

Labor Day's Last Hoorah of Summer

I think my kids are finally getting it. We adults get just a little giddy this time of year and the peak of our euphoria is that first day they climb back on the bus for school. I may have overdone it last Wednesday when I did one of those touchdown "end zone" dances in the front yard in my housecoat. I probably should have waited until the bus was out of sight. Kids just can't take a joke...

Well I fully intend to celebrate this Labor Day and the last few times I've walked by the meat counter at the market those spareribs have been talking to me. I love pork in general but anticipation of barbecued spareribs is something more akin to a "caveman" emotion. You guys out there know what I'm talking about.

The first thing you're going to want is sauce. Not one of those wimpy things they sell in bottles at the store but something that is all yours, has a kick and doesn't have a list of chemicals and gums in the ingredients. Here's a good one you can modify as you like. It is, after all, your sauce recipe.

(Your Name Here)'s Sauce Recipe

1 cup catsup
½ cup dark corn syrup
½ cup apple cider vinegar
¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
¼ cup Dijon Mustard
1 teaspoon chili powder (or to taste)
1 teaspoon sea salt
½ teaspoon hot sauce (or to taste)

Combine all ingredients in a heavy bottom saucepan and heat just to simmer. Taste as you add the last three ingredients and be sure to tweak to your personal preference. Set aside.

When selecting your spareribs be picky. A great rack of ribs should have good color and nice firm meat. Choose slabs with good meat coverage over the bones and no large areas of surface fat. Avoid "shiners." These are slabs where the meat has been cut too close to the bone and the bones have a tendency of falling out during cooking.

If you have a choice, take fresh over previously frozen. Often your selection will come in cryovac packages, which normally have not been frozen, but there's no guarantee unless you are dealing with a butcher you know and trust. Plan on at least 1 pound of ribs for every two adults eating.



Barbecued Spareribs

(serves 8)

4 lbs. pork spareribs
sea salt to taste
fresh ground pepper to taste
paprika
garlic salt
2 cups apple cider

Begin the evening before you plan on cooking the ribs. Rinse your slabs and pat them dry with paper towels. Remove any membrane with a sharp knife. This is normally found on the bone side of the slab and it will prevent you from reaching that perfect level of tenderness when cooking. Salt and pepper the slabs then sprinkle them with paprika and garlic salt. Using the tips of your fingers, rub these spices into the meat. Cover the slabs in a non-reactive container for the night and let them rest and marinate for 12 hours.

Your cooking will be in 3 stages, which allows the ribs to stay moist and tender while benefiting from the flavors you can only achieve on a grill. Start out in the oven at 325°F for 2 hours. Your spareribs should be arranged in a roaster pan. Pour your apple cider evenly over them then cover securely with foil to seal in the moisture.

Next place your slabs on a medium high gas or charcoal grill staying with them through this whole second process. The idea is to begin adding the barbecue sauce seasoning and braise the meat without drying it out. Using a sauce mop or brush, cover the slabs with sauce and flip. Cook each side for approximately 7 to 10 minutes until braised to the level you like, frequently adding sauce in a thin layer. This stage should expose the ribs to high heat for as short a time as you can get away with.

Remove slabs back to your roaster. Cover the ribs with the reserved juices from your pans earlier use and add liberal amounts of sauce before resealing the ribs with foil once

more. Place them back into a 325°F oven and continue to cook for 45 minutes. Cut your slabs into 2 or 3 bone sections before serving and serve with warmed sauce on the side.

We just enjoyed an unbelievable red wine, which would be a perfect match to our spareribs and ideal for those of you who shy away from red wines because of their dryness and higher level of tannins. The *2004 Valckenberg Dornfelder QbA* from the Rheinhessen is a superbly crafted fruity red wine that is medium bodied with a pleasant black cherry aroma. It is filled with lightly fruity flavors of blackberry, ripe black currants and vanilla bean.

The Dornfelder grape has only been around in Germany since the early 1970's when it was first planted more out of curiosity than with the intent of developing a new niche in the German wine industry. Research workers involved with the project began enjoying the wine they were producing from this grape and the rest is wine history.

Valckenberg has been producing exceptional estate-bottled wines in Germany since 1786 and only now do they produce quantities sufficient to allow for import into the United States market. P.J. Valckenberg is in fact the oldest family owned and operated wine import and export business in Germany. Also, you may want to keep in mind if you enjoy German wines that the buzz in the industry is the tremendous quality of the 2004 harvest in Germany and the extraordinary wines that are just now beginning to hit our market.

We'll keep you informed of new German finds as we come across them.

Remember to call if you have any questions at (888) 288-0668 or visit us online at www.winedog.com. Thanks and Cheers!