**Tips for grilling a fall feast**

Folks, don’t put the cover on your grill and store it away yet. Yes, fall is here and winter is not too far away ... so what? The grilling fun has just begun!

What are you going to do with all the vegetables from your garden? I don’t know about you, but we have peppers, zucchini, tomatoes, eggplant and yes, more tomatoes. Just when we’d harvested baskets of them, there would be more the next morning, waiting to be picked. I’ve already made tons of soups and stews with them. The freezer is already full, so what to do? Grill them! What a great idea.

So, here is what we did one weekend, and I would like to share the joy with you. Of course, a glass of pinot grigio is icing on the cake, or if you prefer, a glass of pinot noir. Watching the sun setting, smelling the grilling vegetables and sipping your favorite wine. Yes, life is good.

I had some frozen shrimp in the freezer, the large size. Shrimp are graded by the quantity per pound. The largest are 16-20, which means there are 16-20 shrimp in a pound. Then there are 21-25, which would be considered medium; then 26-30 and 31-35. The larger the number, the smaller the size of the shrimp. Hence, you would have to use a magnifying glass to find shrimp that are 35-40 in your salad.

I love shrimp and I used to eat them fresh from the tank in Hong Kong. Yes, fresh. Well, I didn’t eat them live like the Japanese do. In a restaurant, the shrimp would be happily swimming in a huge glass tank for all to see. Once the order is placed, the chef would come out from the kitchen and get what he needed from the tank with a quick swish of his net. One pound, two pounds ... and off to the boiling water they go.

Once the shrimp turned pink, they would be served immediately with a bowl of dipping sauce made with minced ginger, garlic, scallions, soy sauce and some rice wine. You have to peel the shell off after pulling the head out. Yes, I suck out the stuff from the head, which my wife finds disgusting, but it is a tradition that I dare not defy. The taste is beyond words. Oh, how I miss that.

Grilling is a different story, but it is still a feast of a different version. Regardless, a feast is what you make out of it. So, our recent feast consisted of grilled shrimp, eggplant, zucchini, mushrooms and onion. To make it easier for the vegetables to stay on the grill instead of them rolling around, especially the mushrooms, I get help from my bamboo skewers.

Here is the trick:

Soak 10-12 bamboo skewers in water before using them. The wet skewers will prevent them from catching fire while grilling. Use two skewers for each batch of shrimp and/or vegetables. First, with one skewer, slowly and carefully pierce the shrimp/vegetable from the left end. Then, balance with a skewer on the right side. Now you’ve ensured that your food won’t be rolling around on the grill. So now you have your shrimp/vegetable skewers ready for action. What’s next?

If you have eggplant, slice one-inch slices and sprinkle them with sea salt or garlic salt on both sides and set aside. The next step is to get your garlic lemon butter ready. Here is the trick:

* Melt a cube of butter in a saucepan
* Add two cloves of minced garlic
* Add juice from a fresh-squeezed lemon

Brush the shrimp and vegetable skewers generously with the butter mix and set aside. Do same with the eggplant slices. Make sure the eggplant is well seasoned with seasoning salt.

Once the grill is hot, put all the ingredients on and gently brush them with the garlic lemon butter. The trick is to cook them on medium rather than high heat, as they might burn otherwise. Put the shrimp aside when it turns pink, as they will keep cooking for another 10 or more minutes. I hate overcooked shrimp because they turn rubbery and chewy. Why pay $20 for cardboard? Sometimes, in a restaurant, without any proper coordination, the saute chef will have the shrimp done nice and juicy just to wait for his partner on the charbroiler to cook his steak medium-well. You can guess how it turns out.

Anyway, my wife doesn’t like eggplant much, as they have a bitter aftertaste. But I found a cure for that which is to sprinkle them with seasoning salt 10-15 minutes before cooking them. Then cook them on the grill, over medium heat, and generously brush with garlic lemon butter. Remove from the grill when it is nicely marked. So, the grilled shrimp are ready, and so are the skewered mushrooms and zucchini — you’re ready for your feast!

Once you’ve mastered the art of this, just let your imagination go. Can we make shish kababs? Pork chops? Lamb chops? Only in my dreams, as my wife won’t allow anything cute on the grill. Hence, no lamb chops, ducklings, rabbits, venison ... not even frog legs.

Oh well, so I’ve no use for my “Cook in the Wild” cookbook that a friend gave me before we moved to the North Woods. I read about how any wildlife is game, so to speak, as it has been done for hundreds of years. In the old days, you ate what you caught. Nowadays, we eat what is packaged. I have read about squirrels in bourbon sauce, possum stew, and of course, venison in red wine. I didn’t know our ancestors had such exquisite taste.

I better stop dreaming and go back to my common grilling. I love an occasional steak. Yes, a big, juicy one, better than the ones we got in the supermarket. There is Swank’s, a butcher shop in St. Croix Falls that I frequent. I would call ahead and order the steaks I wanted.

“Yes please, top sirloin/ribeye/New York strip; 1-1/2” thick, 10-12 oz. each. And have them marinated please.” It is a courtesy that they marinate them for free and have them ready for pickup whenever you want them. That’s a special treat when my son’s family comes to visit. I serve them grilled steak with garlic mashed potatoes and grilled vegetables — asparagus, mushrooms, zucchini, corn ... whatever.

The cover for the grill is in the shed with all the garden tools, but I doubt if I will cover the grill for winter. We’ll see. I’m just not ready for winter yet. Maybe a few more trips to Swank’s?

*Peter Kwong’s book “Wok & Roll” is available at* [*phkwong.com*](http://phkwong.com)*.*