

Holiday Hints

Look Outside For Oven Space This Holiday Season

(NAPSA)—Preparing holiday meals with only one oven has always been a challenge. Help may be as close as your backyard.

“By preparing the main dish outside over the coals, whether it’s turkey, ham or even brisket, you’ll gain considerable space in your indoor oven,” says Ed Fisher, founder of Big Green Egg, maker of the renowned green ceramic cookers. It virtually eliminates the juggling act that happens when you’re trying to get all your foods done at the same time.”

Taking the main course outdoors not only increases the available indoor oven space, but the combination of fuel and “flavorizers” will produce meats that have your guests grabbing seconds. You may find yourself moving some of the side dishes out to the grill as well, though they will require less cooking time.

An experienced cook will use natural lump charcoal in the cooker, which burns hotter than traditional briquettes and produces less ash—and it gives you great cooked-outdoors flavor. Also, you just need a natural fire starter or an electric lighter to get the fire going and you’ll be ready to cook in about 10 minutes. No lighter fluid is needed.

Controlling the temperature in a ceramic cooker can be easy too. You can grill, barbecue, smoke or bake at the proper temperature by adjusting the dampers at the bottom. And whether you’re low and slow smoking, or quick grilling, each EGG has a temperature gauge on the outside of the shell—



meaning no heat loss from lifting the lid to insert a thermometer.

Heat isn’t the only thing to consider. To coax even more flavor from the fire, add wood chips or chunks that have been soaked in water or even apple juice. Experiment with wood flavors, as there are more options now than just hickory and mesquite. Look for wood chips made from traditional fruitwoods like cherry, apple and pecan. Or try more exotic woods such as grapevine or mulberry. Smoke pellets don’t require soaking in liquid—just put them in an aluminum foil packet that has a tiny hole for the smoke to escape. They’re available in many tantalizing flavors including black walnut, sassafras and orange.

Another layer of flavor comes from what goes in and on the meat. There are many varieties of injectable marinades. Try one with a little cayenne for heartier cuts of meat, such as pork loin. Chicken broth, garlic, butter and a bit of lemon juice make a great marinade for turkey or Cornish hens. And if seafood is on the

menu, use these marinades to brush over cracked lobster tails, crab claws or shrimp kabobs as they cook.

With or without marinade, don’t forget a dry rub. Turkey especially benefits from both a marinade and a dry rub that is smeared liberally over the skin and throughout the cavity. Brisket and ribs may not need a marinade, but a dry rub is demanded! If your family prefers brisket and ribs with a barbecue sauce, don’t add it until the last 30 minutes or so, as the sugar in the sauce will cause it to burn.

To really maximize your outdoor cooking space, get a grill extender. It’s a second “shelf” that sits about six inches above the first grid to double the cooking capacity. After removing the main course from the grill, you can set a variety of pies—pumpkin, apple or maybe mincemeat—over the warm coals. When dinner is finished and it’s time for dessert, all you have to do is add whipped cream or a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Certainly space saving and flavor boosting are the two best reasons for preparing dinner outdoors, but another plus? You usually have help with the cooking! And, according to the Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association, more than 60 percent of barbecuers now cook out year ’round—so don’t let a little chill in the air deter you.

For more information, visit www.biggreenegg.com and click on Forum for recipes.