

BARBECUE WITH ZINFANDEL

Summertime and the drinkin' is — or should be — easy.

This will help. The Wine of the Week, Joel Gott 2011 California Zinfandel (\$17), will get you through hot, lazy days effortlessly.

The wine is engaging and approachable yet not simplistic. Layers of fruit unfold on the palate, with delicate raspberries and fragrant blueberries followed by ripe black cherries and succulent blackberries. Cinnamon, clove, black pepper and white pepper rise from this foundation of fruit and linger pleasantly on the wine's long finish.

It is an easy guest at almost any table and especially welcome when a grill is involved. As you might suspect, given its heritage — this is the same Gott as Gott's Roadside, formerly Taylor's Refresher, in St. Helena — the wine is a happy companion to a good hamburger. It is also ideal with ribs, grilled salmon, barbecued chicken and almost anything with bacon. You can enjoy it with pizza, spaghetti and meatballs, polenta with sausages and, soon, with ripe summer tomatoes.

You might even want to save a bit for the end of a meal and enjoy it with blueberry pie or ice cream topped with blueberry sauce.

For today's recipe, I've taken inspiration from blueberries, now in season locally. Blueberries make an excellent barbecue

sauce that enhances the wine's connection to grilled foods and is especially good with wild salmon and pork tenderloin.

Blueberry Barbecue Sauce

Makes about 3 cups

- 3 tablespoons bacon fat, olive oil, coconut oil or grapeseed oil
- 2 large shallots or 1 small yellow or white onion, minced
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
- Kosher salt
- 4 cups blueberries
- 1 cup dry red wine
- 3 to 6 tablespoons sugar (see Note below)
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- White pepper in a mill
- Red pepper flakes
- 3 garlic cloves, preferably fresh (not aged), pressed

Put the fat or oil into a medium sauce pan set over medium heat, add the shallots or onion and saute until soft and fragrant, about 7 to 8 minutes; do not allow to brown. Stir in the ginger, season with salt and add the blueberries, red wine, half the sugar, honey, vinegars and Worcestershire sauce. Season with several turns of white pepper and several pinches of red pepper flakes.

Increase the heat and when the liquid simmers, reduce it to low and simmer gently until the blueberries soften and the mixture thickens, about 10 minutes.

Taste and correct for acid-sugar balance, adding more sugar, 2 teaspoons at a time, until balance is achieved. (This step is crucial and you must taste several times.)

Stir in the freshly pressed garlic and remove from the heat.

For a smooth sauce, puree with an immersion blender and pass through a fine sieve or strainer. For a chunky sauce, leave it as it is.

To use this sauce, slather it over grilled chicken, salmon, pork chops, burgers or beef ribs immediately after they come off the grill. Let rest a few minutes and then serve with the remaining sauce alongside.

The sauce will keep, refrigerated and covered, for a week or two. Warm before using.

Note: I use organic cane sugar in this recipe and needed the full 6 tablespoons for balance. If you use granulated white sugar or conventional brown sugar, you may need just the 3 tablespoons. Tasting for balance is essential.