

New England Clambake

SERVES 4

TIME 1 HOUR, PLUS 30 MINUTES BRINING

Why This Works: Clambakes are a rite of summer all along the East Coast. Shellfish and vegetables are layered with seaweed and piled on top of white-hot rocks in a wide sandpit. The food then steams beneath a wet tarp until it's done. This feast usually takes more than a day to prepare and cook. We wanted to make it faster and more approachable by translating it to the grill. The biggest challenge was that our grill was only big enough to handle half the ingredients at a time. Since charcoal dies down as it burns, we had to decide which items would need the hotter temperature of the first round of grilling but could also sit the longest before serving. We chose to lead off with the corn, sausage, and potatoes and follow by the lobsters and clams. We also gave the potatoes a jump-start in the microwave and skewered them to make them more manageable. This grilled clambake captured all the smoky flavor of the traditional version—with no shovel required. Look for potatoes that are 1 to 2 inches in diameter; if your potatoes are larger, quarter them and increase the microwaving time as needed in step 2. Because the skewers go into the microwave, use wooden, not metal, skewers.

- ½ cup table salt, for brining**
- 4 ears corn, husks and silk removed**
- ½ teaspoon plus ⅛ teaspoon pepper, divided**
- 1 pound small red potatoes, unpeeled, halved**
- 3 (12-inch) wooden skewers**
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, divided, plus extra for serving**
- ¾ teaspoon table salt, divided**
- 2 (1¼- to 1½-pound) live lobsters**
- 1 pound kielbasa**
- 2 pounds littleneck clams, scrubbed**
- Lemon wedges**

1. Dissolve ½ cup salt in 4 quarts cold water in large pot. Add corn and soak for at least 30 minutes or up to 8 hours. Before grilling, remove corn from water, pat dry with paper towels, and sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon pepper.

2. Skewer potatoes, then lay them in single layer on large plate. Brush with 1 tablespoon melted butter and sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper. Microwave until potatoes begin to soften, about 6 minutes, flipping them halfway through microwaving. Brush with 1 tablespoon melted butter.

3. Split lobsters in half lengthwise, removing internal organs. Using back of chef's knife, whack 1 side of each claw to crack shell. Brush tail meat with 1 tablespoon melted butter, and sprinkle with remaining ½ teaspoon salt and remaining ¼ teaspoon pepper.

4A. For a charcoal grill: Open bottom vent completely. Light large chimney starter filled with charcoal briquettes (6 quarts). When top coals are partially covered with ash, pour evenly over grill. Set cooking grate in place, cover, and open lid vent completely. Heat grill until hot, about 5 minutes.



4B. For a gas grill: Turn all burners to high, cover, and heat grill until hot, about 15 minutes. Adjust burners as needed to maintain grill temperature at 325 degrees.

5. Clean and oil cooking grate. Place kielbasa, corn, and skewered potatoes on grill. Cook until kielbasa is seared and hot throughout, corn is lightly charred, and potatoes are brown and tender, 10 to 16 minutes, turning as needed. Transfer vegetables and sausage as they finish cooking to serving platter, and tent with aluminum foil.

6. Lay lobsters, flesh side down, and clams on grill. Cook until clams have opened and lobsters are cooked through, 8 to 14 minutes, flipping lobsters and brushing lobster tail meat with remaining 1 tablespoon butter halfway through grilling. As lobsters and clams finish cooking, transfer them to serving platter with vegetables and sausage, preserving any juices that have accumulated inside their shells.

7. Slice kielbasa into 1-inch pieces and remove skewers from potatoes. Serve with lemon wedges and extra melted butter. Use lobster picks to reach meat inside claws and knuckles.

Preparing Lobster for the Grill: If the thought of splitting a live lobster makes you squeamish, know that this is humane and, of course, the most efficient way to dispatch a lobster. You can still freeze the lobster before doing so to lessen its activity. Don't be surprised if the lobster continues to move after being split; this is the result of twitching nerve fibers. Here are the steps to cutting and cleaning a whole lobster with care.

1. Freeze lobster for 30 minutes to sedate it. With the blade of a chef's knife facing the head, plunge the knife into the body at the point where the shell forms a T. Move the blade straight down through the head. Positioning the knife blade so that it faces the tail end, continue to cut through the body toward the tail, making sure to cut all the way through the shell.

2. Using a spoon, discard the stomach, digestive track, and tomalley. Using a meat pounder, lightly pound each claw to crack it open slightly for cooking.

