A CASSEROLE with meat, French bread, tossed salad, fruit and coffee make a complete patio menu.

Photos by Joseph Kitten

Patio meals are served out-of-doors for fun or recreation, and are popular for casual or informal entertaining.

To set the stage, everyone may wear barbecue aprons, and after dark hurricane lamps may be lighted. As with sports, some people prefer to be spectators, and others like to take part in the activities. All age groups seem to enjoy participating in the preparation of these meals.

A FEW EASY DISHES

The menu for a patio meal is usually simple and may consist of a meat, a combination casserole to accompany the meat, salad or relishes, bread, dessert, and beverage. A potato or vegetable may be served instead of the casserole. Most of the food is prepared in the kitchen. The meat, however, is the center of attraction and is cooked with a flair of showmanship outdoors, usually over coals. Charcoal or charcoal briquets are the popular fuel.

The briquets are compressed and will burn longer than the regular charcoal. To have an even heat, ignite the charcoal 45 minutes before starting to cook. A good method is to shake briquets with charcoal lighter fluid in a can, then place four inches apart on a bed of bricks, rocks, gravel, or sand. Place other charcoal pieces on top, and light. The lighter fluid will blaze, and the charcoal will become glowing coals with a grey ash on the surface. A charcoal bed helps hold the heat and may be made in the ground, in a wheelbarrow, or in barbecue fireplaces. Adjustable grills are a convenience but hinged broilers or skewers may be used.

**FOIL PACKING IS HANDY**

Foil packs are popular for cooking directly on the coals. Different food combinations may be used, but ground beef with sliced potatoes and onions, seasoned with salt, pepper and butter is well liked. Place the food on a rectangular piece of heavy foil about 10x18 inches. Bend foil over the food without tearing, and seal open edges by folding together at least twice. Place pack directly on the coals, and cook 8 to 10 minutes on each side. Remove from coals with tongs, cut open with scissors, and eat directly from the foil. Food inside will be cooked by steam, will be tender but not brown.

As a novelty some people cook steaks "on the rocks" by brushing off the ash and placing meat directly on the glowing charcoal. The heat will cook the meat, and steam formed will put out the fire. When the steak is turned a new spot of glowing coals must be used. Results depend on the amount of heat in the charcoal bed and the thickness of the steak.

With a thick steak the interior will be quite rare. To keep from charring outside edges by this method, a layer of moist salt may be spread over the meat. The salt will keep the meat from browning, and may be brushed off when dry.

**NOTHING BEATS A STEAK!**

Broiled steak is, of course, a favorite. Tenderizer, when used according to directions, will improve many cuts. Tenderizers contain an enzyme which softens protein and is found in fresh pineapple and papaya. Tenderizer may be purchased in dry granular form, plain or mixed with salt and seasoning.

Other popular meats are hamburger, kabobs, barbecued chicken, and barbecued spareribs. To barbecue, the meat is marinated in a well-seasoned sauce for several hours, and then more sauce is added while the meat is broiling or roasting. Instead of applying sauce with a brush, the cook may wish to sprinkle it on from a squeeze bottle. The cooking may be done partially in the oven and finished on the grill, or it may be done entirely out-of-doors.

Barbecue sauces add a distinctive flavor, and the following two, I am sure, will add to your eating pleasure.

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**CHICKEN—MARINADE & BARBECUE SAUCE**

- 2 parts olive oil
- 1 part wine vinegar
- minced garlic
- salt and pepper
- a sprinkle of tarragon, thyme, and chopped parsley

Let chicken stand 2 or 3 hours at room temperature in sauce. Use same mixture to baste chicken during cooking. (Recipe from Sunset Barbecue Cook Book.)

**SPARERIBS (3 lbs.) BARBECUE SAUCE**

- 2 tbsp. butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- 1/2 to 1 tsp. chili powder
- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- 2 tbsp. vinegar
- 2 tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 tsp. horseradish
- 1 cup chili sauce
- salt and pepper to taste

Sauté onion and garlic in butter; add remaining ingredients, heat together. Use to baste spareribs while cooking.

Note: Spareribs should be well done when served. (Recipe from Western Family.)

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