

Smoked Ribs

Now we're smokin'. Nothing says summer like a backyard barbeque and a pile of slow-cooked, wood-smoked, tender ribs to tear into. This one's going to take a while, so get your chair, a book, a sun hat and a beer, and while you're tending the grill, put your feet up and enjoy the smell of summer.

See Cook's Note on how to remove the membrane from the backs of the rib racks.

Ingredients

rub & ribs

- 1 tablespoon ground coriander, preferably freshly ground
- 1 tablespoon kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons dried mustard
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon onion powder
- 2 racks baby back ribs (4 to 5 pounds)

sauce

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 slices pancetta, minced
- 1/2 small onion, minced (about 1/3 cup)
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon spice rub (recipe above)
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon molasses

special equipment

- charcoal grill or gas grill
- smoker box or aluminum foil pouch
- grill rib rack
- wood chips or chunks for smoking, preferably applewood or other fruit wood
- heatproof brush

Directions

for the rub & ribs

Combine the spices in a small bowl. Reserve 1 teaspoon for the sauce. Prepare the ribs by removing the membranes from the backs (see Cook's Note). Rub the remaining rub into both sides of the rib racks. Place on a baking sheet, wrap in plastic and refrigerate at least 2 hours and up to overnight.

for the sauce

Add 1 teaspoon oil and the pancetta to a medium saucepan over medium heat. Stir until the pancetta begins to render some fat and soften, about 3 minutes. Add the remaining teaspoon of oil, the onion, garlic and spice rub, and stir over medium heat until the onions soften, about 5 minutes. Pour in the ketchup, water, vinegar and molasses and continue to cook until thickened, stirring so it doesn't scorch the bottom, about 5 more minutes. Cool, then cover and refrigerate until needed.

to smoke the ribs

Soak a couple handfuls of wood chips in water for 1 hour.

Prepare briquettes by lighting them in a chimney starter. Once they ash over, dump in the grill on one side and cover, adjusting the vents, to bring the temperature up to 250 degrees. Enclose a handful of soaked chips in a piece of foil and poke a few holes in the foil. (Or just toss them straight on the coals). Place packet on the coals. Once they start to smoke, put the ribs in a rib rack on the other side of the grill. Cover with the lid vents over the ribs. Keep vents partially open to allow the smoke to flow past the ribs and out the top. Add another packet of chips as each packet stops smoking, about 4 in all, to smoke for 2 hours, adding more coals as needed to maintain the temperature.

Once the smoking ends, continue to cook over indirect heat, covered, adding more coals as needed to maintain the temperature, until the ribs flop when you pick them up with tongs, 2 to 4 more hours. Once they are done, add more coals to increase the heat and spread out coals to cover more of grill. Remove the ribs from the rack, put the ribs over direct heat and baste with sauce. Continue to flip and baste until ribs are nicely glazed, about 5 minutes.

Cook's Note

If you want well-seasoned ribs, then you'll need to get rid of the papery, thin membrane that lines the backs of the racks. Start by flipping the ribs membrane-side up. Loosen one end of the membrane by sliding a paring knife underneath, then slip your fingers underneath and slowly tear it off in a single sheet. A paper towel will give you a better grip. If the strip tears part-way, just use the paring knife to start again.

total time: 4 hours 40 minutes plus marinating time (2 hours to overnight)

active prep: 40 minutes

serves: 4

difficulty: *medium*