

Grilled Lemongrass Beef Skewers

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Sweet basil works fine as a substitute for spicy Thai basil in Chef Andrea Reusing's full-flavored appetizer skewers. But if you can find Thai basil—with its more pronounced anise flavor, red stems, and slender leaves—it's worth giving it a try.

16–18 WOODEN SKEWERS, 6–8 INCHES LONG

¾ CUP FINELY CHOPPED SHALLOTS

1 TBSP. FINELY CHOPPED GARLIC

½ CUP FISH SAUCE

1 TBSP. GRANULATED SUGAR

½ CUP VERY FINELY CHOPPED LEMONGRASS (USE ONLY THE TENDER INSIDE SECTION OF THE LEMONGRASS)

¼ CUP ROASTED PEANUT OR VEGETABLE OIL

5 SERRANO CHILI PEPPERS, FINELY CHOPPED*

2 LB. GRASS-FED BONELESS BEEF SIRLOIN, RIBEYE, OR NEW YORK STRIP BEEF STEAKS, CUT 2 INCHES THICK

WHOLE THAI BASIL LEAVES

SALT

FRESHLY GROUND BLACK PEPPER

ROASTED, SALTED PEANUTS, COARSELY CHOPPED (FOR GARNISH)

Soak wooden skewers in enough water to cover for at least 1 hour. Drain.

For marinade, in a medium bowl combine shallots, garlic, fish sauce, and sugar. Let stand for 10 minutes. Stir in lemongrass and peanut oil. Add serrano chili peppers right before adding to beef.

Cut beef into ¼-inch-thick strips that are 2 inches wide and 3 to 4 inches long. Place steak strips in a 3-quart rectangular baking dish. Pour marinade over beef, spreading to coat all pieces. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for 1 to 4 hours. Remove steak from marinade; discard any remaining marinade. Lay beef strips out on a flat surface lined with waxed paper. Place a few basil leaves on each strip of meat. Fold strips of beef in half, lengthwise, as if you are closing a tall, skinny book. Thread the strips on each skewer. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

Place skewers on the rack of an uncovered grill directly over medium-hot coals. Grill for 6 to 8 minutes, turning once, or until meat is slightly pink in center. Or, place skewers on the unheated rack of a broiler pan. Broil 4 to 5 inches from the heat for about 6 minutes or until meat is slightly pink in center, turning skewers once.

Garnish with peanuts. Makes 16 to 18 appetizer skewers.

***NOTE:** Hot peppers contain volatile oils that can burn your eyes, lips, and sensitive skin. Wear plastic gloves while working with peppers, and wash your hands afterward.