

With the onset of October we are now fully into fall and there is no doubt that summer is fading away and along with it one of the country's great rituals: **barbecuing**. Sure, statistics show that even in the wintertime 50% of all grill chefs are still barbecuing; but it's not the same as summertime.

There are many lessons to be learned by barbecuing. For example, last summer I learned that you can even barbecue lettuce. That's right; lettuce. Historically it probably came from Italians who have been quietly grilling multiple types of foods for years.

Crisp some bacon and crumble it. Then take some romaine lettuce, cut it in half lengthwise. Place it cut side down (after spreading a little olive oil on the cut surface) onto a hot grill for a minute or two. Just enough to get some nice grill marks.

Then remove, drizzle a little more olive oil and sprinkle some balsamic vinegar on it. Add some crumbled blue cheese and the crumbled bacon bits on top and serve. Mmmm. Delicious.

There are also psychological lessons to be learned while barbecuing. For example: humility. It looks easy on TV. But to prepare food right, while talking with friends, to know your grill well – for example, where are the hot spots? – and to cook in a way that is different than what you're used to in an ordinary kitchen is, well, humbling. It's not bad to learn that lesson.

You also have got to be relaxed to grill well; but then again not too relaxed. Just the right amount of wine consumption. (There's that moderation concept again.) And you should be a little bit of a showman without being showy. Grill pizza on a hot grill and watch your guests' eyes light up – hopefully. That is, if the pizza itself doesn't "light up."

But before you start grilling you have to do a lot of homework. Look at the food and cooking channels for hours. Go to the internet and read all the recipes, hints, and comments on the Food Network website. Buy tons of cooking books especially the ones that involve grilling (such as Barbecue Bible by Steven Raichlen and Grill Italian by Clifford Wright) until your spouse thinks you're crazy.

While you are searching the internet you'll be surprised what you'll find. For example, the Catholic Digest has a website and in it there is, of all things, an article by Marialisa Calta entitled "Let's Talk Barbecue." She notes, historically barbecues have been social events. It was popular in Virginia during the times of George Washington who was said to be a real fan of barbecuing.

She also points out that there is even a patron saint of barbecues: St. Lawrence, whose feast day is celebrated August 10.

I won't go into the details as to why he is the patron saint -- but I might make a small recommendation. There is an unassuming book called "Butler's Lives of the Saints." In it, according to the days of the years, is a short biography of the saint of the day. Some of these people really had to deal with a lot and still kept a positive outlook on life.

Barbecuing can teach us a lot.