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Barbecuing Poultry

MILO H. SWANSON

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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LOOKING FOR A WAY to turn an ordinary picnic into a fiesta? Try a barbecue with chicken, turkey, duck or goose. It's easy to do and you'll find the eating delicious.

For a backyard barbecue with the family and a few friends, the equipment can be simple. You can have less than \$5 tied up in a few cinder blocks and some wire for a grill—equipment that can also be carried in the trunk of your car if the picnic is away from home.

A poultry barbecue is also a wonderful idea for larger groups like church organizations, 4-H clubs, community celebrations, business firm picnics.

Interested? Let's have a barbecue!

Selecting the Birds

Chickens—9- to 12-week-old broilers or fryers weighing 1¾ to 2½ pounds (eviscerated weight) are best for barbecuing. Select well-meated, top quality birds of uniform size.

Turkeys—Young fryer-roaster turkeys (broilers) weighing 4 to 7 pounds ready-to-cook barbecue nicely. You can barbecue larger turkeys, but they take much longer and require frequent basting.

Ducks and Geese—Waterfowl barbecued are deliciously different. You'll find ducklings and young geese more satisfactory than the older birds.

Preparing the Birds

Whenever possible, save yourself work by buying birds already cut in halves, ready for the grill. If you have to cut them yourself, follow this procedure:

First split the whole bird by cutting along the side of the backbone. Remove the neck and save it, along with the giblets, for other uses. Complete the separation into two halves by cutting down the midline of the breast.

With turkeys, waterfowl, or large chickens, you can quarter each half by removing the leg-and-thigh from the breast, wings and ribs.

Keep the birds iced right up to time of cooking.

Constructing the Pit

Cinder blocks, 8" x 8" x 16", are ideal for a barbecue pit of any size. (The 6" width blocks are also suitable.) You merely stack them in courses; no cementing together. Avoid using cement blocks; they're heavy to transport and can crack from the heat.

Family Size—You need only 21 blocks to make a pit large enough for 10 chicken-halves. Select a level site and stack the blocks two wide, two long, and three courses high. This provides a cooking area 16" x 24" enclosed on four sides. A 2' x 3' piece of welded wire (1-inch or 1 x 2-inch mesh), laid on two 2' welding rods, makes a satisfactory grill. (Figure 1.)

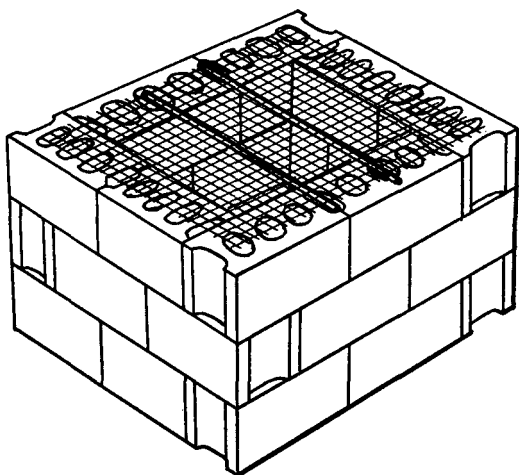


Fig. 1. Family size barbecue pit made of 21 cinder blocks, 8" x 8" x 16" each. Capacity: 10 chicken halves.

Large Size—Cinder-block pits can be quickly set up to handle from 25 to several hundred birds at one time. You'll usually plan these larger pits $3\frac{1}{2}$ blocks wide (to provide offset and overlap for strength) and as long as necessary for the size of the group you're serving. Build the pit three courses high with all four sides enclosed. (Figure 3.)

Pits constructed from sheet metal panels are also coming into use for serving larger groups. They can be easily assembled or knocked down for carrying. Several organizations within the poultry industry have such equipment and will make it available to organized groups planning larger scale barbecues. If you're interested, write directly to the Poultry Department, Institute of Agriculture, University of Minnesota, St. Paul 1, for information.

You can use the same simple type of grill—the welded wire, supported every 5 to 6 feet by cross-pieces of pipe—on the larger barbecue pits. But a *sandwich-type grill* (figure 2) will save you considerable labor. One man can easily turn the type shown, and any number of the grills can be used side by side on the same pit (figure 3).

Fuel and Fire

Charcoal briquets are the most convenient and satisfactory fuel for barbecuing poultry. They give lots of heat with little or no smoke. For a small family-size pit, you'll need 10 to 20 pounds; for larger pits, allow $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 pound for each half-bird.

To start the fire, pour the briquets from the bag into a pile. Soak them lightly with kerosene (about $\frac{1}{2}$ pint per 20 pounds of charcoal) and light with a piece of burning paper. In the larger pits, simply lay the bags of charcoal on their sides and slit them open to expose the briquets for lighting. Use 1 gallon of kerosene for each 25 feet of pit.

When the flames have disappeared and the briquets are burning (shown by the small white spots on their surfaces), spread them evenly over the bottom of the pit so they are no more than *one layer deep*. Allow ample time for the odor of kerosene to disappear before you place the birds on the grill. This will usually take 15 to 20 minutes from the time you first light the fire.

The Barbecue Sauce

The choice of barbecue sauce will depend on your personal likes and dislikes. But if you're barbecuing poultry for the first time, we suggest you try a mild sauce of the New England variety (see recipe). It's also a wise choice when you're serving large groups where tastes may vary considerably. It's an easy one to prepare and to apply.

New England Sauce (for 5 chicken broilers or 10 halves)

1 cup water	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. butter
2 cups vinegar	2 tbsp. salt

Bring sauce to a boil and keep hot on grill

If you prefer a more spicy flavor, we suggest the All-Purpose sauce. Because of its ingredients—tomato, sugar, etc.—it will give the birds a deeper color. It is also somewhat subject to charring, but that is normal; don't mistake it as an indication of overcooking.

All-Purpose Sauce (for 5 chicken broilers or 10 halves)

1½ tsp. salt	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup tomato juice
4 tsp. sugar	$\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter
$\frac{3}{4}$ cup catsup	1½ tsp. paprika
$\frac{1}{2}$ cup vinegar	1 tsp. Worcestershire
1 tsp. pepper	1½ cup water
$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. garlic salt	2 small onions (chopped fine)

Bring sauce to a boil and keep hot on grill

Cooking Procedure

Place the quarters or halves on the grill with the skin-side up, as *close together* as possible so there is a minimum loss of heat. Baste immediately with barbecue sauce.

For basting, clean new dish-mops (with wooden handles) are ideal. Paint brushes or fiber brushes can also be used. For large barbecues, small pump sprayers are sometimes used to reduce labor. *Stainless steel* sprayers are available and recommended (figure 4). Only a thin sauce (New England type) can be sprayed.

Turn the birds frequently—every 5 or 6 minutes—basting them after each turning. The sandwich-type grill mentioned makes it possible to turn all pieces at once, and basting can be done without opening the grill (figure 4). When a simple flat grill is used you must turn each piece individually. Don't turn them by sticking with a fork, since that will permit the juices to run out. Instead, use a set of tongs or a pair of clean, white canvas gloves.

Long, slow cooking is the key to successful barbecuing of poultry. Birds overcooked on the outside and raw inside will result only in disappointment. Allow at least $1\frac{1}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours of cooking time for chicken broilers, proportionately longer times for turkey and waterfowl depending on size. A good test for "done-ness" is that point at which the drumstick can be easily turned loose from the meat.

Slow cooking requires only moderate to low heat. Extensive blistering of the skin on the birds indicates the fire is too hot. You can reduce the temperature by sprinkling water on the coals with a garden sprinkling can. Another way is to raise the grill by adding a fourth course of blocks, or to remove a few blocks on one or two sides of the pit to permit greater air circulation and heat escape.

Generally, you'll find one layer of briquets is sufficient to cook one batch of birds. If not, you can add more briquets from time to time. If the heat becomes too low toward the end of cooking, you can remove one course of blocks completely to bring the grill closer to the source of heat. Successive batches take less fuel.

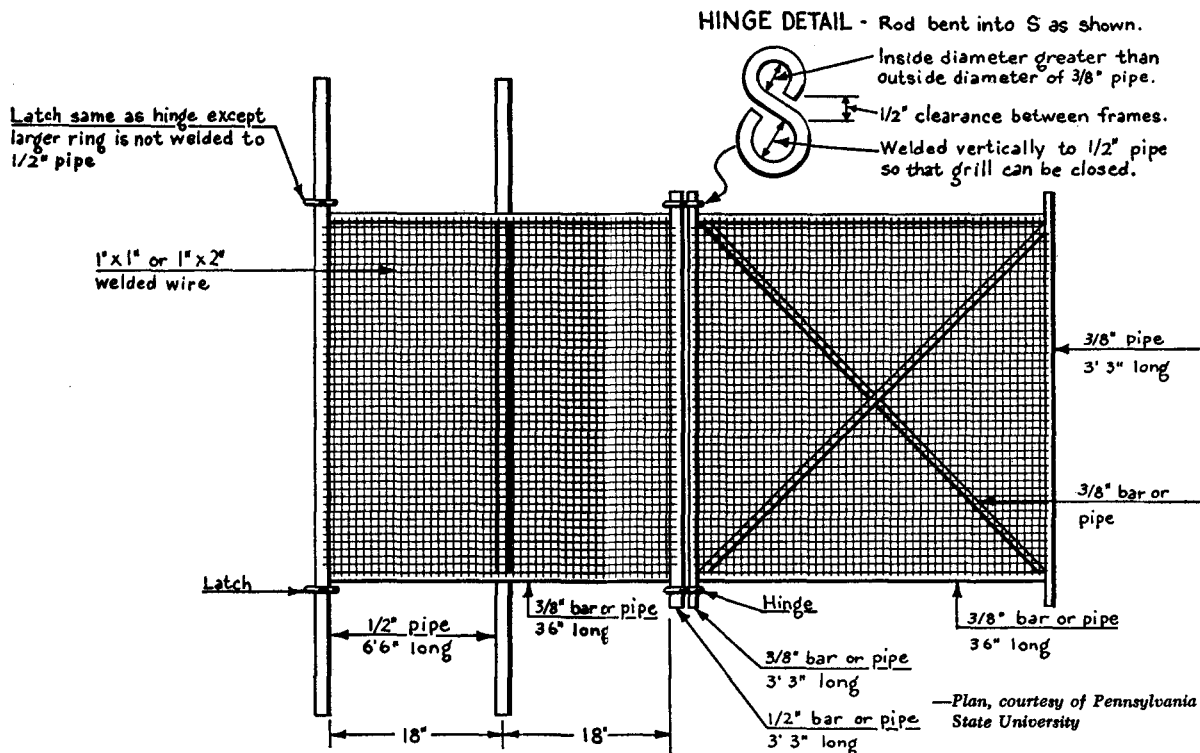


Fig. 2. Poultry barbecue grill. Size: 36" x 36". Capacity: 30 to 35 halves.

Barbecued poultry is best when served hot. For a small barbecue, your family and guests may prefer to select their own birds directly from the grill. Some experienced barbecuers recommend holding the birds in a closed container for about 15 minutes before serving. They believe it improves the juiciness and allows the flavor to penetrate the meat.

Pit and equipment—Provide cinder blocks, the grill, charcoal, kerosene, pails for the sauce, basting equipment, rake, shovel, sprinkling can, gloves, tables, chairs, other equipment.

Barbecuing—Do actual cooking and basting of the birds.

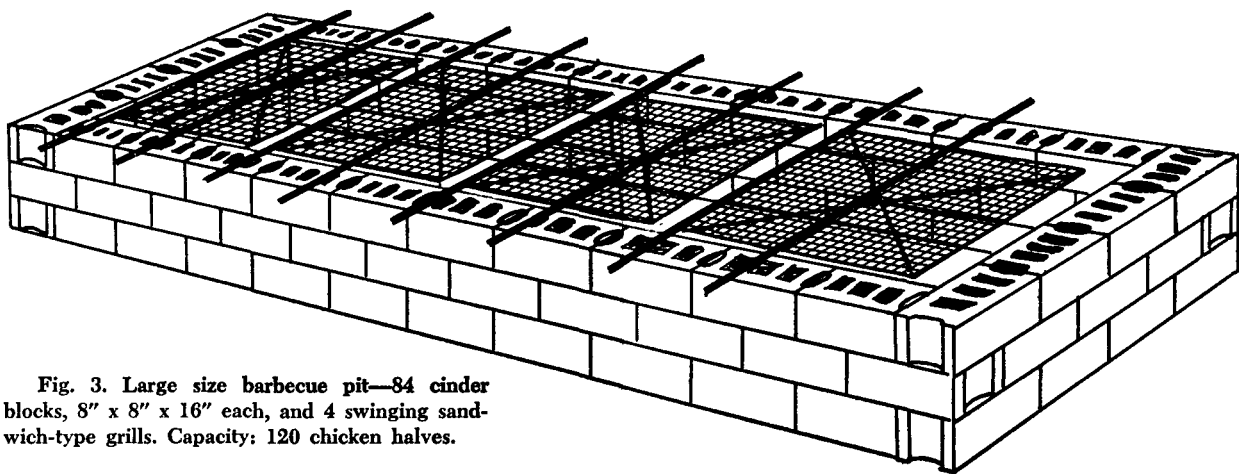


Fig. 3. Large size barbecue pit—84 cinder blocks, 8" x 8" x 16" each, and 4 swinging sand-wich-type grills. Capacity: 120 chicken halves.

Menus for Poultry Barbecues

Keep the accent on the barbecued birds; have the rest of your menu simple. It's also a wise plan to choose items that require no knives, forks, or spoons. Have a good supply of paper napkins. Paper plates will, of course, keep dishwashing to a minimum. Table 1 will help you in planning the menu for your barbecue, large or small.

Tips for Large Barbecues

With a little planning, you'll find that staging a poultry barbecue for a large group isn't difficult. Have your group or organization set up some special committees, so the responsibilities can be delegated and the work load divided among as many as possible. Here's what your committees might do:

Publicity and Tickets—Advertise the barbecue, sell and collect tickets, pay bills for food and accessories, present a financial report afterward.

Food—Prepare the menu; order food, sauce ingredients, drinks, plates, aprons, hats; prepare the sauce; serve all food.

Table 1. All-American menu (make up your menu from this list)

Items	Number of persons				
	4	10	50	100	500
Number of chickens (1¼ to 2½ lbs., ready-to-cook)	2	5	25	50	250
Cranberry sauce	1 pt.	1 qt.	5 qts.	10 qts.	50 qts.
Cole slaw	1 pt.	1 qt.	5 qts.	10 qts.	50 qts.
Potato chips	½ lb.	1 lb.	3 lbs.	6 lbs.	30 lbs.
Pickled or deviled eggs			(allow ½ to 1 per person)		
Pickles	½ pt.	1 pt.	2 qts.	1 gal.	5 gal.
Rolls	¾ doz.	1½ doz.	5 doz.	10 doz.	50 doz.
Bread, loaves (sliced)	½	1	5	10	50
Butter or margarine	½ lb.	¼ lb.	1 lb.	2 lbs.	10 lbs.
Coffee	1½ qt.	3 qts.	3 gal.	6 gal.	30 gal.
Iced tea	2 qts.	1 gal.	5 gal.	10 gal.	50 gal.
Coffee cream	½ pt.	1 pt.	2 qts.	3 qts.	15 qts.
Sugar	½ lb.	¼ lb.	1 lb.	1½ lbs.	7½ lbs.
Ice-cream cups	5	10	50	100	500
Pies (9- to 10-inch)	1	2	5	10	50
Milk (half-pints)	1½	3	12	25	125
Bottled cold drinks	5	12	60	120	600

Clean-up—Dispose of excess food; make sure the fire is out; leave the grounds clean.

Parking—Handle parking arrangements. (A necessary committee where crowds are very large, sometimes overlooked in planning the barbecue.)

Here are some other suggestions for the planners to consider:

- Put your cooks and food committee in white aprons and chef's hats to make the operation more tidy and attractive. Be aware of the dangers of food spoilage. See that equipment is kept clean and all food handled in a sanitary manner.

- To conserve space, place all right halves of the birds on one grill, all left halves on another. Order them packed this way from the processor and save time as well.

- Although it is best to serve the birds shortly after they're cooked, for large groups it may be necessary to hold the cooked birds until ready to serve. Clean cardboard containers lined with paper will help to keep them warm.

- Don't underestimate the appetites of your group. If there should be a few barbecued birds left over, you can usually sell those without any trouble to individuals who would like to take some home.

- Keep the smaller children in mind, too. You may want to plan on serving them smaller portions (for example, a quarter of a chicken) at a lower price. Parents usually appreciate this arrangement.

- Remember that church groups and clubs often may find it possible to borrow the necessary cinder blocks, returning them afterward. Heat does not injure cinder blocks.



Fig. 4. A cinder block barbecue pit and sandwich-type grill in use. One man can easily turn the grill and the birds can be basted without opening it. For large groups, basting can be done with a stainless steel sprayer, as demonstrated here.

• If the barbecue is a fund-raising venture for your church organization, 4-H club, and the like, don't make the mistake of setting your price too low the first time. You might want to make it an annual affair and, once established, prices are easy to lower but difficult to raise.

Large or Small

Table 1 will help you make up the menu for any group from the family picnicking in the backyard to 500 persons. Table 2 will give you an idea of what pit materials and supplies will be needed and how much help you'll need in the cooking and serving.

Table 2. Pit materials and supplies, etc.

Items	Number of persons					
	10	50	100	300	500	
Pit, width (outside)	3' 4"	4' 8"	4' 8"	4' 8"	4' 8"	
Pit, width (blocks)	2½	3½	3½	3½	3½	
Pit, length (outside)	2' 8"	8' 8"	15' 4"	43' 4"	71' 4"	
Pit, length (blocks)	2	6½	11½	32½	53½	
Pit, number of cinder blocks (8"x8"x16")	21	54	84	210	333	
Charcoal briquets (20 lb. bags)	½	3	5	15	25	
Kerosene (gallons)	1/16	1/3	2/3	2	3	
New England Sauce {	Water	½ pt.	1 qt.	2 qts.	1½ gal.	2½ gal.
	Vinegar	1 pt.	2 qts.	4 qts.	3 gal.	5 gal.
	Butter	½ lb.	2 lbs.	4 lbs.	12 lbs.	20 lbs.
	Salt	1 oz.	¼ lb.	½ lb.	1½ lbs.	2½ lbs.
Sauce container (8-qt. pail)	1	1	2	5	8	
Brushes for sauce	1	1	2	5	8	
Tongs to turn birds*	1	2	3	9	15	
Persons to turn and bast	1	2	3	9	15	
Persons to serve	1	2	3	9	15	

* When sandwich grills are unavailable.



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