

Setting Grill up to Smoke over Indirect Heat:

For any grill, you'll want a two zone set up. A hot zone where the heat comes from and an indirect (or cooler) zone where the meat is going to cook, slowly, bathed in the warmth flows around it from the hot zone.

You'll need a water pan, which will help the food cook at a slow steady temperature and add moisture so the meat won't dry out during the long cooking process. Usually a large disposable pan works well, and should reflect the size of your meat as closely as possible. Add about two or three cups of water to the pan, adding more water if it burns away.

You'll want wood chips to complement the style of the meat. Generally, something fruity like an apple, pecan or cherry, or maybe something with more of a bite, like oak, maple, hickory or mesquite. Wood chips need to be soaked before using.

You'll either use a smoking box, usually cast aluminum or iron with grates in the top or a packet made up from a heavy, disposable aluminum pan, covered with foil which you'll perforate. If you're using gas, you may only have room for a foil packet. Just use two layers of heavy duty aluminum foil, add the chips and wrap them up then make punctures in the top.

You'll want a good probe thermometer. Don't trust the thermometer on the grill. You'll be shooting for a temperature of about 225 degrees. Your thermometer probe needs to go where the meat will be cooking.

Charcoal Grill:

Set the grill up so the vents on the bottom are halfway open and those on the top, closest to the meat and opposite of where the coals are going to be are half open, the rest closed. Fill chimney about a third of the way with briquettes. When ashy, pour to one side of the grill, rather closely together so they burn slower. Add the water pan with two to three cups of water to the opposite side of the coals, under the meat. Allow coals to burn down for 30 minutes to an hour to the right temperature.

Add the wood chips or container with wood chips directly on top of the coals. When the grill begins to smoke, you're ready to go. Control heat by adjusting the bottom vents. At some point, the lid may need to be set slightly ajar. You'll need to monitor the temperature and adjust on a regular basis, so the probe should be set where the meat is cooking.

A few briquettes will need to be added every half an hour to an hour or so during the cooking process.

Gas Grill:

For the gas grill, you'll want to fiddle and find your ideal zone for the hot and cool side. If your grill has three burners, side by side, try the far side, away from the meat on medium high, the second, the closest at low and keep the burner under the meat off.

Place the water pan under the grate if there is room, if not, place it on the grate with a rack over it and the meat on top of the rack. Put the wood chips on top of the hot burner, unless you have a built in box. Monitor the temperature until it's as close to 225 degrees as possible and add your meat when the wood begins smoking.

Burners front to back can be a bit trickier. In this case I've found using the back on high and keeping the front two off works better.

All grills are going to operate a bit differently, with different burner set ups from one to four, so it may take a bit of finessing to find what works best for your grill. Your grill will operate a bit differently at different temperatures or if there is wind. You might want to experiment before you're ready to smoke!