

GRILLED OCTOPUS



Keyhole fire



5–6



Campfire stand, grill rack,
ember shovel, Dutch oven

SERVES 4

- 1 bunch of parsley
- 3 red onions
- 1 head of garlic
- 1 wine cork
- 1 tbsp. black peppercorns
- 1 clove
- 1 octopus
- olive oil
- 2 lemons
- salt

The ingredient list for this dish includes a wine cork, which may seem strange. It's an old wives' tale that the cork makes the octopus more tender. I have never tried to cook octopus without one, so I don't know if it's just a myth or is actually true! But it does no harm, so why not?
—Nicolai

Light the fire and put the campfire stand next to it. Once the embers are ready, use the shovel to push them under the campfire stand. Feed your fire with more firewood. Hang the Dutch oven with 5 ¼ quarts (5 liters) of water from the campfire stand above the embers. When the water is boiling, add parsley, halved red onions and garlic, the wine cork, black peppercorns, and the clove.

Cut the head off the octopus right under the eyes. Slide your finger through the hole to pop the beak out of the octopus's mouth. Rinse thoroughly under cold water. Hold the octopus with its arms down, dip it into the water three times, and place it completely under the water on the fourth dip (the dips make the arms curl up nicely). Let the octopus cook for 1–1 ½ hours. Check the tenderness by poking a knife into the arms.

When the octopus is tender, lift it onto a cutting board and divide it into arms. Now you can do one of two things: either scrape off the dark red skin or leave it on. The skin contains a lot of collagen, and some people find it a bit slimy. I think it tastes really good when it's almost burned on the grill. If you keep the skin on, pour some oil over the octopus—otherwise it will stick to whatever it touches.

Remove the campfire stand and place a grill rack over the hot embers, split the lemons and grill them until dark on the cut side.

Lay the octopus arms on the grill until they gain plenty of color. Grill them on both sides and place on a platter. Place the lemons on the side, sprinkle with salt, and serve.

