



The Japanese Grill: From Classic Yakitori to Steak, Seafood, and Vegetables

By Tadashi Ono, Harris Salat

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American grilling, Japanese flavors. In this bold cookbook, chef Tadashi Ono of Matsuri and writer Harris Salat share a key insight: that live-fire cooking marries perfectly with mouthwatering Japanese ingredients like soy sauce and miso.

Packed with fast-and-easy recipes, versatile marinades, and step-by-step techniques, *The Japanese Grill* will have you grilling amazing steaks, pork chops, salmon, tomatoes, and whole chicken, as well as traditional favorites like yakitori, yaki onigiri, and whole salt-packed fish. Whether you use charcoal or gas, or are a grilling novice or disciple, you will love dishes like Skirt Steak with Red Miso, Garlic–Soy Sauce Porterhouse, Crispy Chicken Wings, Yuzu Kosho Scallops, and Soy Sauce-and-Lemon Grilled Eggplant. Ono and Salat include menu suggestions for sophisticated entertaining in addition to quick-grilling choices for healthy weekday meals, plus a slew of delectable sides that pair well with anything off the fire.

Grilling has been a centerpiece of Japanese cooking for centuries, and when you taste the incredible dishes in *The Japanese Grill*—both contemporary and authentic—you’ll become a believer, too.

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Editorial Review

Review

"It will blow the lid off your grill."

—Seattle Weekly's Voracious Blog, *Cooking the Books*, 6/1/11

"What makes this book a wonderful resource is the authors' conviction that by applying traditional Japanese flavors to untraditional Japanese ingredients, home cooks will end up with something unexpected and delicious. . . . With *The Japanese Grill*, the authors have woven the seemingly disparate cultures and grilling styles to create a cookbook that respects and enriches both."

—The Epi-Log, *Epicurious.com*, 5/20/11

"The Japanese Grill takes grilling to a new, unexpected level, mixing infinitely familiar grilled fare with a bit of the exotic."

—Devour Recipe & Food Blog, *Cooking Channel*, 5/12/11

"The land of the rising sun shares its border with barbecue country in this simple and salty collection."

—Publishers Weekly, 3/7/11

"From the simple (foil-baked green beans) to the sublime (chashu pork), this book boasts some of the most fabulous grilling recipes ever assembled in one volume. If you consider yourself to be a grill aficionado, you must—and I mean must—own it. Your grill library won't be complete without it."

—James Oseland, editor in chief of *Saveur* and author of *Cradle of Flavor*

"A stunning book about one of my favorite grill cultures. You can see how the Japanese have elevated live-fire cooking to the level of art."

—Steven Raichlen, author of *Planet Barbecue* and host of *Primal Grill* on PBS

"Demystifying the seemingly inapproachable is something that Ono and Salat believe in as much as I do. With *The Japanese Grill* they have taken on a genre of cooking that every home cook wants to become intimate with but thinks they can't execute. This book should get a serious workout on kitchen counters around the country. I love it!"

—Andrew Zimmern, host of The Travel Channel's *Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern* and author of *The Bizarre Truth*

About the Author

TADASHI ONO is executive chef at Matsuri in New York City. He has been featured in *The New York Times*, *Gourmet*, and *Food & Wine*. Visit www.matsurinyc.com

HARRIS SALAT's stories about food and culture have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Saveur*, and *Gourmet*, and he writes the blog, The Japanese Food Report (www.japanesefoodreport.com). He is the author, with Takashi Yagihashi, of *Takashi's Noodles*. Together, Ono and Salat are the authors of *Japanese Hot Pots*. Visit *The Japanese Grill* online: www.thejapanesegrill.com.

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THE BASICS: GRILLING

SETTING UP YOUR GRILL

What kind of grill should you use, charcoal or gas? It boils down to heat and convenience. Which is best for you? A totally personal choice. Tadashi, who grills for his family almost every Sunday, three seasons a year, insists on charcoal for its purity of cooking and flavor. Harris also loves charcoal, but keeps a gas grill handy for hurry-up weeknight grilling. For this book, we stick to the two most popular grilling options for our recipes, kettle-style charcoal grills and gas grills, and base our timings on them.

Charcoal grills Not only do charcoal grills pump out a lot more heat than gas grills, they also surround foods with enveloping rays from the glowing coals, searing and cooking foods in a way gas grills just can't. And besides the high temperatures, charcoal, especially lump charcoal, produces a singular smoky flavor. With charcoal grills, though, you have to start a fire, maintain it, manage temperature, and clean up the ash. It's more work, but the challenge makes the results that much more rewarding.

Gas grills No doubt about it, gas grills are much more convenient to use than charcoal grills and easier to control, and there's no messy ash to trash after dinner. And gas grills like the Weber we used in our book have special metal bars that vaporize dripping juices, thus adding flavor while eliminating flare-ups.

Kamado grills We also want to mention charcoal-fueled kamado-style grills like the Big Green Egg. These are grills lined with high-fire ceramics or other types of earthenware that do a great job of retaining heat, so you can grill much hotter. They have a cultish following; as fans can attest, foods grilled on them turn out fantastic. If you do use an Egg or any other kamado-style grill for the recipes in this book, follow its user's guide to adjust recipe timing.

Charcoal When grilling with charcoal, a good-quality lump hardwood charcoal is best. These irregularly shaped chunks of natural charcoal are 100 percent hardwood and contain no additives. They burn hotter and faster than charcoal briquettes, so cook foods better. Lump charcoal is more expensive than briquettes, but if it fits your budget, go with it. Otherwise, look for all-natural charcoal briquettes, which are not laced with additives like regular briquettes.

Chimney starter With any type of charcoal, light the briquettes with a cylindrical chimney starter rather than lighter fuel, which infuses food with an unappealing, fuel-tinged flavor. You'll find them at any store that sells grilling equipment. *To use:* Pile charcoal into the top chamber and stuff crumpled newspaper into the bottom chamber, which has holes on the sides. Set the chimney starter on the lower grate of your grill (which holds the charcoal) and light the newspaper. The coals will ignite; when they're covered with gray ash, they're ready for cooking. (Chimney starters get very hot and must be handled safely. Be sure to fully read the user's guide that accompanies this tool before the first use.)

Japanese Grills

Kettle and gas grills rule the American backyard. But Japanese use different kinds of grills that are also terrific and available here. First, let's dispel a myth: In Japan, hibachi aren't grills. There, they are cylindrical or box-shaped containers (earthenware or earthenware-lined) used for smoldering charcoal to heat a room. Somehow, in America, the word *hibachi* came to mean a small-sized grill or a flat-top griddle. Small Japanese grills are actually called *shichirin*. These grills are made from earthenware or ceramics; come in different sizes; and are cylindrical, square, or rectangular. Some are small enough to rest on a tabletop, which you see in restaurants in Japan. Charcoal-fired *konro* are larger grills, typically rectangular shaped, and made from heatproof ceramics or metal. These are the grills used at yakitori joints to sizzle perfect skewers of

chicken; their narrow fireboxes concentrate and focus heat from the charcoal while at the same time insulating the hands that turn the skewers. *Konro* are perfect for Japanese skewer grilling (page 19) but also typically come with removable wire-mesh cooking grates, so you can use those as well. *Konro* are sold in various sizes; a 54-centimeter version (about 21 inches) is perfect for home use, and, as we can personally attest, an incredible way to grill foods (see “Sources,” page 177, for retailers). With all these Japanese grills, you don’t use typical American charcoal, lump or not. Instead, you burn binchotan, an almost magical, artisan-made Japanese charcoal (see “Binchotan,” page 12).

INDISPENSABLE TOOLS

No matter how kitted-out your charcoal or gas set-up, you need the right tools to grill successfully. You don’t need a ton of stuff, just these indispensable tools:

Grill brush A heavy duty, steel-bristled brush will let you scrape off the gunk that accumulates on your cooking grate. Use it before and after you grill so foods won’t stick. Preheat the grill, then brush the cooking grate like you mean it.

Oil wad This one’s a DIY (do-it-yourself) tool—either a wad of paper towels or an old kitchen towel. It works in tandem with the grill brush to ensure that food won’t stick. Dunk the wadded paper or towel in a small container of vegetable oil (1/2 cup is fine). Preheat the grill, then scrape the cooking grate with your grill brush. Now grab the oil-soaked wad with tongs and completely coat the cooking grate with oil. It might get a little smoky when you oil the grate, but don’t worry, that will dissipate quickly.

Tongs Buy a pair of sturdy, 16-inch-long steel tongs to safely turn foods on the grill without burning yourself (and also do the oil-wad trick described before). Use tongs, not a monster fork, to turn foods; you don’t want to pierce your precious (and expensive) steak or chop and let all its luscious juices run out.

Kitchen chopsticks Called saibashi in Japanese, these super-sized kitchen chopsticks (14 inches long and up) are incredibly handy for turning delicate or small ingredients on the grill—scallops or spears of asparagus, for example. You can find these inexpensive wood or bamboo chopsticks at Japanese food markets.

Spatula A spatula is critical for flipping fish fillets, burgers, or any other delicate foods that can break apart on the grill. Use a spatula with a blade at least 6 inches long. An all-metal spatula, the kind that does yeoman’s work on the kitchen stove, is great. If you’re grilling fish fillets, keep two handy, which makes turning easier.

Basting brush We baste like nobody’s business in this book, so a sturdy basting brush is a must. The best choice is a natural boar-bristle brush with a long handle that will keep your hand safely away from the heat. Make sure to hand-wash these brushes in hot, soapy water after each use. Avoid nylon bristles as they can melt if they touch the grate. An alternative is a brush with silicone bristles, as silicone can withstand higher temperatures.

Spray bottle Keep a water-filled spray bottle handy to kill flare-ups before they scorch and blacken your food.

Hand fan Use a sturdy hand fan or paddle fan two ways: to fan coals when you start your fire so they reach grilling temperature quicker and to fan coals when they’re losing power, to revive them with a blast of oxygen-rich air.

Binchotan

Made from the branches of Japanese oak, *binchotan* is a revered, traditional white charcoal. While the word dates back to the 1700s, charcoal-making in Japan reaches back over a millennium and has played a central role in Japanese cooking since. What makes *binchotan* so special? Produced by artisans following the laborious methods handed down through the generations, the oak is fired in an earthen kiln for about a week, producing charcoal so hard it clicks like glass when struck together. *Binchotan*, which still keeps the natural shape of the branches from which it's derived, burns for hours, smokeless and odorless, at a whopping 1,800°F. It's an integral element of *chanoyu*, the Japanese way of tea, where it's used for ritualistically heating the water. It is also essential for Japanese grilling because the very action of its intense infrared rays creates umami flavor compounds in ingredients—so just grilling something on binchotan makes it taste better. The best *binchotan* comes from one tiny area in Japan, the Kishu region of Wakayama Prefecture, and is expensive; only certain oak of a certain age can be used, and few charcoal artisans plying this trade remain. But pricy or not, *binchotan* is the charcoal of choice for chefs devoted to grilling. Because it's so hard, lighting *binchotan* is tough; you have to place it over a live fire to ignite it. Once lit, it often takes an hour or more for the charcoal to become coated with white ash and reach cooking temperature. But because it burns so long, you can *very* carefully transfer red-hot *binchotan* from a grill to a *hikeshi tsubo* (fire-extinguishing pot), a special earthenware jar that will hold and eventually extinguish the charcoal, so you can use it again and again, until it reduces to dust.

MANAGING HEAT

Managing heat on a stovetop is easy: just adjust the burner's controls this way or that and choose cookware like copper or cast iron to improve heat retention. Managing heat on the grill, on the other hand, is a whole different ballgame. On the grill, of course, you're dealing with direct flames, so you have to know how to do two things. First, you have to gauge temperature using either "hand over fire" technique or a grilling temperature (see "Temperature Chart," below). And second, depending on the recipe, we grill one of three ways: direct, two-zone, or indirect.

Flare-Ups

When fat drips from foods and hits red-hot coals, the fat smokes—then flares. These mini-fires can spell disaster for the grill, coating ingredients with black soot or scorching them beyond repair. A cover helps fight flare-ups by cutting off oxygen; otherwise use these two methods: First, leave enough room on the grill to shift foods. As soon as there's a flare-up, move an ingredient to another part of the grill while the flare-up burns out. Another option is to spray down those flames with a water-filled spray bottle. (You can do both options concurrently, of course.) Either way, you want to grill on coals, not shooting flames, so tamp down flare-ups right away.

Grill Marks

The gorgeous crosshatched grill marks that you see on the meat, chicken, and fish photographed for this book were created by Tadashi, who did the grilling for the pictures, and who is a pro chef. But with a little practice, home cooks can also sear these distinctive marks on the foods they prepare. Here's how: Sear your ingredient for about 1 minute. Now, without flipping, give the ingredient a quarter turn (so it shifts 90 degrees). When it's time to flip the ingredient, repeat this process on the other side. Grill marks aren't a must, but they do make foods look pretty—and mouthwatering.

Secrets to Great Grilling

Here are the ten most important things to keep in mind when grilling:

1. Know thy grill. Your particular grill might be smaller or larger than the ones we used to test our dishes, or it could be a Big Green Egg. Adjust timing accordingly. Test for doneness when your food looks done.
2. Marinate with a flat-bottomed vessel. Use a baking dish, sheet pan, or even a plate to marinate. A flat

bottom provides more surface area than a bowl, so the ingredients will better absorb the marinade.

3. Make sure the coals are hot. For charcoal grills, don't start grilling until the charcoal is fully lit, glowing, and covered in a fine gray ash. Use a hand fan to hasten this process.

4. Preheat your grill. Make sure the grill—and especially the cooking grate—is adequately preheated before starting to grill. Preheat the grate for at least 5 minutes. For a gas grill, close the cover to preheat.

5. Brush and oil the cooking grate every time. Repeat: brush and oil your cooking grate every time you grill to keep food from sticking to the grate. We can't emphasize this enough.

6. Keep the vents open. For charcoal grills, make sure the vents on the bottom and cover are open to allow oxygen to fuel your fire. Also, make sure the vents on the bottom aren't clogged, so air can get in.

7. Use the cover strategically. We'll tell you which foods must be grilled covered. The cover traps heat, so thick cuts of meat cook evenly, and also cuts the flow of oxygen, reducing flare-ups.

8. Add more coals. Keep the temperature consistent by adding more charcoal to the grill before the fire gets too weak. After coals burn for about 1 hour, it's time to replenish. For gas grills, always keep an extra tank on hand so you don't run out.

9. Keep your grill clean. Brush the cooking grate after grilling, while it's still hot. When the grill cools, scoop out the leftover ash. For gas grills, clean the briquettes or lava rocks once they cool and keep the gas jets unclogged. Wipe down the grill regularly with soap and water.

10. Remember, grilling is an art. That's the fun and beauty of it. When you're cooking over fire, you're really cooking—that's why we love grilling! So use your judgment: remember, the recipes in our book are guidelines. Grill according to your gut, your equipment, your ingredients, and your environment (grilling in Denver, the Mile High City, say, requires more time than grilling in Death Valley).

CLASSIC YAKITORI

SOUL FOOD, COMFORT FOOD, DRINKING FOOD—yakitori is all this and more. The word literally means “grilled bird,” but yakitori can also include beef, pork, duck, and veggies. No matter which ingredients you use, yakitori is always bite-sized pieces, impaled on skewers, and grilled over fire, preferably one fueled with Japanese binchotan (see “Binchotan,” page 12). Chicken remains the primary ingredient for yakitori—some old school joints serve nothing but—prepared either seasoned with salt or basted with *tare* (pronounced “tar-eh”), or sauce. But the *tare* isn't brushed on willy-nilly. The secret to great yakitori is grilling the chicken partway, coating with the sauce, and then grilling the coated chicken. So you grill both the chicken and the sauce. This one-two punch is the reason why yakitori comes out double-caramelized and so lip-smacking delicious. And it's why yakitori is one of the most popular and beloved foods in Japan.

Although there were references to it some two hundred years earlier, yakitori really caught the fancy of the general population in the nineteenth century when Japan reopened to the West and its citizens began consuming meat again (see “Meat in Japanese Cooking,” page 2). Interestingly, the most prized meat at that time was chicken, not beef, and high-end “chicken cuisine” restaurants began popping up all over Japan, especially along routes to important shrines. It was the leftover bits of chicken from these restaurants that ended up spawning another enterprise: skewering and grilling scraps of chicken as yakitori. Eventually, yakitori became woven into the fabric of Japanese life, especially after World War II, with the skewers offered at yatai (mobile food stalls) and mom-and-pop joints. A singular yakitori culture and connoisseurship were born, with this simple cooking often raised to a level of culinary art. Customers enjoy every part of the chicken imaginable—and some unimaginable—and feast on heirloom breeds, birds of different ages, even fighting cock, reveling in a celebration of chicken-y flavors and textures. In fact, Tadashi's earliest childhood memories include tagging along as his father slipped out of the house to meet his pals for yakitori and beer at “Beautiful Land,” the corner hole-in-the-wall where Tadashi developed a lifelong devotion to these skewers.

Because yakitori places are so widespread in Japan—and because most people there live in homes without outdoor space—grilling skewers is usually left to professional cooks. But here in America, where a Weber is

almost a birthright, we've made it our mission to show you how you can prepare these delicious skewers at home. They're fast and easy to prepare; easy to handle on the grill; and, most importantly, easy to grab hold of and eat. Once you try yakitori at home, we personally guarantee you'll get hooked!

A couple of practical things to keep in mind:

Tare or salt? Chicken yakitori is typically grilled two ways: double-caramelized with the tare or grilled straight up with just salt. Depending on the part of the bird, we suggest the most popular option in the recipes that follow, but feel free to switch if you'd prefer—ultimately it's up to you. Also, some chicken yakitori recipes, and some nonchicken yakitori, have other traditional flavor pairings, which we stick to, rather than the *tare* or salt.

Accents We recommend the two primary accents, *shichimi togarashi* (page 7) and *sansho* (page 7), depending on the skewer; but again, feel free to switch up, or even mix the two together to make your own custom blend.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christopher Morton:

The reason? Because this *The Japanese Grill: From Classic Yakitori to Steak, Seafood, and Vegetables* is an unordinary book that the inside of the publication waiting for you to snap this but latter it will distress you with the secret it inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who all write the book in such awesome way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning thoroughly. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this nowadays or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book possess such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking way. So , still want to hold up having that book? If I were being you I will go to the guide store hurriedly.

Lorretta Cox:

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