

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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It's still grilling season, if you can manage between the rain drops. The sweet aromas of grilling chicken, browning ribs and searing steaks float through our neighborhoods, occasionally mixed with odors of grilling veggies or caramelizing fruits. It's enough to make you hungry just walking from the car to your front door!

Most backyard grill chefs have their favorite recipes down pat. A little of this, a pinch of that, set the flame just so, and they'll have a delicious dinner on the table in a flash. But the more adventurous cooks want to try every new barbeque sauce, all the new flavors, and as many different spice rubs as they can. And some seem to have the magic touch, everything tastes great. Then there are those who call me, wondering what keeps going wrong.

Recently it seems that barbeque sauces turning bitter have become a problem. They've tasted new sauces, found some they liked, and fired up the grill. But by the time the chicken hit the table, the sauce was bitter. It started out sweet then turned bitter. What is going on?

There are two prime suspects for bitter flavors in sweet sauces. One is, surprisingly, sugar. The other is protein. Neither starts out bitter, but with enough or wrong cooking, both can produce bitter flavors.

When sugar is heated it first turns golden brown and develops new, nutty-sweet flavors. Think of caramel candies or the golden sugar glaze on flan. Yum! A little sugar helps meat to brown more quickly and adds balance to the flavor. But burnt sugar is far

from pleasant. When sugar is charred it becomes bitter, acid-y and definitely loses its sweetness.

This happens whether it's plain sugar in a pan or a sticky sweet barbeque sauce brushed onto chicken legs. To avoid over-cooked, over-heated, too dark burnt sugar, wait. Put the meat, poultry and vegetables on the grill without sauce. Let them cook until they're almost done. Use a food thermometer to be sure. (Beef and pork - 145°F, ground meats - 160°F, poultry - 165°F.) Then brush or baste the sauce on in the last 5 to 10 minutes of cooking. That will be enough to develop the caramelized sugar flavor and stick the sauce to the meat, but not enough to burn or char the sugar.

To speed things up, you can partly cook the meat in the microwave, oven or on the stovetop. Then finish cooking on the grill with the sauce. Some things, such as ribs with lots of fat, do much better by being par-boiled or baked before hitting the grill. Removing some of the fat in the first cooking means it's not dripping on the hot coals and burning. Not only does it smell better, this prevents the formation of some known cancer-causing chemicals. That's a win-win cooking method.

Proteins can also create bitter flavors, also if or when they are overcooked. Think about the charred part of a seriously overcooked burger. When protein is cooked to the point of breaking down, amino acids are released. These are incredibly bitter, one reason you don't want to live on a diet of purified amino acids. Some barbeque sauces have partially hydrolyzed vegetable protein as ingredients. They're added to add a savory, meat-y flavor and enhance the flavor of the meat the sauce is used on.

But if the sauce is added too early in the cooking, once again the heat can further break down these protein pieces and create bitter flavors. The moral of the story is to

not over-heat or over-cook barbeque sauces. Be patient, wait till the last 5 minutes, and enjoy the sweetness of caramelized sugar on your barbequed dinner.

Here are two different, Florida-themed barbeque sauces to try for dinner or picnics. Either will be tasty on chicken. The lemon sauce would be great on grilled fish steaks or fillets, and the golden sauce would highlight the flavors of pork chops, pork loin or grilled fruit. Both will keep in the refrigerator for a week or more. And neither will do well if they are burnt! Enjoy, with patience.

Golden Grill Barbeque Sauce	Lemon Barbeque Sauce
<p> $\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar 2 Tbsp cornstarch $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp allspice $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground cloves 1 C orange juice 2 T vinegar 4 T margarine Combine sugar, cornstarch and spices in small saucepan. Slowly stir in juice and vinegar. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, until thick. Boil 3 minutes. Stir in margarine. Brush on partly cooked meat on grill. </p>	<p> $\frac{1}{3}$ C lemon juice $\frac{1}{4}$ C oil 3 T Worcestershire sauce 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt 1 T onion powder $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp garlic powder dash of Tabasco sauce Combine all ingredients in small jar. Cover tightly and shake well. Keep refrigerated until use. </p>