

MARINATING 101

Excerpt from Start Cooking Blog:

<http://startcooking.com/blog/271/Marinating-101--An-Introduction-to-Marinating-Beef--Chicken-and-Fish>

One of the simplest ways to flavour food is to marinate it. That is, treat it like a sponge. All you have to do is pour sauce on the food, let it soak for a while and then cook it. There are many different types of marinades including a teriyaki marinade for Asian dishes, marinades for steak or a yogurt-based marinade for Middle-Eastern dishes.

Marinades typically consist of an acidic ingredient like vinegar, lemon juice, wine or yogurt, plus oil and spices. The acidic ingredient softens the food, allowing it to absorb the flavours of the sauce. Marinating works on all kinds of meat, as well as fish, tofu and vegetables. You can either follow recipes or experiment with whatever ingredients you have on hand.

How long should you marinate? Depends on what you want to marinate! Here are some pointers on poultry, beef and fish.

Poultry Marinade

You can marinate an entire chicken or chicken parts. Piercing the chicken with a fork, or cutting it into smaller pieces will help it absorb marinade.

Removing the skin from the chicken will help it absorb marinade

In general, two hours of marinating is long enough for the meat to soak up the flavor, but poultry can marinate for up to two days in the refrigerator. Very acidic marinades can actually toughen the meat over time, so follow the recipe or package directions.

Beef Marinade

Marinating is best suited for the tougher steak cuts like flank, skirt, sirloin, round and hanger. These cuts can usually marinate up to 24 hours. You can actually ruin better-quality steaks, like porterhouse or rib-eye, by marinating them.

Fish Marinade

Fish and shellfish should marinate for only 30 minutes to an hour; any longer and the flesh might start to "cook" and go mushy.

Marinade Dos and Don'ts

DO think ahead: If possible, start marinating meat the night before, or in the morning before you leave for work.

DO marinate food in the refrigerator, rather than at room temperature.

DO marinate in re-sealable plastic bags, rather than in bowls or other containers. They cut down on cleanup and allow you to evenly distribute the marinade. But you can marinate in plastic, stainless steel or glass containers too.

DO cover containers containing marinating meats

DON'T use marinade from raw meat or fish as a sauce unless it's boiled first for several minutes. It contains bacteria from the raw meat.

DON'T reuse leftover marinade for other food.

DON'T marinate in aluminum containers or foil, because a chemical reaction could spoil the food.

Excerpt from cookthink blog: <http://www.cookthink.com/blog/2007/02/a-formula-for-marinating/>
"A Formula For Marinating"

I've always found it helpful to break down certain dishes (vinaigrettes, marinades, stews and soups) into formulas. Of course, formulas are overly simplified. But once you get the formula down, you can modify it according to the ingredients you have on hand, the type of cuisine you want to explore, the season, or your mood. Marinades are especially formulaic because they're born of function. The acid-and-salt combination was once used to preserve meats and fish before cooking. Now, we use them more for flavouring, tenderizing, and moisturizing. They still lend a holy and cleansed quality to whatever it is they bathe.

Though any marinade could be made from more or less, here's a basic formula for making one:

- acid (vinegar, wine, yogurt, citrus juice) +
- oil (olive, vegetable) +
- aromatics (onion, garlic, ginger) +
- salt/umami (soy, miso, Worcestershire) +
- herbs/spices (rosemary, oregano, cumin, cinnamon, clove) +
- pepper/chile heat (red pepper flakes, hot sauce, sliced chiles)

A few applications of the formula, varied by cuisine type:

For pork/beef/chicken (2 hours to overnight):

American:

2 cups apple cider vinegar, 1/4 cup vegetable oil, 1 thinly sliced onion, 2 smashed garlic cloves, 3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce, 1 tablespoon finely chopped thyme leaves, 1 teaspoon Tabasco sauce

Asian:

2 cups rice wine vinegar, 1/4 cup canola oil, 1/2 cup chopped scallions, 1 tablespoon minced ginger, 3 cloves garlic, minced, 3 tablespoons soy sauce, 1 cup torn basil leaves, 2 teaspoons sambal chile sauce

Middle Eastern:

2 cups plain yogurt, 1/2 cup olive oil, 2 cloves garlic, minced, 1 thinly sliced red onion, 2 teaspoons salt, 1 cup chopped mint leaves, 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

For fish and shellfish (20 minutes to 2 hours):

French:

2 cups dry white wine, 1/4 cup olive oil, 1 shallot, minced, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 tablespoon chopped fresh tarragon, 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley, 1/8 teaspoon ground white pepper

Japanese (especially broiled or grilled oily fish like cod, sea bass, or mackerel):

3/4 cup mirin (sweet cooking wine), 1 cup white miso paste, 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper

Ceviche:

1 cup lime juice, 2 tablespoons olive oil, 1/4 red onion, minced, 1 clove garlic, minced, 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, 1/2 cup finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves, 1/8 teaspoon ground cumin, 1/8 teaspoon coriander, 1 jalapeno pepper, minced

The variations are endless. With a stocked pantry, a formula, and different cuisine types in mind, you'll always be able to marinate meats and fish before grilling, broiling, searing or roasting them.