

ITALIAN BARBECUE

First we need to make an important distinction – that of true barbecue vs. grilling. Although the two terms are often used interchangeably, barbecue traditionally involves cooking for a long time at low heat, often with lots of smoke and sauces or rubs, while grilling refers to cooking with high heat over charcoal, wood, or gas. There is no Italian tradition of American-style barbecue, so when you see that term it will usually mean grilling.

Good Italian grilling uses ingredients like olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and fresh herbs, and goes well beyond the traditional Tuscan Steak, or chicken, or pork chops. Check out recipes for such delights as Eggplant with Rosemary Garlic Oil, Lamb and Figs on Rosemary Skewers, Atlantic Sea Scallops, or a nice Arctic Char (or your favorite fish) with Fresh Herb Salsa Verde. And choosing the wines to accompany your grilled meal should follow the usual guidelines.

If your recipe is from a particular region, your best choices are wines from that region. But keep in mind that grilling beef, pork, or lamb imparts a richer flavor than roasting or sautéing, so the wines that will work best are the full-bodied, heartier varieties. For these dishes, think sangiovese-based reds like Chianti or one of the wonderful wines from Montepulciano or Valpolicella, or Barolo. And if you are having seafood you should try a white Chianti or surprise your guests with something out of the ordinary, like a nice crisp Garofoli Verdicchio or a Saula Frascati, or take them to Sicily with a Nero d'Avola or a Pinot Grigio from Terramore Vineyard or to Sardinia with a wine from Dolianova.

Also, don't rule out one of the all-time favorite white wines from Italy – Soave. I can hear a few of you groaning, “Soave? – Really?” Yes! Several years ago Soave became so popular that large, industrial wineries started pumping out some pretty poor imitations of this wine from the Veneto Region and shipping it in huge quantities to the United States. However, several smaller vineyards have revived the wonderful, crisp and fruity wine like it was long ago. Just be sure you look for a Soave Classico or the DOC classification stamp and you will rediscover something delightful.

Since most outdoor cooking takes place in the Spring or Summer, start your festivities with a delicious Prosecco or try an Asti Spumante. Both provide a festive beginning to your dinner, and the Asti generally is much lower in alcohol (often 7-9.5%). And to accompany your dessert, choose a delicious Vin Santo or the colorful Bellini Tuscan Dessert Wine or a sweet and refreshing Moscato d'Asti.

You don't have to break the bank to enjoy these wines, either. Total Wines and BevMo both have several delightful choices of all the wines I've mentioned ranging in price from \$10 to \$25 – and you can really save some money if you find something on BevMo's 5-cent sale. But if you want something for a really special occasion, they can also provide some really outstanding wines all the way up to \$200+, with dozens of choices in between. Or if you prefer really inexpensive choices, you can always go to Trader Joe's, where you can find Italian wines for under \$10 a bottle. And although my personal experience is that their selections are okay but not the best examples of Italian wines, if you like it, drink it. Cent'anni.“

"Richerino" and Giuseppe