

SEASONAL ACTIVITY

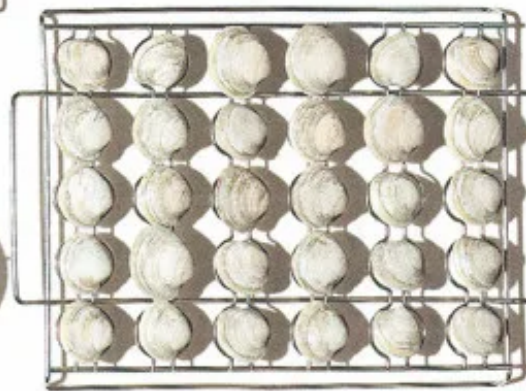


HEATED COMPETITION

SUMMER HAS ARRIVED. AS INVITATIONS FOR MEALS ALFRESCO AND OCEANFRONT-ESTATE COOKOUTS POUR IN, PREPARE FOR HEDGE FUNDERS AND HAMPTONS HOSTESSES TO BE ALL UP IN YOUR GRILL.



*By Holly Peterson
Photographs by James Wojcik*





STEAKS, CHOPS, AND RACKS OF LAMB FROM ROBINSON'S PRIME RESERVE MEATS. TABLEWARE FROM RALPH LAUREN HOME, JULISKA, BENNINGTON POTTERS, WILLIAMSONOMA, DEBORAH RHODES, AND SUR LA TABLE. FOR DETAILS SEE PAGE 163.

Styled by Will Kahn

Deep in the wild woods of the Hamptons, Eric Ripert, a three-Michelin-star chef, carefully fans the wood and charcoal buried in his outdoor grill until its color matches his salt-and-pepper hair. He places a slab of slate on top of the coals, ready to sear a piece of meat for his casual dinner party. Ripert's restaurant, Le Bernardin, has held on to a four-star rating from the *New York Times* longer than any restaurant in Manhattan. Presumably, when it comes to making a summer dinner for friends in jeans, Ripert knows what he's doing.

As guests arrive, he notices that the men, mostly accomplished types like himself, surround the grill, drinks in hand, a little too interested. "They like to come close to me and check out what I'm doing. They even try to intervene and help me. They just can't stop themselves. I look at them and say, 'Guys, please. I got this.'"

And therein lies this tale of one-percenters who can't resist getting close to the summer flames. Whether they're hunting local meat, poultry, and game at Greenwich Prime Meats or angling for the freshest line-caught tuna at the Clamman in Southampton, grilling has become a competitive, obsessive game that possesses their weekends. "It's the most basic human activity there is: cooking meat over a fire," says novelist and *T&C* wine critic Jay McInerney. "It's very far from trading digitized money. It's bloody and it's primal; eating meat is one of the elemental human experiences. These guys are a little removed from the blood and guts of life, and I can see why they'd want to get down with their grills and slabs of beef."

Cocktail party conversation in the Hamptons and other exclusive summer enclaves includes unsolicited advice on the best way to smoke food, how different woods create specific flavors, and where to procure ingredients that come with their own bragging rights. Colin Cowie, entertaining expert and author, says, "I see a lot of people's behavior, and without a doubt there's a more casual approach to entertaining among the wealthy, with more relationship to the outdoors. The patios are as dressed as interior dining rooms, carpets are resistant to rain and sun, kitchens have an indoor and outdoor component. A lot of men and women don't use their kitchens, but anyone can cook on a grill and get very into that."

A meal at Brooke Garber Neidich's Georgica abode in the Hamptons is one of the most coveted summer invites on the East End.

Brooke, co-chair of the Whitney Museum and creative director at Sidney Garber jewelry, serves 15 to 40 on her patio. With rosé, good wineglasses, and cloth napkins as a rule, she and her husband Daniel curate a multi-generational set. "My kids and their friends grew into really interesting, thoughtful people—creating businesses, digitizing something. I can't tell you the connections people make here. All of this happens in our backyard. The secret is we feed them."

The proper equipment and ingredients are, naturally, key to this game. Niche purveyors like DeBragga specialize in well-marbled, hard-to-find Japanese

wagyu beef. They supply luxury proteins to the rock star chefs of Manhattan and to summer season rock star chef wannabes. Some grills on the market—with special rotisseries, areas for searing, an oven underneath, a heater in the back—allow the obsessive workaholic to design and deliver the flavors of the outdoors to select friends and family. The maestro of the boardroom is now the maestro of his backyard. A wide range of monstrosities are currently center stage on bluestone patios: the \$25,000 Kalamazoo grill, with sections for wood, charcoal, and gas; the Viking stainless steel propane model, with multiple burners; oversize Weber ranch kettle grills; a wood pellet-fired Yoder searing and smoking machine; and the Ferrari of grills, the shiny-tiled ceramic Kamado cooker. There are sterling tongs and spatulas for the barbecue chef who has everything, finished with monogrammed handles carved from elk horn. Those who prefer a more down-home touch seek out the refrigerator-size smoker from Backwoods—manufactured in Louisiana—which can accommodate a whole hog.



\$100 IGRILL2 THERMOMETER

For the titan who won't part with his tech appendages even on summer weekends: the iGrill2. Probe four pieces of the finest luxury protein, fire up the iGrill app, and select preferences. The Bluetooth-operated gadget sends real-time temps and status updates straight to your smartphone. \$100. SURLATABLE.COM

"I MAY BE THE ONLY
PIT MASTER IN
PSYCHOANALYSIS.
MY DOCTOR
ASKED, 'WHY THE
HELL ARE YOU
DOING ALL THIS
BARBECUING?'"



\$30

LEMON LADIES

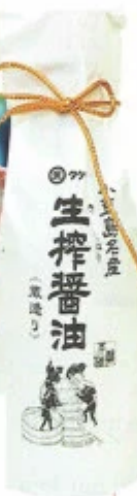
This 40-tree orchard in the Bay Area ships its prized Meyer lemons nationwide. Like all good things, they sell out months before the season is over. Now is the time to get on next year's waiting list. \$30 FOR 3.5 POUNDS. LEMONLADIES.COM

“I LIKE TO USE THE BIG FORKS; THEY FEEL ALMOST LIKE WEAPONS,” SAYS A PRIVATE EQUITY GUY AND GRILLER. “MY UTENSILS ARE HEAVY AND FOUND ONLY IN SOUTH AFRICA.”

Patrick Lyons, a New England restaurateur who owns 39 establishments, witnesses this trend of maniacal grilling firsthand, both at work and at home. “Those of us who are into it—are a little ninja about it—we understand the difference between good and great,” he says. “We are seeking great, not good.” Rising well above ninja level is writer and onetime executive producer of *The Cosby Show* John Markus, who serves as a primary example of how far masters of the universe will go in their quest to conquer cooking well outdoors. Markus began cooking on a grill, experimenting at his expansive country home in the Hudson Valley, after he was served some subpar ribs prepared by his writing partner (and now U.S. senator),

Al Franken. This launched him on a mission to understand low-and-slow Southern-style barbecue and how it is perfected. He then spent a year traveling and cooking in competitions all over America—just to hone his craft. He went on to create the television show *BBQ Pitmasters*, which has been airing in some form on the Discovery networks for six years. “It helps to a be little OCD, and barbecue is the perfect OCD topic,” he says. Markus shows off his honorary titles, including the Order of the Magic Mop Ph.B., or Doctor of Barbecue, an award that has been bestowed on fewer than 40 Americans for their contribution to the culinary arts. He displays this inscribed basting mop in his study next to an Emmy and a Golden Globe.

There’s no question outdoor culinary adventures appeal to the caveman in all of us. “It’s bringing home the bacon, literally,” says Florida-based private equity managing director Arin Maercks. He goes to Miami’s



\$999
DEBRAGGA

Don’t say Kobe; what you want is Miyazaki wagyu beef. Recipe for perfection: Bring to room temperature. Cut into four three-ounce pieces. Ignite coals; spread coals to cool (with gas grill, get the grill hot and then raise lid and put jets to low). Place wagyu pieces over low heat and sear 30 seconds per side; don’t move them except to flip. Allow beef to rest a minute or two before serving. Finish with sea salt or artisanal soy sauce. TENDERLOIN, \$999 FOR 5 POUNDS, DEBRAGGA.COM

Proper Sausages (for unmarinated meat) or Graziano’s Market (for marinated) and personally selects his big tenderloins, thick-cut ribeyes, and skirt steaks every time he grills for guests. “I like to use the big forks; they feel almost like weapons. All my utensils are steel and very heavy, and found only in South Africa. It’s almost as if you’re presenting your sword and making the kill. I have to lay it out in the kitchen in its own display. I want to look at it beforehand. It’s the whole process, all the smells that get everyone worked up. The foreplay is the seasoning and the marinating; then there are the smells the meats put out. You know you’re doing it right if everyone is so excited and so ready, teased for half an hour or more.”

This crowd, more often than not, feels its way is the best. That’s why

a rich friend will push her doctor on you as if he or she were the only medical professional in America capable of curing a strained back brought on by that 9-iron swing. The same concept applies to the consumption of carefully orchestrated meals cooked outdoors over fire: Grilling aficionados like to share what they’ve learned, whether it be the best product from the best purveyor—like the aged Kishibori Shoyu soy sauce at DeBragga—or a technique only they know about. It’s all part of a constant game of one-upmanship. “It’s part of the conversation among those of us who are major outdoor barbecue people,” says the constantly energized Bippy Siegal with a chuckle. Siegal is a Manhattanite who works in private equity and who recently designed his summer home around the kitchen. “‘What are you making?’ ‘How did you make it?’ ‘Where did you fly it in from?’ Once someone sent me a box of the best Meyer lemons he’d ever gotten, and I sent him a case of Kobe steak from Fairway Packing in Detroit. Another time he got a brisket he had smoked for 20 hours and sent it over for me to try. It’s guy talk: ‘What are you drinking with that Kobe beef hamburger?’”

From caveman times up to the era of sprawling, landscaped yards, man has been drawn to food that makes our canines water once we smell the fat dripping off caramelized ribs, or summer corn roasting in butter. We like to tame those flames and, afterward, sit with a nice summer wine and stare at them for hours. “I may be the only pit master in psychoanalysis,” Markus says. “When my doctor asked me, ‘Why the hell are you doing all this barbecuing?’ I came to some important conclusions. It creates community. It’s antithetical to the callousness and carelessness of business. I do it for my friends, because it brings back warm feelings of a small town.” Something surely no one feels in the heated pits of the trading floor. ◀

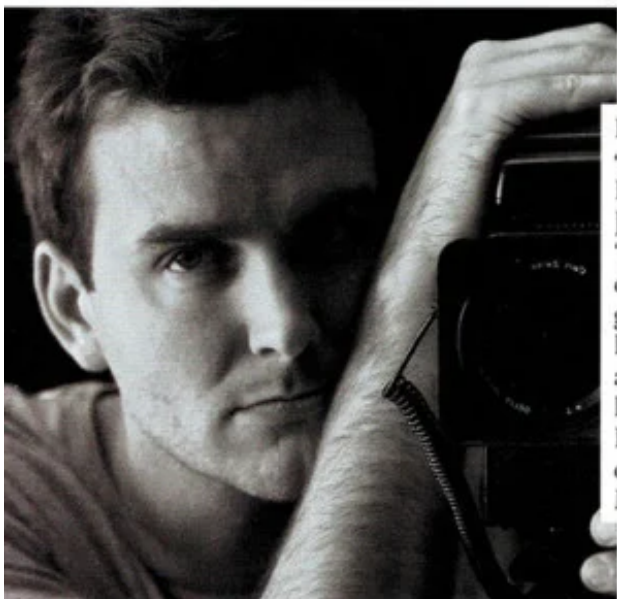
\$25,195

KALAMAZOO GRILL

What price greatness? This made-to-order machine is the only gas grill on the market that can also cook with wood and charcoal, in any combination. The K1000HS model, pictured here, might be marketed to a king, but it can feed the masses: Its four-burner grill covers a combined area of 1,000 square inches. KALAMAZOOGOURMET.COM



T&C CONTRIBUTORS



VICTOR DEMARCHELIER

For this month's cover story, "A BEAUTIFUL MIND" (page 122), Demarchelier photographed Jennifer Connelly, whom he calls "a real beauty" with "a strong opinion and point of view." After graduating from Vassar, where he studied economics and studio art, Demarchelier worked for his fashion photographer father, Patrick. He has shot several covers for *T&C*, including Gugu Mbatha-Raw in March.



MARCIA DESANCTIS

While living in Paris for four years, DeSanctis found that Americans' very relaxed idea of comfort required some explaining. "I have a French friend who was fascinated by the La-Z-Boy," says the author of the *New York Times* best-seller *100 Places in France Every Woman Should Go*. In "FEMME FATIGUE" (page 102) she argues for the many things French women could learn from their Yankee sisters.

TOM SHONE

Shone, pictured with daughter Juliet, profiled Jennifer Connelly for "A BEAUTIFUL MIND" (page 122). "She has a rep as a tough interviewee who doesn't suffer fools, but we got on terrifically," says Shone, who describes her emotional intelligence as "like rock salt. I love the way she drills down into characters." Shone, the movie critic for the *Economist's Intelligent Life* magazine, teaches film history at NYU.



CHRISTIAN FERRETTI

While shooting the jewelry in "THE GRIP OF PASSION" (page 152), Ferretti "immediately connected to this woman, drenched in over-the-top gems in an Upper East Side apartment." The native Californian started out working for David LaChapelle and Annie Leibovitz; he now shoots for *Interview* and *W*, among other publications.



HOLLY PETERSON

Peterson defines grilling—her subject in "HEATED COMPETITION" (page 158)—as "the perfect storm of obsession for one-percenters who seek to fulfill their gregarious, hedonistic, and somewhat self-aggrandizing desire to serve the most perfectly massaged Kobe beef on the largest grill on the most expansive patio behind the most luxurious home." She is the author of *The Manny* and *The Idea of Him*.