

# The Grill Is On

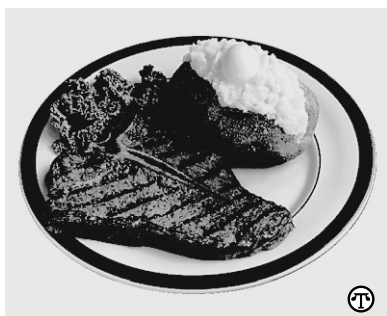
(NAPSA)—Grilling has become a popular cooking method year-round. The juicy grilled flavors, the hint of charcoal, cedar, apple wood or hickory, and the familiar whiff of smoke—it means good eating is on its way. Eighty-four percent of Americans agree that grilled food just tastes better.

“The flavorization of the American palate is another reason for the rising popularity of grilling,” according to Steven Raichlen, author of the *Barbecue Bible*. “Americans love big, bold flavors more than ever before.”

With more and more Americans strapped for time, restaurants across the nation are taking notice of America’s yearning for food “on the barbie.” According to the Chain Menu Account Survey (CMAS), “grilled” was again the preparation method most frequently mentioned on restaurant menus last year, with twice as many mentions as “fried,” which ranked second.

For example, a family-focused restaurant chain that prides itself on offering familiar foods that people like, Shoney’s Restaurants, is introducing Cookout Classics. This builds the menu around such American favorites as the T-Bone, charbroiled chicken breast, and the half o’ pound chopped beef steak. These dishes hold their own, especially when paired with a baked potato or onion rings.

“People’s tastes are becoming more adventurous, but they like the traditional favorites like the T-bone steak,” said Shoney’s Angela Vega, senior product development manager, who develops new menu items for the well-known restaurant.



“We have the grilled favorites but we’re appealing to the adventurous side by putting a twist on them by offering some great sauce toppings,” added Vega. As part of Cookout Classics, three sauces will be offered with the grilled items. The trio includes a zesty Marsala wine sauce made with caramelized onions; a peppercorn glaze; and a tangy Bourbon sauce, which is a rich blend of Kentucky bourbon, brown sugar, pineapple juice, apple cider and soy sauce.

## **The great American pastime**

Eight out of every 10 adults grilled last year, according to The NPD Group’s Report on Grilling in America. People are grilling more all year, making barbecue grills one of the most popular heating appliances in the American home.

Food trend experts agree that the grilling season, once considered a summer-only ritual, is expanding into fall and winter. Why? “Grilling just tastes so good,” said Sara Reddington, director of the Beef and Veal Culinary Center for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. “That taste on the grill. That browning on the outside—it’s so tasty. Eating more grilled foods is a growing trend.”