

IN YOUR GRILL

Local food connoisseur competes in national grilling contest

BY KIRSTEN OTT

Biting into a fresh, juicy peach—our state fruit—is a staple activity for all Georgians. One local Atlantan has introduced the succulent fruit to a grilling recipe for pork, gaining her national attention in the Other White Meat’s “Grilling Grates from the 50 States” contest. Now one of five regional finalists vying for the title of America’s top grilling guru, Virginia Willis is no stranger to orchestrating a variety of ingredients into a mouthwatering dish. A local food consultant, television producer, book author, journalist, food stylist and editor, Willis is also a French-trained chef who teaches culinary classes at Viking Cooking School, the Cook’s Warehouse and Whole Foods Market’s Salud Cooking and Lifestyle School.

With that impressive résumé, Willis still took an interest in entering a grilling recipe contest introduced earlier this year by the National Pork Board. “I’m always developing recipes for my classes,” she says. “Every now and then, I turn to the pork Web site [www.theotherwhitemeat.com] for research.” Willis happened upon the online contest, which asked people to submit

grilling recipes that showcase their region’s signature flavor or grilling style. The five finalists—one for each major region—were chosen based on creativity, mouth-watering appeal and ease of preparation.

“I had this recipe, and it worked very well,” says Willis, who grew up south of Atlanta in Macon County, near Montezuma, where peach orchards are abundant. The contest was open to anyone—including food professionals—so Willis submitted her peach, Dijon mustard and pork recipe for consideration. And now, in almost-standard “American Idol” fashion, it’s up to America to decide who takes home the ultimate prize: a trip to master griller Steven Raichlen’s Barbecue University to hone his or her BBQ skills. All five finalists receive a new Weber Q300 grill and gift certificates for pork. Online voting is open through Aug. 31; only one vote per e-mail address is accepted.

Willis says she grills 10 months out of the year. One of her tips for grilling her peach-dijon crusted pork tenderloin recipe is brining the pork chops, which she explains as marinating the meat in a salt, brown sugar and water mixture that packs in additional moisture (since so much is lost

Cast your vote for your favorite pork-grilling recipe at www.theotherwhitemeat.com.



Georgia native and professed peach lover Virginia Willis is vying for your vote this month in a national grilling contest.

COURTESY OF VIRGINIA WILLIS

during the grilling process). She saves the glazing until the very end, which keeps charring at bay, resulting in a succulent Southern dish for summer and fall. “Georgia peaches are famous,” says Willis. “The sweet peach marries very nicely with the pork for a delicious dinner, and there’s nothing that says Georgia like peaches!” **SP**

PEACHY FACTS

Georgia ranks third nationally in peach production. Most peaches are harvested in Georgia between mid-May and mid-August.

Refrigerate peaches in a single layer. Use within one week.

To keep peaches from darkening after slicing, sprinkle with lemon juice or ascorbic acid powder.

To peel a peach, dip into boiling water for 30 seconds, then in cold water. The peeling should slide off easily.

1 lb. fresh peaches = 3 medium peaches = 2 cups sliced peaches = 1 ½ cups peach puree

When buying Georgia peaches, look for a creamy gold to yellow under-color. The red or “blush” is an indication of variety rather than ripeness. The crease should be well defined and run from the stem end of the peach to the point. A peach should smell “peachy” and be soft to the touch.

Source: Georgia Peach Council

PEACH-DIJON CRUSTED PORK TENDERLOIN

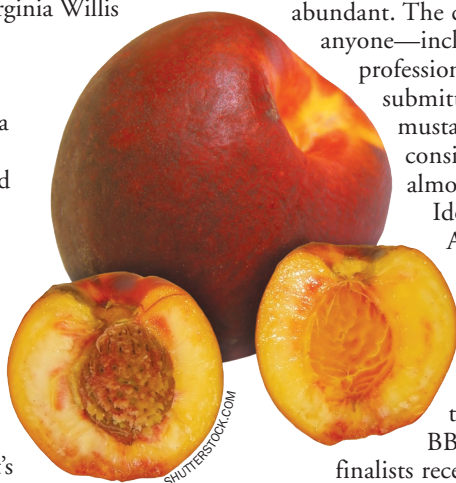
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- ¾ cup coarse kosher salt
- ¾ cup brown sugar, firmly packed
- 2 cups boiling water
- 3 cups ice cubes
- 2 pork tenderloins, 1 ½ to 2 pounds
- ½ cup peach preserves
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped
- ½ cup Dijon mustard
- Black pepper, freshly ground

Place the salt and sugar in a medium heatproof bowl. Pour over boiling water and stir to dissolve. Add the ice cubes and stir to cool. Add the tenderloins, cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate to marinate, at least 10 and up to 30 minutes. Remove from the brine, rinse well and thoroughly dry pat with paper towels.

Meanwhile, stir together the peach preserves, chopped rosemary and mustard in a small bowl. Set aside.

Season the tenderloins with pepper. Place tenderloins on a preheated grill, and grill for about 15 minutes or until the internal temperature reaches 160 degrees F., brushing with peach-mustard mixture in the last few minutes. Remove to a cutting board and cover with aluminum foil to rest and let the juices redistribute (about 5 minutes). Slice on the diagonal, and serve immediately.



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