

For a better steak, cook directly on charcoal

By Matt Lee and Ted Lee, New York Times

We've never been the kind of guys to worship outdoor grilling gear and technology. When we were growing up, Dad set the tone, making do with a rusty hardware store hibachi and a metal chimney. We've written about the ascetic thrill of using government-issue grills in state parks.

But recently we picked up a trick from a Dallas chef that has rocked our minimalist approach to its foundation: We cook meats directly on the coals.

No, the precious porterhouses do not incinerate, even though the heat is consistently 800 to 1,000 degrees. The char is robust and earthy, but never too ashy or excessive, even when we use thinner cuts like hanger and skirt.

In fact, the method promises to reduce anxiety at our outdoor parties this summer by making the grilling speedier and more consistent, with far less sooty flare-up than when we raise our steaks a few inches onto a grate above the coals. (That air space between the meat and the heat provides oxygen for combustion.)

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