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Korean BBQ Skirt Steak

This recipe calls for skirt steak, which has a ton of flavor and cooks quickly. Get the inside skirt steak (which comes from the flank) if you can; it's thinner and cooks faster than the outside skirt steak (which is from between the brisket and flank). The Korean BBQ Sauce marinade is similar to what my mother made to marinate meats for grilling when I was a kid. I really enjoy eating steak this way; the crisp lettuce and herbs help cut the richness of the meat.

3 pounds skirt steak

2 cups Korean BBQ Sauce (*page 34/recipe follows*)

2 cups Korean Pesto (*page 46/recipe follows*)

12 Bibb lettuce leaves

¼ cup fresh basil and cilantro leaves, loosely packed

PREP TIME 10 minutes

MARINATE TIME 1 to 12 hours

COOK TIME 4 minutes

FEEDS 6 people

Place the steak in a large, shallow dish, pour the BBQ sauce over the steak, and turn the steak to coat evenly. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour or preferably overnight.

Heat the grill for direct heat cooking to medium-high (400°F to 450°F).

Place the steak on the grill grate and cook, turning once, for about 2 minutes on each side, until lightly charred. Transfer the steak to a cutting board and let rest for 5 minutes.

Thinly slice the meat against the grain and serve with the pesto, lettuce cups, and herbs.

NOTE It's important to cut the skirt steak the correct way. Otherwise, the meat will be too tough to eat. Look at the steak to see the direction the muscle fibers are running. That's the grain. You want to slice it thinly against the grain.

Sauce and Pesto Recipes follow....



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Korean BBQ Sauce

I learned the essence of American barbecue when I worked as a cook in Atlanta, and I still crave that sticky, smoky, tender meat. We capture those memories when we cook with this sauce at our restaurants. With sweetness coming from the brown sugar, kiwi, and pear, plus the sharpness from the onion, soy sauce, and garlic, this sauce has everything you need for barbecue with a Korean touch. I always give credit to my mom for this recipe because she showed me how to make it. Over the years, I've made some modifications to take it to the next level, but don't tell her! She believes that I am still using the same recipe she taught me all those years ago.

- 1 cup dark brown sugar, firmly packed
- ½ cup water
- 1 cup soy sauce
- 1 small white onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 Asian pear, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 kiwi, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 8 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and sliced
- ¼ cup toasted sesame oil

PREP TIME 20 minutes

MAKES 4 cups

Combine the brown sugar, water, and soy sauce in a bowl and whisk until the sugar dissolves. Transfer the mixture to a food processor, add the onion, pear, kiwi, garlic, and ginger, and process for about 2 minutes, until completely smooth. Add the sesame oil and blend until fully combined.

Transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks or freeze for up to 2 months. Or freeze in standard ice cube trays, then transfer the cubes (they'll be about 2 tablespoons each) to plastic freezer bags and freeze for up to 2 months.



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Korean Pesto

Okay, I know you're wondering what pesto has to do with Korean barbecue. But pesto doesn't have to be exclusive to Italian cooking. It's just a combination of nuts and oil and herbs and other ingredients, and it can be used in anything from a dipping sauce to a soup to a marinade. So I took Asian versions of these ingredients—like kimchi instead of cheese for a little fermented element—and created a similarly balanced sauce that is distinctly Korean. It adds intensity and will elevate the flavors in your food.

- ¼ cup Nuoc Cham Sauce (page 42/*recipe follows*)
- ¼ cup Lemongrass Chili Sauce (page 36/*recipe follows*)
- 1 chipotle chili in adobo sauce, plus 1 tablespoon adobo sauce
- ¼ cup kimchi, homemade (page 166/*not provided*) or store-bought
- ¼ cup dry-roasted peanuts
- ½ cup fresh basil leaves, firmly packed
- ¼ cup olive oil

PREP TIME 10 minutes

MAKES 1 cup

Place the Nuoc Cham Sauce, Lemongrass Chili Sauce, chipotle chili and adobo sauce, kimchi, peanuts, basil, and oil in a food processor and process for about 1 minute, until coarsely blended.

Transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks or freeze for up to 2 months. Or freeze in standard ice-cube trays, then transfer the cubes (about 2 tablespoons each) to plastic freezer bags and freeze for up to 2 months.

Nuoc Cham Sauce and Lemongrass Chili Sauce recipes follow...



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Nuoc Cham Sauce

I learned about nuoc cham from Arun Sampanthavivat, whose Chicago restaurant, Arun's, is considered to be one of the best Thai restaurants in the world. Nuoc cham is a Vietnamese dipping sauce with big, bright flavors; it's tangy, funky, sour, and sweet all at once. I add green Thai chilies to give it some heat and use it not only as a dipping sauce but also as the base for marinades and dressings. This sauce is also a great foundation for things you wouldn't consider very Asian, like my Korean pesto (page 46) and even my pimento cheese dip (page 66).

- ¼ cup dark brown sugar, firmly packed
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- ¼ cup fish sauce
- ½ cup water
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 green Thai chilies, minced, with seeds

PREP TIME 10 minutes

MAKES 1 cup

Combine the brown sugar, lime juice, fish sauce, water, garlic, and chilies in a small bowl and whisk until the sugar dissolves. Transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks or freeze for up to 2 months. Or freeze in standard ice-cube trays, then transfer the cubes (2 tablespoons each) to plastic freezer bags and freeze for up to 2 months.



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Lemongrass Chili Sauce

The inspiration for this recipe came from a trip to Thailand I took a few years ago. Those sweet, spicy, citrusy flavors come right back to me every time I make it. You can use this sauce for braising chicken or for making dipping sauces or glazes for fried appetizers, but I like it best for barbecue. It's thick enough to cling to the meat, adds a good char from all the sugars that caramelize on the grill, and delivers the spicy, fresh flavors of Thailand.

- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon minced, peeled fresh ginger
- ¼ cup minced lemongrass
- 1 cup sweet chili sauce
- ¼ cup fish sauce
- ¼ cup sambal oelek
- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil

PREP TIME 10 minutes

MAKES 2¼ cups

Combine the garlic, ginger, lemongrass, chili sauce, fish sauce, *sambal oelek*, and oil in a bowl and whisk until blended. Transfer to an airtight container and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks or freeze for up to 2 months (see note).

NOTE This sauce won't fully harden when frozen, so you can spoon out as much as you need whenever you want to use it.



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