



Grill On

LOCALS LEARN TRICKS OF THE TRADE AT BACKYARD BISTRO CLASSES



// STORY AND PHOTOS BY DAVE DROSCHAK

HOW MANY OF US TURN ON OUR GAS GRILL, CRANK UP THE heat to 500 degrees and char a steak or some chops and think we're in meat paradise?

Think again.

Grilling is indeed an art, and those of us in a temperate climate such as the Triangle area of North Carolina have the benefit of grilling outside year round. But what do we really know about preparing and cooking meats, seafood and vegetables with our grilling equipment?

"It's all about convenience these days," said Backyard Bistro owner and award-winning chef Joe Lumbrazo. "People want to turn the grill on as high as you can, wait five minutes and throw your steaks on. When I'm at home all I cook with his charcoal."

Charcoal?

Isn't that old school?

Sure is, but Lumbrazo and his team at Backyard Bistro — a restaurant located across from PNC Arena which was featured

on the TV show Destination America for its grilling expertise — are prepared to share some of their secrets about charcoal and various other methods of grilling.

"The benefit of charcoal is that you get a really good, wood, smoky charring that you can't accomplish over gas," Lumbrazo said. "And it's almost like you are cooking outdoors under the stars over a camp fire. It's a real good earthy flavor."

Backyard Bistro's World Famous Grilling Classes will celebrate its fifth anniversary with a bit of a twist in 2016. Normally scheduled on Sunday afternoons on four dates in July and August, this summer the classes will be switched to Friday nights.

"Over the years we've tried to create more of an event than a class so our Friday Night Lights classes will just add to an already fun atmosphere," Lumbrazo said.

The classes are intimate, with a limit of 70-80 people per event. The class is split up into three groups, which rotate between grilling stations that include gas, charcoal and a garbage can smoker, which Lumbrazo's team will explain how to build. Patrons spend about 20 minutes at each interactive station with pencil and customized grilling brochure in hand, jotting down techniques they would like to translate to their own backyard grills.

"While the chefs are explaining what they are cooking we already have one series of food cooked so people are sampling and tasting what we're talking

about, engaging in conversation," Lumbrazo said. "And not only do we have great food we pair it with different spirits — bourbon, tequila, wine or beer — and we have an expert come out and explain why they chose that spirit to go with what we're cooking and why the two go together. It's a fun way to kick off your weekend."

Lumbrazo said a lot of people are intimidated by cooking so they hesitate to tinker with different grilling techniques. The World Famous Grilling Classes help ease that fear.

"It's so simple once you get the techniques down on how to tell the proper temperature, how to read the fire, to find the hot spots and cold spots on your grill; people are just scared because it is all misunderstood," Lumbrazo said.

"And for me it's cool to introduce people to different cuts of meats, what to look for when they are shopping, how to cook it, and how to butcher it once it is all done so it tastes tender, it tastes good and it's not a piece of shoe leather."

Check out www.backyardbistro.com for class dates and how to sign up. ①