

Friday, July 25, 2008

Grilled Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

Prep time: 30 minutes

Grilling time: 40 to 50 minutes

Topping

6 rings fresh (not canned) pineapple, each 1/2 inch thick, peeled and cored (cut core on both sides)
2 tablespoons salted butter, melted
1/2 cup dark brown sugar, packed
1/4 cup heavy cream
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Batter

1 cup all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
2/3 cup buttermilk
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 pound (1 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3/4 cup granulated sugar

1. Lightly brush the pineapple rings with the melted butter. Grill them over **direct medium heat** (350°F to 450°F), with the lid open, until nicely marked, 4 to 6 minutes, turning once. Remove the pineapple from the grill. Let cool. Leave one pineapple ring whole; slice the others in half.

2. In a 12-inch, cast-iron skillet over **direct medium heat**, combine the brown sugar, cream, cinnamon, and any melted butter remaining from brushing the pineapple slices. Cook until the sugar has melted and the liquid starts to bubble around the outer edge, about 2 minutes. Remove the skillet from the heat and place on a baking sheet. Place the whole pineapple ring in the center of the skillet, and then arrange the pineapple halves around it. Set aside.

3. In a large bowl mix the flour, baking powder, salt, and baking soda. In a small bowl whisk the buttermilk, eggs, and vanilla.

4. In a large bowl using an electric mixer, cream the butter and sugar on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, 2 to 4 minutes. With the mixer on low, add the buttermilk mixture and then gradually add the flour mixture. Blend until smooth, scraping down the sides as necessary. Using a rubber spatula evenly spread the batter over the pineapple slices in the skillet.

5. Bake the cake over **indirect medium heat** (approximately 350°F) until a skewer inserted into the center comes out clean and the top is golden brown, 40 to 50 minutes. Using barbecue mitts, remove the cake from the grill and let cool at room temperature for about 10 minutes.

6. Before removing the cake from the skillet, run a paring knife around the edge to loosen it. Place a serving platter, large enough to hold the cake, over the top of the skillet. Using barbecue mitts, carefully invert the skillet and platter at the same time, and then slowly remove the skillet. Replace any pineapple that has stuck to the bottom of the skillet. Let the cake cool briefly before slicing into wedges and serving. The cake is best served warm or at room temperature the day it is made.

Makes 6 to 8 servings

Grilling Tip:

For this recipe, it's important to use fresh pineapple slices rather than canned ones drenched in syrup. Also, when grilling desserts, it's often a good idea to leave the lid open so that the fruits aren't filled with smoke. More generally, it's a really good idea to have a cast-iron skillet on hand so you can make desserts like skillet cakes, cobblers, and gingerbread, and lots of savory things, too, like cornbread, paella, and risotto.