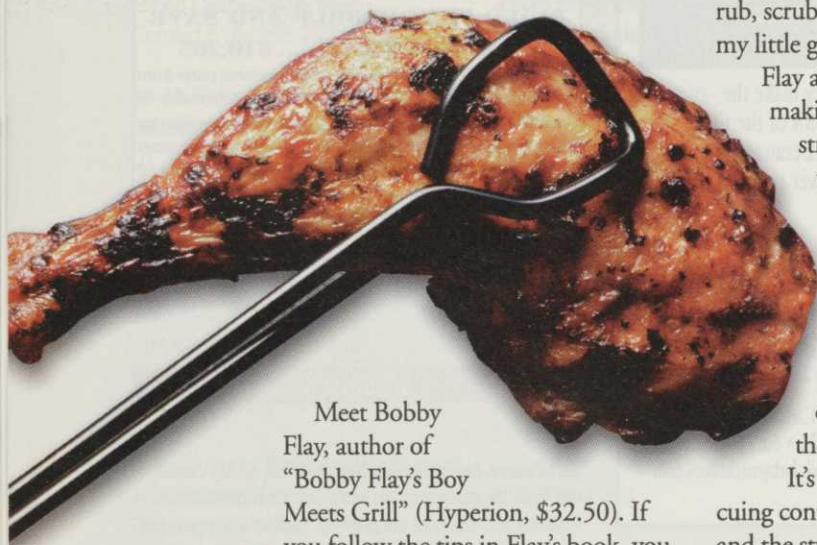


barbecue

We aren't going to waste time debating gas vs. charcoal grills, and we won't butt heads over

whether the dry rub of the Rendezvous in Memphis, Tenn., beats the slather of Arthur Bryant's in Kansas City, Mo. Such personal barbecue preferences should never be judged right or wrong.

We are going to talk about cooking on the grill. And we are going to talk about how to break out of the burgers and dogs monotony into something both uptown and down home.



Meet Bobby Flay, author of "Bobby Flay's Boy Meets Grill" (Hyperion, \$32.50). If you follow the tips in Flay's book, you will have your family and colleagues praising your keen imagination and deft touch with the grill.

Flay lives in New York and hosts television grilling shows on channels you would never admit to watching. But the dude knows the muscular art of grilling — and the classy arts of presentation, menu planning and, most important, ingredients.

Think lobster, clams and whole brook trout, Flay advises. Think buf-

READ ON FOR TIPS FROM TWO GODS OF THE GRILL ON HOW TO PUT A LITTLE FLAVOR IN YOUR SUMMER — AND YOUR DINNER

BY MARK LUCE

falo burgers, Italian sausages and porterhouse steaks. And while his writing may be a little self-important and corny (it is a cookbook), the 125 recipes are well explained, easy to follow, and define "mouth-watering."

At best, I'm a C student in barbecue 101, but even I was able to make a dry rub, scrub it on a rib eye, plop it on my little grill and chow down.

Flay also provides helpful tips for making a barbecue an event. He stresses simplicity in preparation, and complexity in choosing side dishes and condiments. He thinks the person grilling should be organized but casual. "Make sure you have a nice array of things to put out," he writes, "but don't let the cooking become a burden."

It's as if Flay's approach to barbecuing contains the passiveness of Zen and the stubbornness of Stoicism. He may be onto something. It takes extreme patience to let the coals ready — too early and the food gets toasted, too late and the chicken isn't done. Once the food goes on, quick and confident decisions are necessary.

For all of Flay's regular-guy philosophy, his refined side provides some monster dishes sure to please even the pickiest of your nephews.

But remember: A book can only help you so much. The best barbecue knowl-

edge comes from trying and trying again, says Mike McGonigle, owner of McGonigle's Food Store in Kansas City, a haven of meat cuts, sauces and seasonings.

McGonigle, who has been grilling since he was 10, says patience, creativity, organization and a willingness to learn from both mistakes and successes are keys to cooking good barbecue. "You have to learn how to control the fire and temperature of your grill," he says. "If you don't get to know the grill, you will be cooking blind and never get a consistent temperature."

He knows that some folks have a natural talent for cooking and flavor, and encourages those folks to take some culinary chances — find a basic sauce recipe and then start experimenting according to your instincts and predilections. Whether an extra dash of cayenne pepper or two scoops of brown sugar, let your taste guide you to your favorite combination.

However you decide to approach the grill, never cut corners on the meat, McGonigle advises. A quality product is the foundation of a successful barbecue.

You won't be a barbecue Jedi overnight, but these helpful tips from Flay and McGonigle should put a little flavor in your summer and give your grilling a little more personality.

May the sauce be with you.

Mark Luce, a freelance writer from Lawrence, Kan., cooks out four nights a week.