

Shoprite's Master Butchers weigh in with top tips for Braai Day

South Africa's Braai Day is a time of coming together around the fire to cook some of the country's finest cuts of meat. And there are few better to offer tips on how to treat these than Shoprite's crew of Master Butchers.

A Master Butcher is a specialist who is conversant in meat processing practices from farm to fork. There are only five certified Master Butchers in South Africa, and all of them work for the Shoprite Group.

Achieving Master Butcher status takes three years, and butchers must build up a portfolio of work that includes modules on butchery expertise, business acumen, and food hygiene and safety. The Shoprite Group recently launched an internationally endorsed Master Meat Artisan Programme that aims to train [250 people over next five years](#).

With braaing a point of pride in many South African households, Shoprite's Master Butchers all have their preferences, tips, and tricks that make them expert braaiers, too. Here are their top braai tips for cooking on fire this Heritage Day.

Songezo Basela

I usually choose to braai rump steak. If you're looking for the best rump to braai, pick out a steak that has good fat content - marbled fat inside the meat will always add flavour to a rump steak.

Braaing rump is also relatively easy to do because it's a soft steak. I suggest you rub it with olive oil, pepper, and salt on both sides. Cook it to medium-rare. I usually aim for four minutes on each side. After it's cooked, pour on a cheese sauce and serve with a good side salad. And if you want to retain some of the heat, consider using rock coals.

Khusela Dindili

I'm a big fan of beef on the braai, and in particular I like beef brisket. The fat on top brings amazing flavour to the meat. I add a few spices, place it over light coals and cook it very slowly.

I also love to braai a good ribeye steak. Similar to the beef brisket, a ribeye has great fat inside the meat which also brings amazing flavour to your steak.

Coenraad Vermaak

When I braai, I like to go for a Picanha cut of beef. The Picanha has a nice layer of fat on top, and I usually recommend adding some salt and pepper. Braai it for about seven or eight minutes a side, and slice it as thin as you can. If you have a thick slab of meat, you can also consider cooking it on a salt plate - it takes a bit longer but adds a great salty flavour.

If you're keen to cook chicken this Braai Day, my colleague John Rae also taught me a great recipe. Use a deboned whole chicken, add sun-dried tomato, basil pesto, a layer of bacon,

and a good quality cheese that melts nicely. Season it, roll it up into tinfoil, and then put that over the coals. When you cut it, you get great layers of all the flavours.

Tony de Sousa

I love making a nice espetada with pieces of good quality rump, on a braai over hot coals. Look for a nice piece of rump with a good covering of fat. You only need to add minimal flavouring - there's no need to add marinades and other sauces. Just add a bit of salt, pepper, garlic and bay leaves, rub it on, and that's all you need - it's a basic recipe, but that way, you're tasting the quality of the meat. I usually add a bit of olive oil so that when it hits the coals, it seals it nicely, keeping the juices in. Rare to medium rare is perfect on that rump.

John Rae

A whole Picanha roast is a favourite of mine, particularly if you're entertaining other people. Marinade it with a bit of balsamic vinegar for an hour before cooking. And then, add a bit of salt and pepper, and put it straight onto the braai. That's it!

Make sure you cook the fat nice and crispy. How long you cook it depends on how well people like their steak - but the triangular shape of a Picanha means it's an excellent option for entertaining because everyone likes their steaks cooked a little bit differently. This way, you can have some well-done meat and some that's closer to medium.

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