

GRILLED TUNA

SERVES 4

It is difficult to avoid cooking tuna steaks thinner than $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch to medium because the interior cooks almost as quickly as the surface. For $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch steaks, follow steps 1-3; for 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch tuna steaks, use variation described in steps 4 - 6. Piquant sauces and fresh salsas are natural partners for either thin or thick grilled tuna steaks.

- 4 tuna steaks (about 8 ounces each)**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- Salt and ground black pepper**

1. FOR $\frac{3}{4}$ -INCH TUNA STEAKS: Place tuna and oil in gallon-sized zipper-lock plastic bag; seal bag and refrigerate until fish has marinated fully, at least 1 and up to 24 hours.

2. Meanwhile, spread one large chimney's worth, about 5 quarts, hardwood charcoal or charcoal briquettes over $\frac{2}{3}$ of grill bottom. Refill chimney with charcoal, position on charcoal layer in grill, and ignite. Burn until charcoal in chimney is blazing, 5 to 8 minutes. Dump burning coals onto unlit charcoal, position grill rack over fire, and burn until all charcoal is completely covered with thin coating of light gray ash and fire is very hot (you can hold your hand 5 inches above grill surface for 1 to 2 seconds), 20 to 30 minutes more.

3. Remove tuna from bag; season both sides of each steak with salt and pepper. Grill over direct heat until well seared and grill marks appear, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ minutes. Flip steaks over and grill on second side until fish is cooked to medium (opaque throughout, yet translucent at very center when checked with point of paring knife), 1 to $1\frac{1}{2}$ minutes longer. Serve immediately.

4. FOR 1- TO $1\frac{1}{2}$ -INCH TUNA STEAKS: Whereas thinner tuna steaks cook to medium before you know it, thicker 1- to $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch steaks can easily be cooked to rare or medium-rare. In addition, you need only to brush thick steaks with olive oil rather than to marinate them, because they are less likely to dry out during cooking.

5. Spread one large chimney's worth, about 5 quarts, hardwood charcoal or charcoal briquettes over $\frac{2}{3}$ of grill bottom. Refill chimney with charcoal, position on charcoal layer in grill, and ignite. Burn until charcoal in chimney is blazing, 5 to 8 minutes. Dump burning coals onto unlit charcoal, position grill rack over fire, and burn until all charcoal is completely covered with thin coating of light gray ash and fire is very hot (you can hold your hand 5 inches above grill surface for 1 to 2 seconds), 20 to 30 minutes more.

6. Brush both sides of each tuna steak with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill steaks $2\frac{1}{2}$ minutes on first

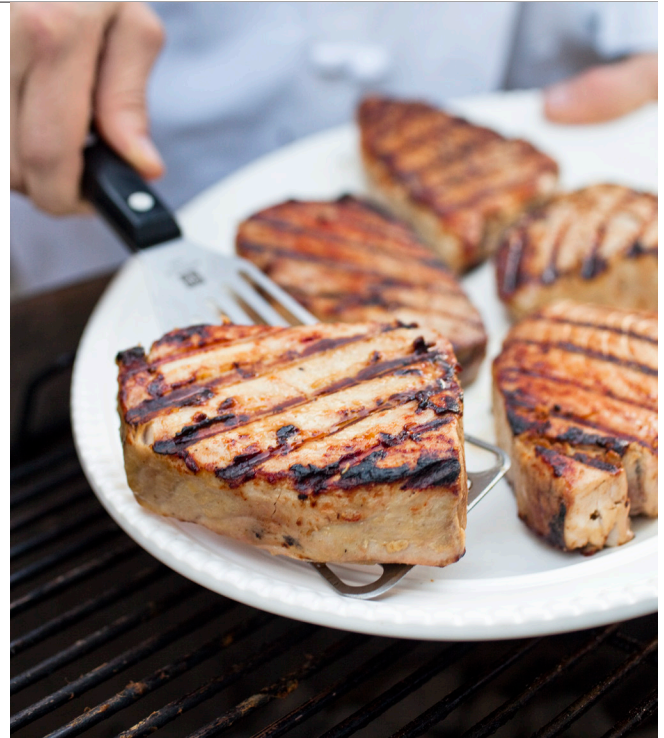


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side and $2\frac{1}{2}$ to $3\frac{1}{2}$ minutes on second side for rare (opaque near surfaces and still red and translucent at center when checked with point of paring knife) or $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 minutes on first side and 3 to 4 minutes on second side for medium-rare (just opaque throughout, yet still pink at very center when checked with point of paring knife); serve immediately.