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Butterflied Grilled Cornish Hens

Butterflying a Cornish hen - or a chicken for that matter - is quite easy. All you need is a sharp pair of kitchen shears and voila! I decided to butterfly the hens for this recipe because I wanted to press them down onto the grill with my super heavy cast iron pan. You can use any heavy pan you have - even bricks if you want. The point is to get those birds as flat as possible so they cook faster.

To butterfly a Cornish hen simply means to remove its backbone. Place the bird back side up on a cutting board and, using some sharp kitchen shears, cut closely along one side of the backbone. Repeat on the other side and discard backbone. Turn breast side up and now open the Cornish hen so the drumsticks point out. Press the breastbone firmly to flatten. It's that easy!

After prepping the birds I rubbed them liberally with Julie McGeevers' rub:

1 cup Susie Q Santa Maria Seasoning (available in bulk at Costco)

1/2 cup Cayenne pepper

1/2 cup ancho, chipotle or pasilla chile powder

1 1/2 cups dark brown sugar (moscovado sugar for more intense flavor if you prefer)

1/4 cup powdered garlic (not minced)

1/4 cup dried parsley

Mix together all ingredients with a whisk in a large bowl. When using the rub on meat rub it with a high quality olive oil before applying rub liberally. When using fish or chicken first cover with the juice of limes or lemons. Make sure you let the rub do its thing for at least 2 hours (preferably 4) before barbecue. We did exactly as instructed!

We heated the grill for 20 minutes on high and then turned it down to medium, cleaned the grids really well and then oiled them with a wad of paper towel soaked in olive oil. Pete, my husband, proceeded to place the hens breast side down on the grill and placed the cast iron pan on them. He cooked them for 10 minutes, flipped them and covered them again. The hens were done in 30 minutes.

We served them with a side salad. They were DELICIOUS!

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