

Grills

SIZZLE

By Lori Murray

with Spice



Barbecue rubs and spice blends transform ordinary food into grilled sensations.

Photo courtesy of CharCruSt (www.charcruSt.com)

With grilling popularity at an all-time high, there is no better time to introduce both master and amateur grillers to the world of specialty barbecue rubs, spices and dry glazes. A host of new gourmet offerings are designed specifically to transform ordinary meats and veggies into grilled sensations. And with flavor profiles guaranteed to get even the most worldly foodie excited, the time is now to stock your grilling displays.

We talked with some of the manufacturers and learned what flavor profiles are currently hot. They shared some tips for creative demos and additional applications beyond grilling.

Packed with Flavor
Even the bland and ordinary boneless, skinless chicken breast comes alive with the addition of spices and rubs. That is exactly what's happening at Chicago-based Urban Accents (877/UA-SPICE) where they've introduced a new line of Dryglazes in six flavors — Vermont Grill, Bombay Blitz, Cayman Citrus, Puebla Mole, Santa Fe BBQ and Pan Asian Zing. These products combine the ease of a traditional grilling rub with the properties of a glaze for a unique sweet-based rub. In short, the particles actually melt, creating a sweet heat that begins in a dry form.

"The whole hook on this is that

everybody is either salt or savory-based," says President Tom Knibbs. "We have been working on a sweet-based rub for a while, trying to source the right kind of sweeteners. The sugar melts and turns into a glaze. It gives you the sweet-savory flavors that I love." That's why they're called Dryglazes. "It says what you want to achieve — that warm, brown glaze look," adds Knibbs.

The Vermont Grill Dryglaze contains granulated molasses, as well as sage and caraway, much like you might find in breakfast sausage. It's good on everything from chicken breast and turkey to pork tenderloin and grilled tofu. Bombay Blitz

uses imported vanilla-flavored sugar, as well as honey and cayenne, with a curry hook to it, while Cayman Citrus incorporates lime-flavored sugar with cayenne pepper and chili powder for a tropical sweet-heat flavor. Puebla Mole is cocoa-based, with unsweetened cocoa preventing it from tasting over-the-top chocolate. Simply rub it on chicken breasts for a world-class mole in no time.

The Dryglazes perform best when rubbed into meat at least 30 minutes before cooking. The use of indirect heat ensures that the sweeteners will not burn. Best of all, the products are all-natural, with no artificial flavors. Available in 4.5-oz. clear-top tins,



Original Juan Specialty Foods (800/568-8468 or www.originaljuan.com) offers Bilardo Brothers rubs for chicken, fish, steak and more, along with Blackin' Rub and Mesquite Rub Seasonings that prove themselves as versatile spice tools for grillers.

they come with stay-fresh pouches so that leftover product can be saved and used again.

There's a similar story unfolding at Melanie's Fine Foods (650/593-9301) in San Carlos, California. Last year, President Melanie Yunk introduced a new line of Spice & Rubs that boasts three sensational flavors — Fancy Fish, Perfect Poultry and Stellar Steak. Also all-natural with no added sugar, MSG or preservatives, these granules convert to a nice glaze when baked or grilled. Because they are salt rubs, the first ingredient is sea salt, making them an ideal fit for anything requiring a little salt, such as

meat, fish and poultry.

"Perfect Poultry is my favorite," says Yunk. "I like anything with rosemary, and it is a nice combination if you really like herbs." The

Stellar Steak has a little kick to it, with big pieces of garlic, black pepper and chili. It's also a good addition to pork. At the same time, Fancy Fish works well on vegetables, too, because it includes sea salt, garlic, onion, black pepper, dill and lime powder.

The company also sells three-ply foil Smoker Bags for cooking in the oven or on the grill to give food a rich, wood-smoked flavor. The rubs are perfect for this kind of pouch where the food and rubs are sealed in. "We also do whole bags of mixed vegetables in the Smoker Bags," says Yunk.

At the Sauce Goddess (858/272-6205) in San Diego, Owner and Sauce Goddess Jennifer Reynolds is the brains behind the company's Rubrubs, which come in four flavors: Original Super Chunk, Moroccan Twist, Latin Heat and BBQ Sweet Heat. These

rubs are salt-based and can be used as spices, seasonings and meat rubs. Some are good when tossed on vegetables for an overall seasoning.

"I am a bit of a weight-loss nut," says Reynolds. "Having seasoning is terrific for weight-loss because a little bit goes a long way, and it is virtually calorie-free." These Rubrubs ensure there is plenty of flavor to go around. For instance, the Original Super Chunk is a good fit for steak or

chicken because it has a nice mixture of salt, black pepper, fennel and mustard. It also works well with Portobello mushrooms. The Moroccan Twist Rubrub features cardamom, peppers and allspice, making

Dryglaze Spice Rubs from **Urban Accents** (877/UA-SPICE or www.urbanaccents.com) create exciting flavors for grilled meats and veggies while providing a glazed finish when the sugars caramelize.



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New All American Barbecue dry-rub seasoning is the latest in a line of spices that can be used to bake, broil or grill meat and fish. From Char Crust, 773/528-0600 or www.charcrust.com

it the perfect addition to lamb, pork or tofu. The Latin Heat Rubrub can transform beef, chicken or shrimp into fajitas quite easily. The name Latin Heat is a true indication of what you can expect — a real kick! Finally, the BBQ Sweet Heat Rubrub is designed for folks who want both sweet and spicy, and it is best used for slow cooking ribs.

The folks at Kansas City-based Original Juan Specialty Foods (800/568-8468) have a large selection of barbecue spices and rubs. One of the company's top-selling lines is Bilardo Brothers meat rubs, available in four flavors: Chicken Rub Seasoning, Pork Rub Seasoning, Peppercorn Steak Rub Seasoning and Meat Rub Seasoning.

Cowtown is another popular brand tapping into Kansas City's barbecue heritage with fun names and labels, including Squeal Hog Rub, Cowtown Steak Rub and All-Purpose Rub. "You can use it like a spice on anything," says Sales Executive Tony Munson. "I use it on stir-fry or steamed vegetables."

Munson says these rubs are well penetrated in the Northeast, a testament to the fact that people are grilling even when the snow flies. "Grilling is more popular than ever," says Munson. "It's a healthier choice than frying, and you can do more with leaner meats."

For a wide range of seasoning choices, go to New Orleans-based Magic Seasoning Blends (800/457-2857) where you'll find

products developed by Chef Paul Prudhomme. The company offers 17 seasoning blends, as well as marinades and sauces. New on the list is Salmon Magic, a combination of mustard seed, herbs and spices designed to enhance grilled or baked salmon.

"Salmon and shrimp are the most consumed seafood items, but people don't really know how to cook them," says John McBride, vice president, sales and marketing. "Sometimes people overcook them and don't season them correctly." Salmon Magic has been such a big success they decided to introduce Shrimp Magic, which will hit store shelves soon.

The all-natural, gluten-free seasonings have no additives or preservatives and are best applied during the cooking process. They are available in convenient canisters.

Finally, Chicago-based Char Crust (773/528-0600) recently introduced a new twist on flavor with its All-American Barbecue Rub, a blend of barbecue flavors from different areas of the country. "I am a big barbecue fan myself, and I like a variety of barbecue traditions around the country. Whenever we travel, we look for the local favorites," says Susan Eriksen, vice president, sales and marketing. "There are signature flavors of each region, and I think these flavors are compatible together. That's why we decided to do an All-American Barbecue."

Eriksen's husband, Bernard Silver, who is president of Char Crust, was diagnosed with lung cancer two years ago. What's really special is that he is alive and well and making a miraculous recovery. As a result, the company is donating 25 cents from every sale of the All-American Barbecue Rub to the American Lung Association.

Today, Char Crust offers eight other rub flavors, including the rub that began with Silver's father, who owned a steak house in Chicago before retiring in 1972. The steak rubs he used were so famous people often visited the restaurant equipped with containers so they could take some of the good stuff home. "We needed something to sell to customers," says Eriksen, "So we went retail in 1998."

Char Crust's other dry rubs still keep folks coming back for more. The Sun-Dried Tomato and Garlic Rub is a combination of sun-dried tomatoes, roasted garlic and rosemary with a hint of lemon that works well on meat or seafood. If you're looking for a steak rub, the Original Hickory Grilled Rub is the original family secret blend of ingredients used in the restaurant. It creates a charred crust on the outside while sealing in the juices on the inside and can be used on the broiler, grill or rotisserie. Next, the Hickory & Molasses Rub has less salt with a little molasses that makes chicken and fish taste special. The Roto Roast Rub blends 15 spices that create a light-golden crust

Sauce Goddess (858/272-6205 or www.saucegoddess.com) offers a line of grill glazes and sauces, along with the spice rubs that the original sauce products are based on. The rubs are versatile and can be used to spice all kinds of food, and not just on the grill.



for a juicy, slow-roasted flavor, and it is for chicken and prime rib.

The list continues with Roasted Garlic Peppercorn Rub, a garlic-lover's choice and a top seller. With roasted garlic, onions, fresh cracked peppercorns and a hint of Worcestershire, it's a guaranteed hit. For those who want a taste of the Southwest, the Smoky Spicy Southwest Rub combines real ancho and chipotle chiles with cilantro and spices, making it the ideal rub for pork, chicken, shrimp and beef.

The Ginger Teriyaki Rub provides a good balance of ginger and teriyaki for chicken, shrimp and steak, and finally, the Amazin' Cajun Rub brings a taste of New Orleans to the table with its spicy and sweet blend of cayenne pepper, onion, garlic and oregano, a great match with catfish, chicken and shrimp.

Not Just for the Grill

The story doesn't end with meat, and it certainly goes way beyond grilling. Some rubs are creatively used with other food.

For instance, at Melanie's Fine Foods, Yunk suggests using Stellar Steak in soup, and she has paired the Perfect Poultry with goat cheese. "These (rubs) are good on potatoes, broccoli, zucchini and other vegetables," says Yunk.

At Sauce Goddess, Reynolds suggests the Latin Heat Rubrub to season eggs and other dishes. She has



New Orleans-based Magic Seasoning Blends (800/457-2857 or www.chefpaul.com) takes the all-natural spice blends of Chef Paul Prudhomme and makes them easy for home cooks to use. Magic Shrimp seasoning is the newest blend available in the line.

also used the Moroccan Twist Rubrub to make an apple onion chutney for garnishing meat. "It's really aromatic and kind of spicy with red pepper for some spice and heat," she says. "At the same time, it is sweet."

Her other tips include adding Moroccan Twist to sour cream or combining Latin Heat with melted cheese, beans and sour cream for two, fabulous dip options.

Great Demo Ideas

These seasoning manufacturers know taste sells. That's why they want to get product into the mouths of consumers. It's also why they've developed great demo ideas for retailers.

At Magic Seasoning Blends, the company teams with a seafood com-

A trio of new Big Acres rubs from Melanie's Fine Foods (650/593-9301 or www.bigacres.com) contains



Stellar Steak, Fancy Fish and Perfect Poultry Rub.

pany for a co-op demo that showcases both the salmon and the Salmon Magic while sharing the cost. A simple Teflon frying pan with a little olive oil and butter is all that's needed. Place the salmon in the warm pan, season it and cook it for three to four minutes.

The folks at Urban Accents are known for executing great demos. Knibbs says it's as simple as using a George Foreman grill, cutting the protein (chicken breast, pork tenderloin, filet or extra-firm tofu) into strips, placing it in a Ziploc bag with the rub, mixing it up and grilling it.

The Sauce Goddess uses pre-

cooked chicken in demos. She places it in a pan with oil and then sprinkles the spices over it. "It serves nice and warm, and since the chicken is pre-cooked, there are no worries," says Reynolds. She recommends using chicken instead of steak. "Steak does not hold over well at room temperature. It is very unappealing cold."

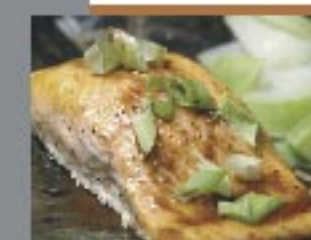
Finally, at Melanie's Fine Foods, Yunk likes to demo using Smoker Bags. "We put a whole salmon fillet in a bag and sprinkle it with Fancy Fish or Perfect Poultry, and it takes 25 minutes on the grill or in the oven," she says. "Let it rest for five minutes. Open the bag, and you have beautifully steamed fish."

These demo ideas will inspire shoppers, from new grillers to pros. ☺

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