More Better Barbecue

You might think healthy and barbecue don't belong in the same sentence. But even skeptics will love these recipes—and with less fat, sodium and sugar, they'll love us back.

July 1, 2005 By Melissa Ewey-Johnson

Take it outside—that's what warm summer months seem to demand. Family reunions and holiday celebrations call for ribs and chops on the grill, buckets of slaw and potato salad on the side and desserts galore. But must people who need to watch their diets miss out? Not by a long shot.We asked Evelyn Jackson of Dothan, Ala.—who has both diabetes and hypertension—to test some recipes from the classic cookbook The New Soul Cookbook for People With Diabetes by Fabiola Demps Gaines and Roniece Weaver (McGraw-Hill, $14.95). Jackson, a Southern-cooking expert who can throw down in the kitchen, was skeptical. But after trying the recipes, she was shocked at how tasty they were. And she didn't tell her husband, Jake, that they were diabetes-friendly until afterward. "He liked them so much, he packed some of the leftovers for lunch the next day!"

BARBECUE PULLED PORK

Before: Jackson would salt and season Boston butt (untrimmed, boneless pork shoulder) and roast it in the oven. With barbecued meat and sauce, "high salt is always a concern," says nutritionist Goulda Downer, MD, of Metroplex Health and Nutrition Services in Washington, D.C.

After: The New Soul Cookbook calls for searing boneless pork tenderloin—a cut that is very low in fat—in a skillet, then baking. Afterward, it's blended with a savory sauce with no added salt. Preparation was "pretty easy," Jackson says.

The Verdict: "Delicious!" Jackson learned a valuable lesson—she'd been cooking pork tenderloin too long. "It always came out dry before," she says."Because I didn't find it moist enough, I never thought tenderloin would work for pulled pork; but this turned out perfectly—it pulled apart beautifully."

SOUL SLAW

Before: "I love coleslaw, and I'm very particular about it," says Jackson, who slices cabbage and carrots and tosses it all in a scrumptious but heart-stopping blend of buttermilk, mayonnaise and sugar.

After: The New Soul version lightens things up with reduced-fat mayonnaise, fat-free yogurt and less sugar.

The Verdict: "It was just right," Jackson says. "I was worried about the mayonnaise,but it didn't affect the taste—I didn't miss the fat from the regular mayo at all." Jake also picked this one as a personal favorite. "I hope she makes this again," he says. If you just can't part with your regular

mayo, try Dr. Downer's suggestion: "I like to use one-third the mayonnaise a recipe calls for, then substitute the other two-thirds with a vinaigrette dressing," she says.

SKILLET PEACH UPSIDE-DOWN CAKE
Before: Jackson would make a recipe like this with whole milk and butter. "I've made peach cobbler and pineapple upside-down cake before, so this is something different."
After: The New Soul recipe calls for skim milk, reduced-fat margarine and less sugar. "To make a dessert healthier, you really have to cut down on the fat and sugar," says Dr. Downer.
The Verdict: Jackson tries to avoid sweets, but she indulged in a small piece of this cake. "It really is tasty—nice and rich," she says. She was surprised that the recipe, which called for canned peaches, worked so well. "I might try to make it with fresh peaches when they're in season," she adds. "But this you can make any time of the year."

THE TAKE-HOME
"You don't need to give up the traditional barbecue foods you love," says Dr. Downer. "You just need to make a few adjustments to your ingredients and techniques." For Jackson, the adjustments were easy and well worth the effort. "I never would've thought to make my barbecue meals this way," Jackson says. "They're much better for me, and they taste so good, I don't feel like I'm missing anything. In fact, I plan to try these out on my friends and family—I just won't tell them these are healthier until they taste them!"

Barbecue Pulled Pork
Makes 4 servings

1 pound boneless pork tenderloin
1/2 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 tablespoon canola oil
1 cup diced onion
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 cup barbecue sauce
1/4 cup ketchup
1/2 cup water
1 teaspoon vinegar

1. Heat oven to 350º F. Sear the whole tenderloin on all sides in a hot, nonstick skillet. Remove from heat and season with pepper and red pepper flakes.
2. Cover tenderloin with foil and bake for 25
minutes. Heat oil in a medium saucepan and sauté onion and garlic for five minutes.
3. Add barbecue sauce, ketchup, water and vinegar. Simmer for 10 minutes. Shred pork with two forks. Add pulled pork to the sauce. Serve on buns.

Per serving: 230 calories, 25 grams protein, 13 grams carbohydrates,

8 grams fat, 0 grams saturated fat, 65 milligrams cholesterol, 1 gram dietary fiber, 482 milligrams sodium.

Soul Slaw
Makes 8 servings

1/2 cup reduced-fat
mayonnaise
1/2 cup plain fat-free yogurt
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
2 teaspoons sugar
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
1/8 teaspoons salt
1 teaspoon celery seeds
Pepper to taste
1 large head green cabbage, julienned
2 medium raw carrots, grated

1. Combine mayonnaise, yogurt, vinegar, sugar, mustard, salt, celery seeds and pepper in a small bowl and mix well.
2. Combine cabbage and carrots in a large bowl. Add dressing, toss well and refrigerate for at least 1 hour before serving.

Per serving: 108 calories, 3 grams protein, 14 grams carbohydrates,
5 grams fat, 1 gram saturated fat,
6 milligrams cholesterol, 4 grams dietary fiber, 216 milligrams sodium.

Skillet Peach Upside-Down Cake
Makes 10 servings

1/3 cup reduced-fat
margarine
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup sugar
1 16-ounce can sliced peaches, packed in their own juice
4 maraschino cherries, sliced
1 cup egg substitute
2/3 cup fat-free (skim) milk
1 1/2 cups flour
3 teaspoons baking
powder
1/8 teaspoon salt

1. Heat oven to 350º F. Melt margarine and sugars in a small saucepan until sugar is dissolved. Remove from the heat.
2. Drain peaches and place them in the center of a heavy ovenproof skillet or 9-inch cake pan, forming a circle. Sprinkle cherries on top.
3. Add egg and milk to the sugar mixture. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder and salt. Add flour in increments to the sugar mixture and mix well.
4. Pour the batter over peaches and bake for 40 minutes.

Per serving: 215 calories, 5 grams protein, 42 grams carbohydrates,
3 grams fat, 1 gram saturated fat,
0 grams cholesterol, 1 gram dietary fiber, 189 milligrams sodium.

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