

MESQUITE-GRILLED TUNA STEAKS

With Fire-Charred Tomato Chipotle Salsa

Source: Barbecue USA by Steven Raichlen (Workman Publishing, 2003)

Method: Direct

Yield: Serves 4

Advance Preparation: 30 minutes for marinating the tuna

2 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon coarse salt (kosher or sea)
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus 1 to 2 tablespoons for brushing the tuna
4 sushi-quality tuna steaks (each about 3/4 inch thick and 6 ounces each)
4 flour tortillas (8 inches each)
Fire-Charred Tomato Chipotle Salsa (recipe follows)
Cilantro sprigs for garnish

You'll also need:

1 cup wood chips or chunks, preferably mesquite, unsoaked

1. In a mortar using a pestle or in a small nonreactive bowl using the back of a spoon, mash together the garlic, salt, black pepper, and cilantro. Stir in the lime juice and 2 tablespoons of the olive oil.

2. Trim any skin or dark or bloody spots off the tuna steaks. Rinse the tuna under cold running water, then blot it dry with paper towels. Place the tuna steaks in a nonreactive baking dish just large enough to hold them and pour the marinade over the fish. Let the tuna marinate in the refrigerator, covered, for 30 minutes, turning once or twice so that it marinates evenly.

3. Set up the grill for direct grilling and preheat to high. If using a gas grill, place all of the wood chips or chunks in the smoker box or in a smoker pouch and run the grill on high until you see smoke. If using a charcoal grill, preheat it to high, then toss all of the wood chips or chunks on the coals.

4. When ready to cook, drain the marinade from the tuna steaks and discard the marinade. Lightly brush both sides of the tuna with olive oil. Brush and oil the grill grate. Arrange the tuna on the hot grate, placing it on a diagonal to the bars. Grill the fish until cooked to taste, 3 to 5 minutes per side for medium-rare, 4 to 6 minutes per side for medium, rotating each steak a quarter turn after 1-1/2 minutes or so on each side to create an attractive crosshatch of grill marks. Test for doneness using the poke method: A medium-rare tuna steak will be gently yielding; a medium steak will be firm.

5. Meanwhile, warm the tortillas on the grill; it will take 10 to 20 seconds per side. Wrap the tortillas in a cloth napkin and place in a basket.

6. There are two ways to serve the tuna. Place the tortillas on a platter or plates, arrange the grilled tuna steaks on top, and spoon the salsa over them. Or you can cut the fish into thin slices and pile them on the tortillas, spooning the salsa on top. Garnish with the cilantro sprigs.