

# Up Your Game: Turn Your Tailgate Party Into A Feast

BY SUSAN M. SELASKY  
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DETROIT — As fans rev up for football games, so does their tailgating repertoire.

In parking lots on game day, tailgaters elevate their food to big and bold levels.

Consider cedar planked salmon, rubbed with applewood seasoned rub and smoked over applewood chips. Or meatloaf smoked on the grill in a special pan. Or a pizza and nacho bar.

“You have to keep it interesting,” says Robert Green of Waterford, Mich., who was tailgating before the recent Sunday Lions game against the Minnesota Vikings.

Green usually tailgates with his friends the Merrill family and says they generally have a theme, like a pizza and nacho bar.

“It’s basically a standard pizza, and you choose toppings. It’s just cooked outside on top of a grill,” says Green, 26.

For the home opener, Green says they roasted a 150-pound pig. Throughout the season, they’ll do a chili cook-off and a seafood buffet with Alaskan king crab, shrimp scampi, lobster tails and jambalaya.

Nearby, Louis Gross, 49, of Clinton Township, Mich., was making his tailgate meatloaf.

He smokes it on a kettle-style grill in a special pan. That infused smoky flavor permeates the meatloaf because the pan has a perforated bottom.

“The holes allow the grease to drip through the bottom so the meatloaf isn’t sitting in its own grease,” says Gross.

Jessie McElwain, 50, of Sterling Heights, Mich., who tailgates with Gross, says applewood smoked salmon is one of his specialties.

“It’s real simple. A skinless salmon rubbed with olive oil and my specialty apple spice rub,” McElwain says. “Cook it about an hour (on cedar planks). Don’t flip it or anything.”

While many tailgaters pull out all the stops, Ken Lasley’s shrimp boil was a sight to behold.

“Most of the guys like it, and it always draws attention,” says Lasley, 33, of Birch Run, Mich.

Lasley and his brother Ed Lasley follow their great grandfather J McNier’s method for making the shrimp boil.

First, they fill a tall pot with water (about 8 cups) and pour in Hamm’s beer (about 30 cans). The mixture is set on a propane burner and brought to a full boil. Lasley stirs Coach’s Low Country Boil seasoning and then adds halved red-skin potatoes and corn on the cob halves. Ken Lasley cooks them for 10 minutes; chunks of smoked sausage and quartered onion are added and cooked for another 20 minutes.

At the end, about 6 pounds of 24-30 count raw shrimp are cooked for just a few minutes.

“We do all the prep work right there,” Lasley says.

One piece of advice tailgaters agree on is to have a plan and prepare ahead.

If you want to score extra points at your next tailgate, try today’s Flat Iron Steak Sandwiches with Go Big Blue Cheese; Sausage, Bean and Spinach Dip, and Mocha Cinnamon Chocolate Chip Cookies for dessert.

## MOCHA CINNAMON CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Makes: About 48 / Preparation time: 15 minutes / Total time: 45 minutes

- 2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
  - 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
  - 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
  - 1/4 teaspoon salt
  - 2 1/2 sticks (or 11/4 cups) unsalted butter, softened
  - 3 tablespoons instant espresso powder (or 4 tablespoons instant coffee granules, crushed)
  - 1 cup confectioners’ sugar
  - 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
  - 1 1/2 cups semisweet chocolate chips
  - 1/4 cup sugar for dipping
- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Line a cooling rack with paper towels.

In a medium bowl, combine the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. In a larger bowl, beat the butter and espresso powder or coffee until well combined; about 3 minutes. Add the confectioners’ sugar and brown sugar and beat until combined. Stir in the flour mixture about 1/2 cup at a time, mixing well after each addition. Stir in the chocolate chips.

Put the sugar in a small, shallow bowl. Scoop out a scant 1 tablespoon of dough and flatten it slightly into a disk about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Dip one side into the granulated sugar and then set the disk sugar side up on an ungreased baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough, spacing the disks about 2 inches apart. Bake until the edges start to darken, 12 to 14 minutes. (Begin checking after 12 minutes, but don’t be tempted to remove them too soon.)

Let the cookies cool for 1 to 2 minutes on the baking sheets. Transfer them to the paper towel-lined racks to cool completely. Repeat with remaining dough.

From Fine Cooking Tailgating 2010. Tested by Susan M. Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.

Analysis per 1 cookie: 110 calories (51 percent from fat), 6 grams fat (4 grams sat. fat), 13 grams carbohydrates, 1 gram protein, 15 mg sodium, 15 mg cholesterol, 0 grams fiber.

## SAUSAGE, BEAN AND SPINACH DIP

Makes: 6 cups / Preparation

- time: 15 minutes  
Total time: 45 minutes  
Make the ultimate spinach dip by adding ground sausage, pinto beans, cream cheese and Parmesan. It’s almost hearty enough to be a main dish.
- 1 sweet onion, diced
  - 1 red bell pepper, diced
  - 1-pound package hot ground pork sausage
  - 2 garlic cloves, minced
  - 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
  - 1/2 cup dry white wine
  - 1 package (8 ounces) reduced-fat cream cheese, softened
  - 1 package (6 ounces) fresh baby spinach, coarsely chopped
  - 1/4 teaspoon salt
  - 1 can (15 ounces) pinto beans, drained and rinsed
  - 1/2 cup (2 ounces) shredded Parmesan cheese
- For serving:  
Corn chip scoops  
Red bell pepper strips  
Pretzel rods
- Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, cook the onion, bell pepper and pork sausage, stirring often, 8 to 10 minutes or until meat crumbles and is no longer pink. Drain well.

Stir in garlic and thyme; cook 1 minute. Stir in wine; cook 2 minutes or until liquid has almost completely evaporated.

Add cream cheese, and cook, stirring constantly, 2 minutes or until cream cheese is melted. Stir in spinach and salt, and cook, stirring constantly, 2 minutes or until

spinach is wilted. Gently stir in beans. Pour mixture into a 2-quart baking dish; sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until golden brown. Serve with corn chip scoops, bell pepper strips and pretzel rods.

Adapted from www.myrecipes.com. Tested by Susan M. Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.

Analysis per 1/4 cup dip: 117 calories (59 percent from fat), 8 grams fat (4 grams sat. fat), 4 grams carbohydrates, 8 grams protein, 320 mg sodium, 19 mg cholesterol, 1 gram fiber.

## HERB-MARINATED STEAK

Serves: 8 / Preparation time: 10 minutes / Total time: 30 minutes (plus marinating time)

- 1/2 small sweet onion, minced
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil

- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper

1 3/4 pounds flat iron steak

In a large plastic sealable bag, place onion, garlic, olive oil, vinegar, basil, thyme, rosemary, salt and crushed red pepper. Squeeze bag to mix the ingredients. Add the flat iron steak, seal bag, and marinate in the refrigerator for at least

30 minutes or several hours. Remove steak from marinade, discarding marinade.

Preheat grill to high heat. Grill steak, covered with grill lid, 7-9 minutes on each side or to desired degree of doneness. Remove from grill. Let stand 10 minutes. Cut across the grain into thin slices.

Adapted from www.myrecipes.com. Tested by Susan M. Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.

246 calories (58 percent from fat), 15 grams fat (5 grams sat. fat), 1 gram carbohydrates, 25 grams protein, 150 mg sodium, 83 mg cholesterol, 0 grams fiber.

## FLAT IRON STEAK SANDWICHES WITH GO BIG BLUE CHEESE

Makes: 8 / Preparation time: 15 minutes / Total time: 45 minutes

These are easy to make at your tailgate if you have a grill, or you can make all the components of this recipe the day before and assemble the sandwiches on game day.

- 2 large sweet onions
- 4 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper, divided

3 large red bell peppers, cut into 1/3-inch-wide strips

8 (2-to-3-ounce) favorite deli rolls, split

5 ounces soft ripened blue cheese

1 1/2 cups loosely packed arugula

Herb-Marinated Flat Iron Steak (see recipe), thinly sliced



KIRTHMON F. DOZIER/DETROIT FREE PRESS/MCT

**Detroit Lion’s fan Ken Lasley prepares a seafood boil at a tailgate party before the game against Minnesota, September 30, 2012 at Eastern Market in Detroit, Michigan.**

6 tablespoons reduced-fat mayonnaise  
1 tablespoon fresh chopped parsley

Preheat grill to high. Cut onion into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Brush with 1 tablespoon olive oil, and sprinkle with 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon black pepper. Cut bell peppers into 1-inch-wide strips. Place red bell pepper strips in a large bowl, and drizzle with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Sprinkle with remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper; toss to coat.

Grill the onion and red bell pepper strips, covered with grill lid, 7 to 10 minutes on each side or until lightly charred and tender.

Brush cut sides of rolls with remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil, and grill, cut sides down, uncovered, 1 to 2 minutes or until lightly browned and toasted.

Spread blue cheese on cut sides of roll bottoms; top with arugula,

bell pepper strips, steak and onion. Mix mayonnaise with parsley and spread on cut sides of roll tops. Place roll tops, mayonnaise sides down, on top of onion, pressing lightly.

Cooks’ note: For Flat Iron Steak Sandwiches with Brie: Substitute 5 ounces Brie, rind removed, for blue cheese. Proceed with recipe as directed.

Herb Chicken Sandwiches: Substitute herb-marinated and grilled chicken breasts for flat iron steak. Proceed with recipe as directed.

Adapted from www.myrecipes.com. Tested by Susan M. Selasky for the Free Press Test Kitchen.

453 calories (54 percent from fat), 27 grams fat (9 grams sat. fat), 22 grams carbohydrates, 32 grams protein, 633 mg sodium, 99 mg cholesterol, 4 grams fiber.

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