

Grilled Lobster with Garlic-Herb Butter

Kathy's Note: Many people are suspicious when I talk about grilling lobsters. Why bother, they ask? They're so good steamed! If you've never grilled lobster outdoors over an open fire you're in for a treat.

If you are squeamish about the idea of cutting a live lobster ask your fish store to do it for you, but be sure to cook the lobsters within about an hour after they have been cut. (Watch our video at hereandnow.org for a step by step!)

Serve with a cold fruity white or rose, tomato and onion salad, summer greens and grilled or steamed corn for a summer feast.

Serves 4.

Ingredients:

6 tablespoons butter, very soft and at room temperature
2 cloves garlic, very finely chopped, optional
3 tablespoons chopped fresh chives
2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme
1 1/2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil or rosemary
1 1/2 tablespoon opal basil, optional**
1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill and or chervil
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
Pinch of sea salt, or to taste
Generous grinding of black pepper
Four 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 pound lobsters, preferably soft shell*
1 lemon, cut into wedges

*Soft shell lobster tends to be less expensive than hard shell and they are ideal for grilling. Since the shell is softer it's easier to cut the lobsters down the middle. And because the shell is soft the heat of the grill cooks the lobster more evenly and quickly.

**Opal basil has a subtle different flavor than regular basil. The two of them together are delicious. Look for opal basil at farmer's markets.

Instructions:

To make the garlic-herb butter: place the butter and garlic in a bowl and mix. Add the herbs, lemon zest, salt, and pepper and stir well to mix all the ingredients. The garlic-herb butter can be made several hours ahead of time; cover and refrigerate until ready to cook the lobsters.

Light a fire – either charcoal, wood, or gas – and heat until the embers are quite hot. If your grill has a built-in thermometer you should aim for around 400 degrees.

Meanwhile, prepare the lobsters: place them on a clean work surface, shell side down. Place a tea towel over the lobster's head and plunge a knife into the body, directly below the head and split the lobster open, cutting it down the middle, almost all the way through. The lobster should still be attached and not separated into two halves. (This technique may seem gruesome, but many experts claim it's more

Recipe & tips from *Here & Now* resident chef Kathy Gunst

humane than plunging the poor things into a pot of boiling water.) Remove and discard the sac at the top of the head. Alternately, have your fish store cut the lobster for you.

Divide the garlic-herb butter and place in the body and throughout the tail of each lobster, pushing the butter into the lobster meat.

Place the lobsters on the grill, shell side down, so that you don't lose any juices. Cover the grill and cook for about 12 to 15 minutes. Remove the cover and cook for another minute or two, depending on the size of your lobster. The butter will baste the lobster meat. The lobster is done when the tail meat feels just firm, and not soft and raw. Remove from the hot grill, place on a platter, and scatter with the lemon wedges.

Lobster Lore

From Notes from a Maine Kitchen (Down East Books) by Kathy Gunst

Always remove the rubber bands from lobster claws before you cook them or you'll have rubbery tasting lobster. Be careful once you remove the rubber bands because the lobster is very much alive and will snap at your fingers if you're not careful.

How do you tell the difference between a male and a female lobster? Look between its legs, of course. If you look between the legs of a female lobster you'll find the two feelers located at the base of the tail. If they're hard, it's a male; if it's soft and flexible you've got yourself a lady. Some think females are sweeter; others swear by the males.

Males grow larger claws, have narrower tails and spikes on their underside of the tail. Females have broader tails and feathery hairs on their "swimmerets."

The red roe or coral, found in female lobsters, is considered by many to be a delicacy.

A 1-pound lobster yields about 4 ounces of meat.

Lobster is said to have less calories, less total fat and less cholesterol than lean beef, poached eggs, and roasted, skinless chicken. It is high in vitamins, calcium and phosphorous, zinc, and iron.

Lobster Cooking Tips

Steaming produces the juiciest, most tender meat. Fill a large pot with about 2 to 3 inches of water. (Adding salt or a few strips of fresh seaweed is controversial. Pearl Hardy says that you don't need to add salt to the water. He says "Lobster are plenty salty all on their own.") Bring the water to a rolling boil and add the lobsters to the pot back first so all the juices get caught in the shell and not in lost in the pot. Cover and let steam about 11- 12 minutes for a 1-pound lobster and about 20 minutes for a 2-pounder. To test for doneness, simply pull off one of the legs; if it pulls off easily, the lobster is ready. Drain and serve with melted butter, lemon wedges and plenty of oversized paper napkins. A baked potato, a few corn on the cobs, and an ice-cold beer or two wouldn't hurt!

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Always make sure the water is at a full rolling boil at high heat before placing a live lobster into the water. You want to add them to the pot, cover them immediately, and get the water back up to a boil as fast as possible. Do not keep peeking under the lid to check on the lobster; you will reduce the water temperature and throw off the cooking time.

When cutting up lobster for a salad or to use in another preparation be sure to cut the tail down the middle lengthwise and remove the thin black vein, like you would do with a shrimp.

How To Eat The ‘Undiscovered Secret’

Lobster bodies are the undiscovered secret of the lobster world. Most people throw them away, discarding all kinds of delicious meat and juice. Lobster and fish stores throughout Maine and New England often sell the cooked lobster bodies for some ridiculously low price, like 4 bodies for \$1. I mean you can't even buy gum for \$1.

So how do you eat a lobster body. Pull the body out of the shell. Rip off the lobster legs and....well the best way to put it is this: chew, suck, slurp. Stick the whole leg in your mouth and bite down and...chew, suck, slurp. Rip the body apart and chew and separate the meat attached to the legs. There is much to be had. Don't worry about getting dirty – that's what those ridiculous lobster bibs are all about. This is dirty business so dig in. Chew, suck, slurp. Got it?