

Charcoal vs. Wood vs. Propane

Story By: Andrew Frinkle

Ted was definitely a grill master. He loved to cook on the grill. He was fairly useless in the kitchen, but, if you gave him something hot to throw meat over, he was suddenly a culinary deity. He and some of his friends often argued about the best way to grill, and each of the three main ways had its pros and cons.



Take charcoal for example. It was fairly cheap, which was nice. It could be ready for cooking in about 15 minutes. It left behind ashes and sometimes a flavor of lighter fluid, but generally had a nice smoky flavor. Wood chips could be tossed on it to smolder and add extra flavor, too. It was a bit messy, however, and probably wasn't as cheap as propane per meal cooked. Charcoal could have binders and other additives in the briquettes, which might not be good for food. You could, however, get all natural wood charcoal, but it was twice as expensive as the briquettes.

Propane was not something the purists liked. It didn't have a lot of its own flavor. On the other hand, that allowed the meats and foods to use their own seasonings as flavor. It left food clean tasting, and it was fairly cheap. It was the fastest way to cook, because, once you turned it on, it was ready to go. It could be annoying to get halfway through a meal, only to run out of gas. That wouldn't happen with charcoal or wood, because even as the fuel ran out, it would slowly burn or smolder and lose heat; it wouldn't happen all at once.

Wood could potentially be the most expensive way to go. It helped to have friends with trees or to have your own trees to cut down. Otherwise, you had to buy it. Then the wood had to be dried and seasoned for months if not a year or longer. It was the most natural, best-tasting way to cook, but it took a long time. It could take more than an hour to get a fire built, burning, and reduced to red-hot coals to cook over. It left behind ashes, but it didn't have the binders and other ingredients that charcoal often had. The flavors varied by the type of wood, but were generally great!

So Ted and his friends argued about grilling, and each had their own opinions over what method to use for each kind of food. Pizzas were better with wood, meats and sausages were often better with charcoal, but propane was fast and easy... It was a never-ending discussion about deliciousness, and that didn't even count all the discussions about the shapes of grills to be used! It was a fun hobby.



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Use the information in the story to answer the questions below.

1. Which of these is NOT a method discussed for grilling?
 - A. charcoal
 - B. propane
 - C. brick oven
 - D. wood
2. Which of these is NOT a benefit of charcoal?
 - A. smoky flavor
 - B. ready pretty quick
 - C. messy
 - D. cost
3. Which of these is NOT a benefit of propane?
 - A. cost
 - B. speed and ease of use
 - C. allows food to have its own flavors
 - D. smoky flavor
4. Which of these is NOT a benefit of wood?
 - A. natural cooking
 - B. ready fast
 - C. no additives or binders
 - D. great flavors
5. In the end, which is the best way to cook food?
 - A. charcoal
 - B. propane
 - C. wood
 - D. each one has its good points and bad

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