricotta cheese
1/4 tsp dried red pepper flakes
2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
1/4 tsp coarse sea salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1 lb prepared pizza dough, garlic and herb-flavored, if possible; whole wheat, natural grain or gluten-free if preferred
Unbleached all-purpose or gluten-free flour for rolling out and dusting
Extra-virgin olive oil for brushing
1/4 cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese
4 cups baby arugula (about 6 oz)

Stir together the ricotta, red pepper flakes and olive oil in a small bowl and adjust the seasonings to taste. Set aside.

Prepare an indirect medium-hot fire in the grill, with heat on one side and no heat on the other.

Divide the dough into four portions. On a floured surface, pat or roll each portion into a 6-to-8-inch-diameter circle.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Brush olive oil into a circle that’s a little larger than a pizza, and then place a pizza on the oiled circle. Brush the top of the pizza with olive oil.

Lift the pizza by holding the ends of the parchment paper. At a height of about 6 inches above the grill, flip the circle of dough onto the hot side of the grill grates. Quickly peel off the parchment and close the lid. Grill the pizza for 2 to 3 minutes, or until it has good grill marks.

Turn the pizza with tongs and move it to the indirect side. Spread the pizza with one-quarter of the ricotta and sprinkle with one-quarter of the Pecorino Romano. Cover and grill for 2 to 3 minutes, or until the cheese has melted. Repeat the process with the other pizzas. To serve, top each pizza with 1 cup of arugula.

Thai Shrimp Pizzettes with Coconut and Chiles

Yields: 4 (6-to-8-inch) pizza servings

Green curry paste, available in the Asian section of the grocery, contains green chiles, lemongrass and other tasty seasonings. Ingredients include enough shrimp for nibbling before scattering the bulk of them on the pizzettes.

For the green curry coconut sauce:
1 cup fresh or canned coconut milk, well shaken
2 tsp green curry paste
Juice of 1 lime (about 1 Tbsp)

For the shrimp pizzettes:
1 lb large shrimp (31 to 35), peeled and deveined
Extra-virgin olive oil for brushing
1 lb prepared pizza dough, whole wheat, natural grain or gluten-free if preferred
Unbleached all-purpose flour or gluten-free flour for rolling out and dusting
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro

For the green curry coconut sauce, stir together the coconut milk, green curry paste and lime juice in small bowl. Set aside.



For the shrimp pizzettes, soak 8 (12-inch) bamboo skewers in water for at least 30 minutes.

Prepare an indirect medium-hot fire in the grill, with heat on one side and no heat on the other.

Thread the shrimp onto the prepared skewers and brush with olive oil.

Grill shrimp over direct heat for 3 to 4 minutes per side, or until firm, opaque and pink.

Divide the dough into four portions. On a floured surface, pat or roll each portion into a 6-to-8-inch-diameter circle.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Brush olive oil into a circle that's a little larger than a pizza, and then place a pizza on the oiled circle. Brush the top of the pizza with olive oil.

Lift the pizza by holding the ends of the parchment paper. At a height of about 6 inches above the grill, flip the circle of dough onto the hot side of the grill grates. Quickly peel off the parchment and close the lid. Grill the pizza base for 2 to 3 minutes, or until it has good grill marks. Turn the pizza with tongs and move it to the indirect heat side.

Spread the pizza with one-quarter of the green curry coconut sauce. Cover and grill for an additional 2 to 3 minutes, or until the topping has melted.

Repeat the process with the other pizzas. To serve, top each pizza with grilled shrimp and cilantro.

Source: Patio Pizzeria, by Karen Adler and Judith Fertig; adapted, with the permission of Running Press.