

Strictly Sticks - 4th of July Menu
(The whole BBQ in kebab form!)
From Mel's Kitchen Cafe
www.melskitchencafe.com

All the recipes have been modified to feed groups of about 10. Keep in mind, this is just an average number. You'll want to adjust the recipes accordingly if you are feeding more than that or if the 10-ish people are big eaters/little eaters.

Strictly Sticks - 4th of July Menu

	Grilled Steak and Veggie Kebabs	Chipotle Chicken Skewers with Creamy Dipping Sauce	Caprese Skewers	Grilled Sweet Potato Skewers	Brownie & Fruit Kebabs
1-2 days in advance		Make the dipping sauce and refrigerate.			Make brownie recipe of your choice and chill.
24 Hours in Advance	<p>Cut the onion, peppers, and any other veggies you are using into chunks and refrigerate.</p> <p>Cut the steak into 1 1/2 inch chunks and refrigerate.</p>	<p>Slice the chicken breasts into long, thin strips, about 1/2-inch thick. In a small bowl, stir together the brown sugar, cilantro, chipotle chile, adobo sauce, salt, chili powder, garlic powder, and pepper. Toss the chicken with the brown sugar mixture coating all the pieces evenly. Cover the chicken and refrigerate.</p>		<p>Peel the sweet potatoes and cube into 1 inch chunks. Refrigerate in a large, microwavable bowl.</p>	
12 Hours in Advance					<p>Cut the chilled brownies into 1 inch cubes. Alternate threading brownies, fruit and marshmallows onto wooden skewers. Drizzle with hot fudge sauce, if desired. Refrigerate until ready to serve.</p>
2 Hours Before Serving	<p>In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, olive oil, garlic and pepper. Transfer 2/3 cup of the mixture to a large microwave-safe bowl. Place the remaining mixture in a gallon-size ziploc bag and add the meat, tossing lightly. Press the air out of the bag, seal and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 2.</p>				
1 Hour Before Serving	<p>Add the bell peppers, onion and mushrooms to the bowl with the reserved soy sauce mixture and toss to coat. Wrap tightly with plastic wrap and let marinate for 30 minutes. Microwave the vegetables until the onions are translucent at the edges, about 3 minutes, stirring halfway. Uncover the vegetables and set aside until the meat is fully marinated</p> <p><i>{30 minutes before serving}</i> Thread the skewers and grill.</p>	<p><i>{30 minutes before serving}</i> Cover the bamboo skewers with water and soak. Skip this step if using metal skewers.</p> <p>Grill the chicken skewers and serve with dipping sauce.</p>	<p>Prepare the caprese skewers. Place all the finished skewers on a paper plate or tray. Drizzle lightly with balsamic vinegar and transfer to a platter to serve.</p>	<p>Microwave the sweet potatoes until tender enough to skewer. Skewer, season, and grill.</p>	

The Recipes

Grilled Steak and Veggie Kebabs

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup soy sauce
- 1 1/2 cups olive oil
- 8 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 1/2 teaspoons pepper
- 4 pounds steak tips or sirloin steak/roast, poked all over with a fork and cut into 1 1/2-inch chunks
- 4 red bell peppers, seeded and cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
- 2 medium red onions, cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
- 20 ounces white mushrooms, stemmed
- 12 12-inch metal skewers or 12-16 wooden skewers, soaked in water for an hour

DIRECTIONS

1. In a small bowl, whisk together the soy sauce, olive oil, garlic and pepper. Transfer 2/3 cup of the mixture to a large microwave-safe bowl. Place the remaining mixture in a gallon-size ziploc bag and add the meat, tossing lightly. Press the air out of the bag, seal and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 2 hours (don't marinate longer than 2 hours or the beef will be too salty).
2. Add the bell peppers, onion and mushrooms to the bowl with the reserved soy sauce mixture and toss to coat. Wrap tightly with plastic wrap and let marinate for 30 minutes. Microwave the vegetables until the onions are translucent at the edges, about 3 minutes, stirring halfway. Uncover the vegetables and set aside until the meat is fully marinated.
3. Thread the meat onto the skewers, distributing the veggies among the pieces of meat. Grill the kebabs over medium heat, covered, turning frequently, until the meat is well browned and vegetables are tender, about 14-16 minutes. Serve.

Caprese Skewers

Note: fresh mozzarella is the kind that is packed in a watery solution to keep it moist. You can easily substitute marinated mozzarella balls for the fresh mozzarella, slicing them in half or using a whole ball for each skewer. Also, this is a very "loose" recipe so change the quantities as needed. You can use regular toothpicks but if at all possible look for the longer, decorative skewers (a couple centimeters longer than toothpicks) in the paper plate/picnic aisle.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, red or yellow
- 1 bunch basil leaves (about 18-30 leaves, the big ones can be cut in half)
- 8 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese
- Balsamic vinegar, for drizzling
- 2-3 dozen long toothpicks/skewers

DIRECTIONS

1. Slice the cherry tomatoes in half so you end up with two half-basketball pieces. Slice the mozzarella into bite-sized chunks. Slide a piece of mozzarella onto the toothpick. Fold a basil leaf in half or thirds and nestle it up next to the mozzarella (large leaves can be cut into halves or even thirds). Slide a tomato onto the bottom of the skewer, cut side down. Move the mozzarella and basil down to meet the tomato if needed. You want the flat side of the tomato to be right at the end of the toothpick so it stands up straight.
2. Place all the finished skewers on a paper plate or tray. Drizzle lightly with balsamic vinegar and transfer to a platter to serve.

[Chipotle Chicken Skewers with Creamy Dipping Sauce](#)

Note: You could definitely use full-fat sour cream or mayo/yogurt, but I'll attest that the sauce was divinely yummy made with reduced fat ingredients. Chipotle chiles in adobo sauce can be quite spicy so if you want to knock the spice down a bit, scrape the seeds out of the chile and discard before mincing the chile for the marinade/dry rub.

INGREDIENTS

Chicken Skewers:

- 2 1/2 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts (4-5 medium chicken breasts)
- 1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, minced
- 1 chipotle chile in adobo sauce, minced (scrape out the seeds before mincing to reduce spiciness)
- 2 teaspoons adobo sauce
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 12 bamboo or metal skewers

Creamy Dipping Sauce:

- 3/4 cup lowfat sour cream
- 1/4 cup lowfat mayonnaise or Greek yogurt
- 1/4 cup lime juice, from 2-3 limes
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
- 2 tablespoons cilantro leaves, minced
- 2 green onions, finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Slice the chicken breasts into long, thin strips, about 1/2-inch thick. You should have right around 30 strips. In a small bowl, stir together the brown sugar, cilantro, chipotle chile, adobo sauce, salt, chili powder, garlic powder, and pepper. Toss the chicken with the brown sugar mixture coating all the pieces evenly. Cover the chicken (or place in a ziploc bag) and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes and up to 24 hours.
2. For the dipping sauce, in a bowl, stir all the ingredients together. Cover the mixture and let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes until the flavors combine. Alternately, you can make the dipping sauce in advance and refrigerate for up to 2 days. Be sure to season the dipping sauce with additional lime juice, salt and pepper to taste before serving.
3. 30 minutes before grilling, cover the bamboo skewers with water and soak. Skip this step if using metal skewers.
4. Preheat an oven broiler or gas/charcoal grill. Weave two strips of chicken onto each skewer. Broil or grill the chicken for 5-8 minutes until cooked through, using nonstick cooking spray on a foil-lined pan if you are broiling. Serve immediately (if you broil, you may need to cook in batches) with the dipping sauce.

Grilled Sweet Potato Skewers

Note: The key to this recipe is cutting all the sweet potato pieces as close to the same size as possible that way they cook evenly. Also, feel free to add other spices to fancy them up a bit. Chili powder and cumin for a southwest kick anyone?

INGREDIENTS

- 8 medium sweet potatoes/yams, peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Bamboo skewers

DIRECTIONS

1. Place all of the sweet potato chunks in a large microwaveable bowl. Cover with plastic wrap and microwave for three minutes. Remove from the microwave, stir, recover with plastic wrap and microwave 2-3 minutes more, until the sweet potatoes are just tender enough to thread on skewers (but not overly soft – they will cook through on the grill).
2. Thread 5-6 pieces of sweet potato on each skewer. Place all the skewers on a rimmed baking sheet and drizzle with 1-2 tablespoons of olive oil, rolling the skewers back and forth to evenly distribute the oil. Sprinkle the skewers with salt and pepper.
3. Preheat a charcoal or gas grill to medium or medium-high heat. Grill the sweet potato skewers, flipping every 5-6 minutes, for a total of about 20 minutes, until the sweet potatoes are tender. If desired, finish the hot sweet potatoes off with a quick brush of olive oil mixed with a little salt.

Brownie & Fruit Kebabs

INGREDIENTS

- 9X13-inch pan of [Brownies](#) (chilled and cut into 1-inch cubes)
- 1 pint blueberries, washed
- 1 pint strawberries, washed and hulled
- Large marshmallows
- Hot Fudge Sauce for drizzling, if desired
- Bamboo/wooden skewers

DIRECTIONS

Alternate threading brownies, fruit and marshmallows onto wooden skewers. Drizzle with hot fudge sauce, if desired. Refrigerate until ready to serve.