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Succulent ribs and light salad perfect for outdoor summer dining

By Susie Iventosch



Photo Susie Iventosch

Baby back ribs simply say summer. What's better than dining on a batch of succulent ribs with your favorite barbecue sauce and a nice summer salad out on the patio? Ribs are really pretty easy to prepare, too, since they can be cooked ahead of time in the oven and then heated through on the barbecue in less than 10 minutes. Some of the main things to remember about cooking ribs are to remove the thick membrane under the ribs, if your butcher has not already done that, and to slow cook them in a tightly covered pan for about two hours. If you have difficulty removing the membrane, you can slice in between each rib in a couple of places in order to allow the fat to drip out and the seasoning to seep in. I do this even once the membrane is removed.

Now, for the big decision of what kind of rub and sauce to use. This depends upon your own taste. I love both a tangy barbecue sauce and a southern-style sweet sauce made with bourbon. I've included the sweet

southern style rub and sauce that my mom normally uses and I really enjoy. Feel free to email me for a tangier sauce that we also love! With the sweeter southern style ribs, this jicama salad made with grapefruit, mango, avocado and cilantro all tossed in lime vinaigrette is the perfect accompaniment!

Baby Back Ribs
(Serves 6)

INGREDIENTS

2 racks baby back ribs, approximately 2 1/2 to 3 pounds each, or 12 ribs per rack
 4 tablespoons rub (see recipe below)

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 300 F.

Remove membrane from back of ribs, if it is still there. Cut rack into portions of 3-4 ribs each. Make two small (3/4-inch) slits in between each rib. Spread rub on top and bottom of rib racks.

Place in a baking dish, meaty side down, and cover tightly with foil. Bake for approximately two hours, or until a knife easily inserts into the meat between ribs.

Remove from oven. Cool to room temperature and drain any excess fat from the pan. Seal ribs in foil or in an airtight container and refrigerate until ready to use.

When ready to serve, heat ribs on barbecue over medium heat for a couple of minutes before basting with barbecue sauce. Then, cook ribs for two-three minutes per side. Serve hot!

Sweet Rib Rub and Barbecue Sauce

For rub, blend together:

2 tablespoons powdered cumin
 1 tablespoon brown sugar
 1 tablespoon chili powder
 2 teaspoons dry mustard
 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Sometimes I add: 1 teaspoon paprika and 1 teaspoon onion or garlic powder and a dash of ginger.

For Sauce:

INGREDIENTS

1 medium yellow onion, chopped
 4 cloves garlic, minced
 2 tablespoons canola oil
 1 teaspoon salt
 1/2 cup whole seeded Dijon mustard
 1 1/2 cups ketchup
 1 small can (6 ounces) tomato paste
 1/2 cup apple juice
 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
 1 dried ancho chili, peeled, stem and seeds removed and chopped (can substitute 1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes)
 1 cup water
 1/2 cup bourbon

DIRECTIONS

Heat oil in sauce pan. Add onion and garlic and cook until translucent. Stir in salt, ancho chili, mustard, ketchup, apple juice, apple cider vinegar and water. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Add bourbon and continue to cook for another 5 minutes or so. At this point, you can cool the sauce and refrigerate in an air-tight container until ready to use.

Jicama-Mango-Grapefruit-
Avocado Salad with Lime Vinaigrette

INGREDIENTS

Salad

2 cups julienned strips of jicama (1-2 inches in length)
1 cup mango cut into bite-sized pieces
1/2 grapefruit cut into pieces (I cut these out with a grapefruit spoon)
1 firm avocado, cut into bite-sized pieces
1/2 cup cilantro leaves, snipped into pieces
1/4 cup red onion, chopped and caramelized
1/3 cup crumbled blue cheese
1 recipe vinaigrette (below)

Lime Vinaigrette

Place the following in a container with a tight-fitting lid and shake well:

1/4 cup fresh-squeezed lime juice
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
2/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 teaspoon Tajin (or other Lime-salt seasoning)



Susie can be reached at suziventosch@gmail.com. This recipe can be found on our website: www.lamorindaweekly.com. If you would like to share your favorite recipe with Susie please contact her by email or call our office at (925) 377-0977.

Reach the reporter at: suziven@gmail.com

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