

# THE MONTHLY

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## BOYS AND GRILLS

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By Melissa Swanson

Vegetarians and vegans can enjoy the grill's versatility. Oakland-based Colleen Patrick-Goudreau, a vegan cooking teacher and founder of Compassionate Cooks, which offers vegetarian cooking and nutrition classes, recently appeared on the Food Network with celebrity chef Bobby Flay. The segment featured grilling options for vegetarians using ingredients such as eggplant, marinated tofu and tempeh (fermented soy bean cakes), Portobello mushrooms, corn grilled in its husk, and grilled pineapple and papaya. Figs even found their way onto the grate. "These are foods that even a meat-eater would be satisfied with," she says. "No one's going to be left hungry."

Some may find it surprising that tofu is a grilling candidate, given its propensity for sticking and crumbling. But, when properly prepped, tofu grills deliciously, especially since it absorbs marinade and sauces well. The night before, wrap a block of firm tofu in a kitchen towel and place it underneath a heavy weight, such as a cast-iron pan, for about half an hour, until the towel is soaked through. If you wish, marinate it overnight, using maple syrup and tamari, or olive oil, vinegar, mustard, and basil. You can also freeze it, which makes for a meatier texture. The next day, brush the tofu with more marinade and grill it over a hot fire until warm and marked.

Tempeh has a denser, chewier texture that also works well on the grill. Patrick-Goudreau recommends giving it a quick steam – ten minutes or so – before grilling it. This preserves texture and cuts down on overall cooking time.

Patrick-Goudreau does marinate many of the vegetables and fruits she grills, but advises against overdoing it. "People forget that the vegetables themselves have all the flavor," she says. "You want that to stand out." A simple brush in olive oil and sprinkling of salt and pepper is all many vegetables need, especially those in season and grown locally.

Generally, vegetables, tofu, and tempeh will do best after a few minutes on the hottest part of your fire. For a simple delight, try burying a couple of whole, unpeeled onions, red bell peppers, and fennel directly in the hot embers.