



Fire Grilling: Brazilian Churrasco



GAUCHO STEAKS



BACKGROUND

The term [Churrasco](#) is a Portuguese term for grilled meat or referring to a thick cut of steak, the name originally came from the early European settlers in Brazil. Brazilian Churrasco was developed by the gauchos in the 1800's tending the cattle in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. The hungry gauchos would use local hardwood, beef from their abundant cattle and a few of their swords to skewer the cuts of meat, add some fresh sea salt and you have a feast!

Brazilian Churrasco usually involves larger slabs of meat or whole animals cooked over open fire that are skewered on Churrasco swords or spread out by the legs on a steel frame over hot coals. The meat flavor is punctuated by coarse sea salt and wood smoke with minimal additional ingredients to detract from the fresh grass fed beef. Medium to low indirect heat is best.

As the meat cooks it's sliced off the skewer and enjoyed and the roast is basted or salted and rotated and continues to cook. It is to be enjoyed over a long period of time with regular servings of meat sliced off the churrasco skewer along with your favorite cerveja (beer). Repeat this process until everyone in your party is stuffed, the meat should not run out or that's considered a party foul almost as bad as running out of beer.



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MEAT MATTERS

Brazilian [picanha roast](#) (rump cap) can be found in the US but you have to hunt for it, often times it's trimmed so ordering un-trimmed with the fat on from the butcher the best bet. The picanha is a cross-section of rump, loin, and round and is the muscle that is on the top of the cow butt next to the rump/sirloin cut. It comes as a roast which you can slice it into 2 or 3 fat steaks (option 1) or keep whole and baste it and cook it as a roast to slice off chunks as it cooks (option 2).

If you go the steak route (Option 1 in the picture above) When it is skewered it should be squeezed so that it curves the fat into a C-shape which helps hold it on the skewer better. As it cooks the fat bastes the roast through the meat and into the embers as it drips. Other suitable alternative cuts such as tri-tip or sirloin roast work well but you want to pick a cut that is flavorful and not known for being tough. No matter what type of meat you use, it must be cooked over hardwood coals to infuse the smoky hardwood flavors and keep the fat on. And to do it right you should cook it on a Churrasco sword or [Cowboy Kabob](#) so you can slice it as it cooks with your biggest badest sharpest knife, then baste it and then return it to the heat. That's the best part of the experience!

GET YOUR BLADE ON

Churrasco swords come in all sizes based on what you plan to cook and where you plan to cook. They can range from shorter 19-24" blades that are suitable for more refined grilling situations involving a flat grilling surface or using a churrasco rack. At 24" long, The [Cowboy Kabob Jr.](#) is great for backyard grills, Kettles, Green Eggs etc. where the handles stay outside of the grilling surface.

For the larger cuts of meat there are 5'+ long flat or angle iron blades that can hold huge slabs of meat that are unwieldy but great if you have your own herd of cattle to cut up. However, they're not too practical to the average camper or backyard chef.

The Original [Cowboy Kabob](#) makes the perfect mid-size option for most group or family Churrasco cooking situations. It's designed to fit across campfire pits for that true Gaucho campfire cooking experience. The 42" square stainless blade holds a lot and the 1 lb weight makes it easy to transport and use as a Churrasco sword and for many other grilling recipes. Use a single Cowboy Kabob for thick steaks and use 2 Cowboy kabobs side by side for skewering Picanha roasts or multiple roasts or a rack of ribs while still being able to easily rotate and remove holding the oak handles.



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SHOP Cowboy Kabobs:



Cowboy Kabob Jr. - 24" Long.

The Original Cowboy Kabob – 42" long

PREPARATION

Option 1: Slice the Roast into 2-3" thick steaks keep the fat on. Cover the outside of the meat with crushed salt, pepper and oregano for an hour + to warm up while the fire burns down. Grill over the coals for 20-30 min. at 5-7 seconds count using the hand thermometer. Rotate every 5 minutes or so to prevent burning one side more than the other. The fat will render and drip over the meat self-basting. Let it rest for 15 min. before slicing into 1/2" steaks. Or enjoy it as it cooks!.



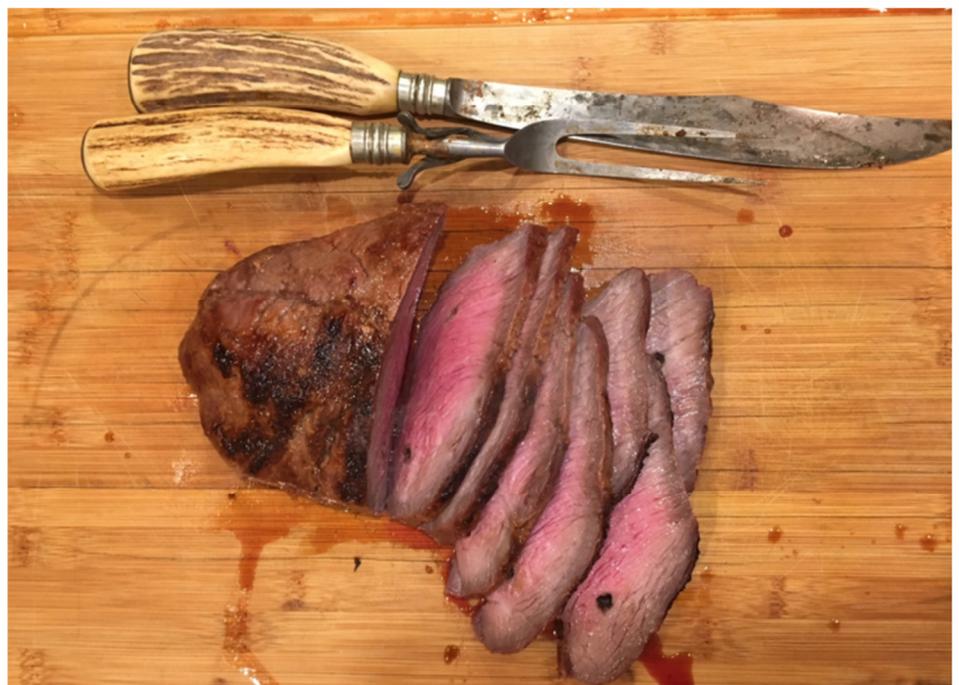
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Option 2:

BASTE INGREDIENTS:

- 2 Picanha roasts or other alternate
- 1 head garlic (about 10 to 12 cloves)
- 3 tablespoons coarse sea salt
- 1 1/2 cups water



Option 2: Make the baste: Heat the water to a boil, add the salt and crushed garlic, and simmer for 3 min to dissolve the salt and pull the garlic into the brine but not cook too much. Baste the



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meat and let it warm up while the fire burns down to coals. Baste again and grill at 5-7 seconds on the hand thermometer. As you rotate every 5-10 min. or so slice off a piece and eat it or share then baste and keep cooking. Repeat until you are out of meat or out of beer.

For larger roasts or multiple roasts skewer your meat onto a use 2 Cowboy Kabobs side by side. Serve with a Chimichurri sauce and copious amounts of beer.

CHIMICHURRI INGREDIENTS

- 1 bunch parsley, roughly chopped
- ½ bunch Cilantro
- 5-6 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 2 green onions chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed pepper or cayenne pepper
- 2 teaspoon mild ground red pepper or paprika
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1/3 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- Juice from 1 lemon (optional but good)
- Cracked pepper (optional)

PREPARATION

1. Add the green stuff with garlic, chlie powder/ paprika, salt, and vinegar (not the olive oil or lemon) to a blender or food processor and pulse to process well, but do not puree. Leave a chunky. Or chop it up with a knife and stick it in a bowl.
2. Remove to a bowl and stir in the olive oil and lemon juice and let it stand for 30 minutes + to combine all the flavors. Serve at room temperature.
3. It is recommended to let sit in for a few hours to 2 + days. Make ahead of time to bring to a campsite



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HAND THERMOMETER

This is from page 123 of a mid-80s Boy Scout Handbook and it's spot on accurate. This doesn't require you have your phone or an Ap, or some device that takes batteries. As the picture indicates, hold your hand at the level you are cooking. Count one-one thousand, two-one thousand etc. to count seconds, when it's too hot to hold your hand there pull it away. Reference the temperature chart and that's how hot it is. For this recipe we recommend 6 seconds give or take 1 second.

And always cook over the coals, not the flame, If you still have flames, wait until they burn down or cook off to the side of the flames.

HAND THERMOMETER. Hold palm at place where food will go: over coals for broiling, in front of reflector oven for baking. Count "One-and-one," "Two-and-two," and so on, for seconds you can stand to hold your hand. Move your hand to find the temperature you want.



Hand removed at count	Heat	Temperature
6 to 8	Slow	120°C-175°C 250°F-350°F
4 to 5	Moderate	175°C-200°C 350°F-400°F
2 to 3	Hot	200°C-230°C 400°F-450°F
1 or less	Very hot	230°C-260°C 450°F-500°F

MORE INFORMATION:

For a more detailed summary of the origins of Churrasco from the Batel Grill in Brazil:

<http://www.batelgrill.com.br/en/batel-grill/the-origins-of-churrasco>

Wikipedia: Churrasco

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churrasco>

Wikipedia: Picanha

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