Prep

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR HEALTHY COOKING

COOKING SCHOOL

Grill Veggies Like a Pro

Backyard barbecues are better with vegetables, especially when you follow our simple four-step plan.

BY **ANDREA KIRKLAND**, M.S., RD
PHOTOS **JEN CAUSEY**
STYLING **EMILY HALL & HEATHER CHADDUCK**

STEP 1

Select Produce Carefully

For best results, start at the market. Look for vegetables that are large enough to be grilled whole or cut into uniform shapes with flat surfaces. Vegetables will get more flavor and a better texture when their surfaces come into contact with the grill's hot grates. Also, choose vegetables that are ripe, firm, crisp, and bright in color—and avoid any that are blemished, limp, or have wilted leaves.

Ancho Chile Grilled Cauliflower Steaks

ACTIVE: 40 min. **TOTAL:** 40 min.
EQUIPMENT: Charcoal or gas grill; grill basket
13g CARB

Cauliflower's round shape can be cut into slabs or florets for the grill. Here, it's grilled both ways after being rubbed with a blend of spicy seasonings and basted with a fresh cilantro-lime vinaigrette.

- **1 large head cauliflower**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **3½ Tbsp. olive oil, divided**
- **1 tsp. ancho chile powder**
- **1 tsp. ground cumin, divided**
- **½ tsp. salt, divided**
- **½ tsp. ground pepper, divided**
- **½ tsp. lime zest**
- **2 Tbsp. lime juice**
- **1 Tbsp. chopped fresh cilantro**
- **1 tsp. honey**

1. Preheat grill to medium-high. Place a grill basket on the grill while it preheats.
2. Remove the tough outer leaves of cauliflower. Trim stem to create a flat base, keeping the core intact. Stand the cauliflower upright on a cutting board. Holding the cauliflower firmly and starting from the center, use a large chef's knife to cut four 1½-inch-thick slabs, creating 2 large and 2 small steaks. Reserve the loose florets.
3. Combine garlic, 1½ Tbsp. oil, chile powder, ½ tsp. cumin, ¼ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper in a small bowl. Rub evenly over the cauliflower steaks and florets.
4. Whisk lime zest, lime juice, cilantro, honey, and the remaining 2 Tbsp. oil, ½ tsp. cumin, ¼ tsp. salt, and ¼ tsp. pepper in a small bowl. Spoon 2 Tbsp. of the cilantro mixture into a separate small bowl for basting; reserve the remainder for serving.
5. Place the cauliflower steaks on the grill and the florets in the grill basket; baste the cauliflower with 1 Tbsp. of the cilantro mixture. Grill until well marked and charred in some spots, 7 to 8 minutes. Flip the steaks and florets and baste with 1 Tbsp. cilantro mixture. Grill until the other side is tender and well marked and charred in some spots, 7 to 8 minutes more.
6. Transfer to a platter to serve. Drizzle the remaining sauce over the grilled cauliflower.

SERVES 4: ¼ cauliflower each
CAL 166, **CARB** 13g *(fiber 4g, sugars 5g)*, **FAT** 13g *(sat. fat 2g)*, **PROTEIN** 4g, **CHOL** 0mg, **SODIUM** 369mg, **POTASSIUM** 607mg.

STEP 2

Prep Uniformly

The goal in prepping is to give vegetables maximum exposure to the grill's hot surface, which leads to that desirable char. How you cut vegetables will depend on their size, shape, and density. Some vegetables like corn and asparagus are easier to manage when kept whole. Large and irregular-shaped veggies like bell peppers, eggplant, and onions are best sliced into halves, rings, planks, or quarters. To get evenly cooked vegetables, be sure to cut each slice to the same thickness.

STEP 3

Add Flavor

Vegetables are naturally low in fat, so they need to be either coated with a little oil or marinated to help their seasonings adhere and prevent them from drying out and sticking to the grill. You can make a quick marinade by combining oil, an acid like lemon juice or vinegar, and aromatics like garlic and fresh herbs. Hard vegetables like carrots, beets, and potatoes can marinate overnight, while most other varieties should marinate for just 30 minutes to 2 hours.

STEP 4

Head to the Grill

There are two no-fuss ways to grill vegetables: directly on the grates or using a grill basket. Larger, oblong-shaped vegetables—whole or sliced—are best cooked directly on the grill, perpendicular to the grates so they can be moved around easily. If desired, you can chop or slice them after grilling to suit your personal preference. A grill basket is best for smaller vegetables like cremini mushrooms, Brussels sprouts, broccoli florets, or cauliflower florets; it will prevent them from falling into the flames.

For flawlessly grilled vegetables, keep a close watch while grilling. If any appear to be cooking too fast or too slow, move them to cooler or hotter areas on the grill as needed. You'll know they're done once gorgeous grill marks appear and their texture is tender but not mushy.

ESSENTIAL TOOLS

Grill basket. Look for one with handles for easy lifting and a nonstick finish for easy cleanup. Our pick: Grillaholics Grill Basket ($22, *Grillaholics.com*).

Long-handed tongs. Select a metal set with a comfortable grip and spring-loaded handle. Our pick: Oxo 16" Grilling Tongs ($15, *Oxo.com*).

Long-handed spatula. Choose a metal one with a bent neck. Our pick: Mercer Culinary Hell's Handle Square Edge Turner ($22, *WebstaurantStore.com*).

✚ Find more grilled veggie recipes at *EatingWell.com/GrilledVeg*

Grilled Ratatouille

ACTIVE: 35 min. **TOTAL:** 2 hrs. 35 min.
EQUIPMENT: Charcoal or gas grill
13g CARB

To keep the veggies from burning, watch them carefully while grilling. If necessary, move any that are cooking too quickly to a cooler spot on the grill.

- **1 eggplant (about 1 lb.), cut lengthwise into ½-inch planks**
- **1 yellow summer squash (about ½ lb.), cut lengthwise into ½-inch planks**
- **1 zucchini (about ½ lb.), cut lengthwise into ½-inch planks**
- **1 red bell pepper, quartered**
- **1 red onion, cut into ½-inch-thick rings (*see Tip*)**
- **6 Tbsp. olive oil**
- **6 Tbsp. red-wine vinegar**
- **6 cloves garlic, minced**
- **1 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil, divided**
- **1 Tbsp. chopped fresh oregano, divided**
- **1 Tbsp. chopped fresh thyme, divided**
- **1 tsp. ground pepper, divided**
- **¾ tsp. salt, divided**
- **2 tomatoes (about ¾ lb. total), coarsely chopped**

1. Combine eggplant, squash, zucchini, bell pepper, and onion in a 9x13-inch baking dish. Whisk oil, vinegar, garlic, 1 tsp. basil, 1 tsp. oregano, 1 tsp. thyme, ½ tsp. pepper, and ¼ tsp. salt in a small bowl; pour the marinade over the vegetables. Toss the vegetables until well coated. Let stand at room temperature for 2 hours, tossing the vegetables in the marinade occasionally.
2. Preheat grill to medium-high.
3. Remove the vegetables from the marinade (reserve the marinade). Grill the vegetables until tender and grill marks appear, basting with the marinade and flipping halfway through; 6 to 10 minutes for eggplant, squash, and zucchini; 8 to 10 minutes for onion; and about 10 minutes for bell pepper.
4. Coarsely chop the grilled vegetables. Transfer to a large bowl and add tomatoes and the remaining ½ tsp. each pepper and salt, and 2 tsp. each basil, oregano, and thyme. Toss well to combine.

SERVES 6: generous 1 cup each
CAL 184, **CARB** 13g *(fiber 4g, sugars 7g)*, **FAT** 14g *(sat. fat 2g)*, **PROTEIN** 3g, **CHOL** 0mg, **SODIUM** 302mg, **POTASSIUM** 604mg.

TIP: To keep the onion rings intact, cut the onion into even slices and hold the rings closest to the center with tongs or a long spatula when flipping them.

GRILLING TIMES

The amount of time a vegetable needs on the grill depends on its type, thickness, and size. Here are some general guidelines to help you get started.

4-6 min. Whole asparagus spears, halved romaine lettuce hearts

7-8 min. Halved cremini mushrooms, ½-inch-thick slices of eggplant, ½-inch-thick slices of zucchini

8-10 min. Quartered bell peppers, ½-inch-thick onion rings, halved Brussels sprouts, whole okra pods

10-15 min. Ears of corn

14-16 min. Cauliflower steaks and florets