

## Banana Bread Pudding

Preheat an oven to 300°F. Place the bread cubes on a baking sheet. Toast in the oven until dried, about 15 minutes; watch carefully so they don't brown. Let cool to room temperature. Place the bread cubes in a large bowl and add the vanilla wafers. Set aside.

Increase the oven to 375°F. Place the bananas on a foil-lined baking sheet. Roast until the peels are blackened and the bananas are very soft, about 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a bowl, whisk together the whole eggs, egg yolks and sugar. In a saucepan over medium heat, warm the cream until it just simmers.

Scoop the banana flesh into a blender. Pour any juices from the baking sheet into the blender and blend until smooth. Gently whisk the puree into the warm cream. Slowly whisk about half of the cream mixture into the egg mixture, then whisk the egg mixture into the saucepan with the remaining cream mixture. Pour the custard over the bread cubes and vanilla wafers. Let stand, stirring occasionally, until the bread cubes are very soft, about 1 hour. Not all of the custard will be absorbed.

Reduce the oven to 350°F. Bring a pot of water to a boil. Pour the bread pudding mixture into an 8-inch nonstick square pan and place the pan in a 9-by-13-inch nonstick pan. Fill the larger pan with boiling water to reach halfway up the sides of the square pan. Cover the larger pan with foil and bake for 40 minutes. Remove the foil and increase the oven to 400°F. Bake until the top of the bread pudding is golden brown, about 25 minutes more. Remove the square pan from the water bath and let cool for 10 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature with vanilla wafer ice cream. Serves 9.

Recipe by Chef Michael Voltaggio, inspired by Wilber's Barbecue & Restaurant, Goldsboro, NC

## Sweet Tea

*Sweet tea, the official beverage of the South, is strictly defined as iced tea that is sweetened with sugar at the time it is brewing. Southerners swear by their traditional sweet iced tea and drink it by the gallons. In the South, iced tea is not just a summertime drink; it is served year-round with most meals. When people order tea in a Southern restaurant, chances are they will get sweet iced tea.*

In a saucepan, combine 3 cups of the water and the sugar. Set over high heat and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Remove from the heat and add the tea bags. Steep for 20 minutes. Remove the tea bags and discard.

Pour the tea mixture into a 1-gallon pitcher, add the remaining 13 cups water and stir to combine. Pour the tea into ice-filled glasses. Garnish with mint leaves or lemon slices. Makes 1 gallon.

Recipe courtesy of Williams-Sonoma Culinary Expert

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### Ingredients for Banana Bread Pudding

5 oz. crustless white pullman loaf, cut into ¾-inch cubes

3 oz. vanilla wafers, roughly broken by hand

2 very ripe bananas

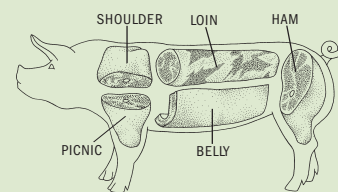
4 whole eggs plus 2 egg yolks

½ cup sugar

2 cups heavy cream

Vanilla wafer ice cream for serving\*

\*Try Michael Voltaggio's recipe for Vanilla Wafer Ice Cream at [williams-sonoma.com](http://williams-sonoma.com).



### Pork Cuts for Barbecuing

Butchers in the United States divide the pig into five primary sections: the ham, loin, shoulder, picnic and belly. The loin is sometimes subdivided into the center loin and the sirloin. Small thin pork cuts, from any section, are suitable for direct-heat cooking, while thick roasts or rib slabs do best when grill-roasted over an indirect-heat fire. Some of the most famous barbecued dishes are made from pork, such as North Carolina pulled pork, which uses the shoulder; and Memphis ribs, which come from the belly. The picnic portion and much of the ham portion of the pig are better suited to other cooking methods, such as braising.

The following pork cuts are ideal for long, slow and smoky cooking. The rich meat absorbs the smoke flavors, and fat and collagen in cuts from the rib and shoulder turn luscious and silky with long cooking at low temperatures:

**Baby Back Ribs:** Baby back ribs are bones with meat attached that are trimmed from the rib section of the pork loin when the butcher cuts boneless pork loin roast or chops. Since they are essentially loin meat, baby back ribs are much more tender than true spareribs and can be cooked quickly with direct heat on the grill. They can also be cooked by long, slow cooking but are done in about half the time of traditional spareribs. Look for lean racks of ribs with plenty of meat—the heavier the better.

**Country-Style Ribs:** Country-style ribs are butterflied or split chops from the shoulder end or the loin. Bone-in or boneless, they are usually quite meaty, with a moderate amount of fat. They can be grilled over direct heat using any pork chop recipe, or cooked by the long and slow method in a charcoal or gas grill. Country-style ribs are inexpensive, easy to cook and delicious.

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# Technique Class: Celebrate American BBQ: The Carolinas

Although it can be difficult (and dangerous!) to define Carolina-style barbecue because there are many regional differences, even within the two states, some general characteristics hold true:

- Whether cooked in the region's famed open pits with burning hickory logs or on a gas grill, Carolina barbecue always means slow cooking over indirect heat.
- In the Carolinas, barbecue is synonymous with hog. Pulled or chopped (never sliced!) pork was made famous here. In Western North Carolina, or "Lexington-style," pork shoulder is the celebrated cut, but in Eastern North Carolina, barbecue means "whole-hog" cooking, where shoulders, hams, ribs and belly are cooked all together.
- Vinegar-based barbecue sauces are used to flavor pork after it has been slow cooked. In South Carolina, mustard is usually added to sauces.

## Grilling vs. Barbecuing

When grilling, you are cooking over a flame. Direct-heat grilling involves cooking directly over the flame and makes quick work of cooking the food. This technique is used primarily for smaller pieces of meat. With indirect-heat grilling, the meat is placed on the unheated portion of the grill, then the grill is covered while the food cooks. It is used for larger pieces of meat, such as whole chickens, briskets and roasts.

Barbecuing, on the other hand, is a slow cooking process most often used with larger pieces of meat, including roasts, briskets, whole pigs and slabs of ribs. The food is covered and slowly cooked in a pit or on a spit, using hot coals or wood, and is basted during the cooking process to keep it moist.

## Barbecuing

Among American food lovers, the mere mention of the subject of barbecuing can provoke a pretty lively discussion, if not an all-out argument. While many people use the word "barbecuing" interchangeably with "grilling," aficionados are more precise about what they call barbecue.

Southerners in particular may swell up with indignation if they hear the word barbecue applied to anything other than pork (or beef if they are from Texas) cooked long and slow in a smoky fire of hickory, oak or pecan wood.

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### *Pork Cuts for Barbecuing (continued)*

**Pork Shoulder:** The shoulder has more internal fat and connective tissue than the pork leg or fresh ham, so it is best cooked long and slow. Professionals often cook the whole shoulder, but most home cooks prefer to barbecue half shoulders (5 to 7 lb.) or quarter shoulders. The best cut is the Boston butt, or pork cut from the top part of the shoulder.

**Pork Loin:** Pork loin is quite tender and can be cut into chops and cooked directly on the grill or slowly barbecued whole over low heat on a covered charcoal or gas grill. The loin will be done more quickly than shoulder, and care must be taken to not overcook this cut. Since the loin is quite low in internal fat and connective tissue, it will dry out and toughen if the internal temperature rises over 150°F. Bone-in loin will stay moist on the grill longer than boneless; test with an instant-read meat thermometer to avoid overcooking.

**Spareribs:** Cut from the belly of the hog, spareribs need long, slow cooking to become tender and juicy, but most true barbecue fanciers prefer these succulent ribs above all other cuts. There’s nothing better than gnawing on a tender sparerib and savoring the combination of crisp brown surface and luscious sweet meat next to the bone. Choose large slabs (13 ribs to a slab) with plenty of meat and a moderate amount of fat. Slabs run 2 to 3 lb., and it’s worth taking the time to choose large, meaty ribs.

### *Making a Rub (continued)*

**Blackened:** This cooking technique was made famous by New Orleans’ chef Paul Prudhomme. Traditionally, the meat was rubbed with a Cajun spice mixture and cooked in a cast-iron skillet that had been heated to almost red hot. Today, blackened meats (especially fish) are often prepared on the grill. The term “blackened” mainly describes the spice rub (a Cajun blend) as well as the use of very hot coals to achieve the desired extra-crispy crust on the outside of the food.

When a large, tough cut—such as pork ribs or pork shoulder, beef brisket or even a whole hog—is cooked for many hours at very low temperatures in savory smoke in a pit roaster, these tough cuts become luscious, velvety and exquisitely tender. True barbecue lovers patiently await the brisket that slow-roasts overnight, or the pork shoulder pulled into shreds for sandwiches after spending many hours in a smoky pit. Some will allow pork loin or beef ribs, but other barbecue fanatics would not consider these tender meats that cook in only an hour or two to be true barbecue.

Achieving the results of the professional pitman or the semipro barbecue aficionado requires specialized equipment, such as a pit roaster or an offset smoker-cooker. However, with attention to temperatures and patient care, a delicious approximation of traditional Southern barbecue can be achieved in an ordinary charcoal or gas grill.

The basic strategy is to use a small number of coals (or the temperature dial of your gas grill) to create a low fire and to monitor the temperature with a thermometer, adding coals as needed to keep the heat level consistent. A drip pan filled with water helps keep the environment inside the grill moist, while wood chips supply the smoke. The meat may be seasoned with a rub, marinated, brined or mopped with sauce during cooking, or some combination of these flavoring techniques may be used. Cuts that need to cook for several hours may be wrapped in foil for part of the cooking to prevent them from drying out. This helps ensure flavorful, tender meat without the extra-low temperatures and long cooking times required for traditional barbecue.

## Making a Rub

**Rub:** A spice and/or herb mixture, a rub is applied to the outside surface of foods before cooking. Rubs can be completely dry or incorporate some liquids or fats, in which case they are called wet rubs or pastes. Rubs are most often used in barbecuing and grilling because of their ability to adhere to meats when grilled or smoked. When applying a rub, add it thoroughly and don’t skimp on the amount. Then refrigerate the food and let it absorb the spices, from 30 minutes for fish and shrimp to overnight for large cuts of beef and pork.

**Dry Rubs:** Made with spices and herbs, dry rubs are rubbed into the meat. When the food is refrigerated overnight, the rub helps to break down the meat fibers and tenderize it, and the spices flavor the meat. The meat is then served with sauce “on the side.” A dry rub is great on food that will be cooked faster using direct heat (at a higher temperature, like on a gas grill) and on food that won’t tenderize much, like shrimp, chicken breasts and steaks.

**Wet Rubs:** These are dry rubs that have been made into a thick paste using liquid or fat. Then the paste is rubbed into and on top of the meat and often refrigerated overnight. The paste needs to be thick enough to adhere to the food but thin enough to smear easily. For best results, apply a wet rub generously and use a slow-cooking method to ensure the meat is flavored all the way through. Ribs, pork and bone-in chicken benefit from a wet rub; they draw moisture in from the rub while charring the outside.

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## Chili Rub

*This is an all-purpose spice rub for slow and low barbecue cooking. It is best used liberally to coat beef, poultry and pork overnight. It can also be rubbed onto the meat just before it is placed on the grill.*

In a spice grinder or blender, combine the salt, brown sugar, paprika, pepper, granulated garlic, mustard, cumin, chili powder and oregano. Process into a coarse powder.

Use immediately, or cover tightly and store for up to 1 week at room temperature. Makes 1 cup.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *On the Grill*, by Willie Cooper (Oxmoor House, 2009).

## Pulled Pork Sandwiches

*Pulled pork, a specialty of North Carolina, calls for cooking the pork until the fibers break down and the meat is tender and easy to shred. The shredded pork is always simmered in a sauce before serving. Some cooks swear that the best sauce is vinegar based, while others contend that tomato sauce is better. The recipe here, using purchased barbecue sauce, is almost as good as the authentic hickory-smoked version but is much easier to prepare. You can ask the butcher to trim the pork shoulder and tie it for you. Traditional accompaniments are coleslaw, baked beans, potato salad and lots of pickles.*

In a large pot over medium-high heat, melt the butter with the canola oil. Add the pork and cook, turning frequently, until browned on all sides, 5 to 10 minutes. Transfer to a platter.

Pour off all but 2 Tbs. of the fat in the pot. Set the pot over medium-high heat, add the onion and garlic, and cook, stirring, until the onion is slightly softened, about 2 minutes. Return the pork to the pot, add the broth, and season with salt and pepper. Cover, reduce the heat to medium and cook, turning the pork occasionally, until very tender, about 2 hours. Transfer to a clean platter and let cool. Using clean hands or 2 forks, pull the meat apart into thin shreds. Remove and discard all the fat and gristle.

To make the sauce, in a large saucepan over medium-high heat, stir together the barbecue sauce, mustard, honey, soy sauce, salt and pepper.

Add the pork to the sauce and cook, uncovered, stirring frequently, until the pork is very soft and the flavors are blended, about 45 minutes.

Place the buns, cut sides up, on individual plates. Divide the pork among the buns, spooning it on the bottom halves. Cover with the tops of the buns and serve immediately. Serves 6.

Adapted from Williams-Sonoma *Essentials of Breakfast and Brunch*, by Georgeanne Brennan, Elinor Klivans, Jordan Mackay and Charles Pierce (Oxmoor House, 2007).

### Ingredients for Chili Rub

3 Tbs. coarse salt

2 Tbs. firmly packed light brown sugar

1½ Tbs. paprika

1 Tbs. cracked pepper

1 Tbs. granulated garlic

1 tsp. dry mustard

1 tsp. cumin

1 tsp. chili powder

1 tsp. dried oregano

### Ingredients for Pulled Pork Sandwiches

2 Tbs. unsalted butter

2 Tbs. canola oil

1 boneless pork shoulder, about 3 lb., trimmed and tied

1 yellow onion, chopped

1 garlic clove, minced

½ cup chicken broth

Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

For the sauce:

2 cups barbecue sauce

2 Tbs. Dijon mustard

2 Tbs. honey

1 Tbs. soy sauce

½ tsp. salt

¼ tsp. freshly ground pepper

6 hamburger buns or large rolls, split and warmed