

Recipe by Julia Heffelfinger

Grilled Chicken with Blueberry BBQ Sauce

Serves 4



Come summer, when the farmers market stands are overflowing with juicy berries, I'm constantly looking for new ways to put them to use. This recipe uses blueberries to create a complex barbecue sauce that is savory, sweet, and tangy—it's an unexpected spin on the cookout staple. The homemade sauce is enriched with a touch of balsamic vinegar at the end, giving it incredible depth. Brush it on your favorite cut of chicken while it cooks away on the grill—the sauce caramelizes and gives your bird a dramatic, deep purple tint. For good measure, I also scatter a few more fresh berries over the top for serving.

3 cups fresh or thawed frozen blueberries, plus more for serving

½ cup ketchup

¼ cup packed dark brown sugar

¼ cup cider vinegar

2 Tablespoons molasses

2 Tablespoons Worcestershire sauce

2 garlic cloves, minced or grated

2 teaspoons sweet or hot paprika

½ teaspoon ground ginger

Pinch of cayenne

A couple dashes of hot sauce

Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 Tablespoon quality balsamic vinegar

Canola or grapeseed oil, for brushing

One 4-pound chicken, halved (see Note)

Grilled corn, for serving

1. In a medium saucepan, combine the blueberries with the ketchup, brown sugar, apple cider vinegar, molasses, Worcestershire, garlic, paprika, ground ginger, cayenne, hot

Recipe by Julia Heffelfinger

sauce, 1 teaspoon of salt, ½ teaspoon of ground black pepper, and 1 cup of water. Bring the blueberry mixture to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to moderately low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the sauce has thickened and reduced by almost half, about 20 minutes. Let cool slightly, then transfer to a blender and puree until smooth. Stir in the balsamic vinegar and season with salt and pepper. You should have about 3 cups of barbecue sauce.

2. Preheat a grill to medium (400°F). Clean the grate thoroughly and brush with oil. Season the chicken all over with salt and pepper. Transfer 1 cup of the barbecue sauce to a small bowl for grilling. Reserve the remaining sauce for serving.
3. Set the chicken halves on the grill bone side down. Brush all over with some of the barbecue sauce, close the hood, and grill, brushing the chicken occasionally with more sauce, for 25 minutes. Flip the chicken halves, brush some sauce on the bone side of each chicken, and grill skin side down until the sauce is beginning to caramelize, about 5 minutes more. Flip the chicken once more and grill bone side down until a thermometer inserted in the thickest part of the breast registers 160°F, 2 to 5 minutes more. Transfer the chicken to a carving board and let rest for at least 10 minutes. Do not cover with foil.
4. Carve the chicken and transfer to a platter. Sprinkle more blueberries over the top and serve with grilled corn and any remaining barbecue sauce on the side.

NOTE To halve your chicken, set it on its butt, facing away from you. Using kitchen shears or a sharp chef's knife, cut along each side of the backbone to remove it from the chicken. Lay the chicken on a work surface breast side up. Using the heel of your hand, press down firmly to flatten the breast bone. Using a sharp chef's knife, split the chicken in half along the breast bone. Alternatively, you can ask your butcher to do this for you.