

Getting in Touch With Your Inner Caveman

Roasting Whole Carcasses Is Latest Backyard-Grill Fad; Where to Get Your Goat

By KATY McLAUGHLIN

AFTER BARBECUING anything and everything from baby zucchini, to pizzas, to scallops skewered on rosemary branches, you'd think there was nothing left for Americans to throw on the grill. Unfortunately for those who prefer their food without a face, you'd be wrong.

This year's summer backyard curiosity is the whole-animal carcass roast. To the surprise of many barbecue professionals, whole pigs, lambs, turkeys, chickens and goats are being sacrificed in increasing numbers across the nation. Rejuvenating a practice that dates back to cavemen, these animals are being impaled on spits, tossed on the grill, or entombed in special, outdoor-oven type boxes that look disconcertingly like coffins on legs.

The animal of choice is the pig—a staple of carcass roasting that is experiencing an upswing this summer. Edward Zuckerman, owner of Eddie's Portable Pig-Out in Denville, N.J., says he's already had twice as many pig roast requests so far this summer as he did in all of last summer.

But less traditional beasts are hitting the fires



as well. Sandra Kay Miller, a goat breeder in Newburg, Pa., says she has had a significant jump in business this year and now has a 30-person waiting list. Butch Elrod, who raises goats in Benton City, Wash., says he and his goat-raising neighbors have all sold out their herds this summer. Goat meat is lower in fat and cholesterol than most other red meats, which makes it healthy but prone to drying out on the spit. A tip: Baste frequently with olive oil.

Barbecue industry insiders credit the interest in whole-animal cookouts to a variety of influences,

A whole-hog shindig in Buffalo, N.Y. For details on hosting a carcass roast, see page D3.

particularly the extensive barbecue programming on food TV shows. The low-carb diet trend is helping as well. After all, digging into a pile of spit-roasted meat is now the dieter's equivalent to picking at a salad all night.

Interest may also be getting fueled by people's increased desire to know more about their meat, in light of concerns about meatpacking practices and mad cow disease. With whole-animal cooking, of course, it's quite obvious how the meat was prepared.

Of course, as much as some people embrace the roasting ritual, others are horrified by it. Nikki Dryden, a law student in Brooklyn, N.Y., was all set to attend a friend's pig roast when she realized just she couldn't stomach it. "I am perfectly happy with

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the fact that people eat animals," says Ms. Dryden, who is a vegetarian. But she feels no need to "celebrate" it.

The most common complaint: Seeing a face on the grill. Pigs are traditionally roasted with the head, although lamb and goat suppliers commonly remove it.

Professional caterers report 10% to 25% increases in bookings for carcass-roasting parties compared to last year. David Bates, owner of BBQ1, a maker of barbecue equipment in Oak Creek, Wis., says he is selling twice as many motorized rotisseries as last year—as many as 225 of the \$395 machines a week. Bruce Campbell, a producer of all-natural lamb in Healdsburg, Calif., is selling 10 times as many lambs to individuals as he did last year for backyard barbecues. "It's remarkable," says Mr. Campbell.

Dances With Pigs

Even the humble chicken is joining the act. Beer-can chicken, a dish that involves impaling a bird on a beer can and standing it upright on a grill, is so popular that Steve Heide, inventor of Captain Steve's Beer Can Chicken Roaster System, sold 30,000 of his gadgets last year and this summer has doubled his inventory. The recipe is simple enough. "You put a can up the butt of a chicken, and add ingredients," says Mr. Heide. His device stabilizes the can and the bird.

Some clients of Mr. Zuckerman, the New Jersey pig roaster, have taken a morbid interest in the barbecue. "Once, a bunch of guys wanted to take the head and go dancing around," he says. "I can't let that happen. I'm a professional."

Others don't have such scruples. Adam Nettler, a 23-year-old talent-agency assistant, was recently at a pig roast in Buffalo, N.Y., and wanted to try a piece of cheek, which he had heard is delicious. The caterer said he would give him that choice cut only if he agreed to eat a piece of eyeball as well. "I took a couple of chews and swallowed down," says Mr. Nettler. "It was squishy."

Sharp Little Teeth

Pig roasts tend to include the pig's face, complete with sharp little teeth that often surprise and disturb guests. "There are people who are grossed out but you know, they just have to understand that it came with a face," says Colleen McGlynn, who held a pig roast last month at her home in Healdsburg, Calif. Ms. McGlynn, who also regularly roasts lambs, is hardly sentimental about her meat. Every Mother's Day she spit-roasts a pig that she herself raises from a piglet.

People interested in hosting their own whole-animal roast can opt to either do it themselves or hire one of a growing number of catering services. For do-it-yourselfers, the fundamental choice is between spit-roasting and oven-roasting.

How to Host a Carcass Roast

First you have to find your farm animal...

Pig



Daily Images

Lamb



Daily Images

Goat



Daily Images

- A good starting place is nichepork.com. Click "Find a Producer" for ones in your area who sell whole-carcass pigs for barbecuing.
- Some butchers will also sell a whole pig. Order a few weeks in advance.
- Call the American Lamb Board for breeders in your area. (866) 327-5262; americanlambboard.org
- For grass-fed lamb, call CK Lamb at (707) 431-8181 or email ckilamb@pacbell.net. A three- to six-month old lamb is \$175 plus shipping.
- Go to meatgoats.com and look through "Breeder's List" for local suppliers.
- Painted Hand Farm in Newburg, Penn., sells goats for about \$100 a carcass. (717) 423-5663, paintedhandfarm.com

Then you have to cook it:

	ITEM	PRICE	COMMENT
Spit Roasting	BBQ1 Barbecue Rotisserie	Starts at \$395.99 at bbq1.com	An all-purpose, motorized rotisserie. Works for pigs, lambs, chickens, ducks, geese and turkeys.
	Kanes K23 Automatic Barbecue	\$220 at kanesbbq.com	Its maker says the device is particularly popular among Greek customers who use it for lamb.
Caja China	Caja China	Units start at \$250 at lacajachina.com	Roasts a pig in under four hours.
	Meadow Creek PR42 Pig Roaster	\$605 on meadowcreekbbq.com	The unit is designed to be transported. Web site says the closed-lid method fills the unit with flavorful smoke.

believes the meat tastes the same when cooked in a commercial roasting oven as it does on a spit, and says the latter method is time-consuming, dirty and difficult.

Rotisserie aficionados disagree, arguing that the indirect heat, coupled with the spinning motion, breaks down fibers slowly and gets the juices flowing with the result being tender meat. One common complaint of the rookie rotisserie roaster is that the carcass sometimes falls into the fire. "The key is to keep the fires at the ends," says Mr. Campbell, the lamb salesman, so the middle won't overcook and fall apart, he says.

'Selling the Sizzle'

Hiring a caterer makes life easier but pricier, with prices ranging from about \$400 just for a cooked pig to upward of

many caterers don't actually cook the animal on-site—it takes too long. For instance Robert Moyer of Blooming Glen Pork and Catering in Blooming Glen, Pa., roasts pigs in commercial ovens at his facility, then tows a smaller roaster to the party and props up the cooked pig on it. "You're selling the sizzle," says Mr. Moyer, who adds that pig-roast requests are up 25% this year.

For do-it-yourselfers, the "caja china" method is one of the fastest routes to barbecue. Caja chinas, wooden boxes in which a pig roasts in less than four hours (compared to up to 22 hours in a commercial oven) are selling 48% faster than last year, says Roberto Guerra, owner of La Caja China, a maker of the device.

Julia Schneider, a law student in New York City, teamed up with some friends