

Tool-users and Firemakers

• ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BARBEQUE AND MORE •

By Henry Verden

300,000 years ago, a Homo Erectus named Ooga-Ooga Ugh sat by his campfire at Terra Amata, a beachfront location on what is now the French Riviera. He was trying to cook a chunk of Giant Three-Toed Sloth he had killed earlier in the day. His problem was that holding the meat over the fire barehanded hurt ... a lot.

In an inspired moment he stuck the meat on a stick and things went much better. Ugh was so excited he called his friends and they all sat around cooking meat on sticks, drinking fermented Mastodon milk, and talking sports. Thus the barbeque and the first barbeque tools were born. Mankind has never looked back.

Throughout the years between then and the present, grilling technology has seen constant improvement. Why? Because the ritual of barbequing has been the bastion of male cooking and what do men like? Come on ladies, you know. That's right, toys. A man cannot resist a gadget and so new ones have been in constant demand.

I have no doubt that while Rome burned, someone was figuring out how to keep their dinner peacock rotating so it would cook evenly and not burn. Or during the Spanish Inquisition that while the irons were heating up to brand heretics, one of the inquisitors

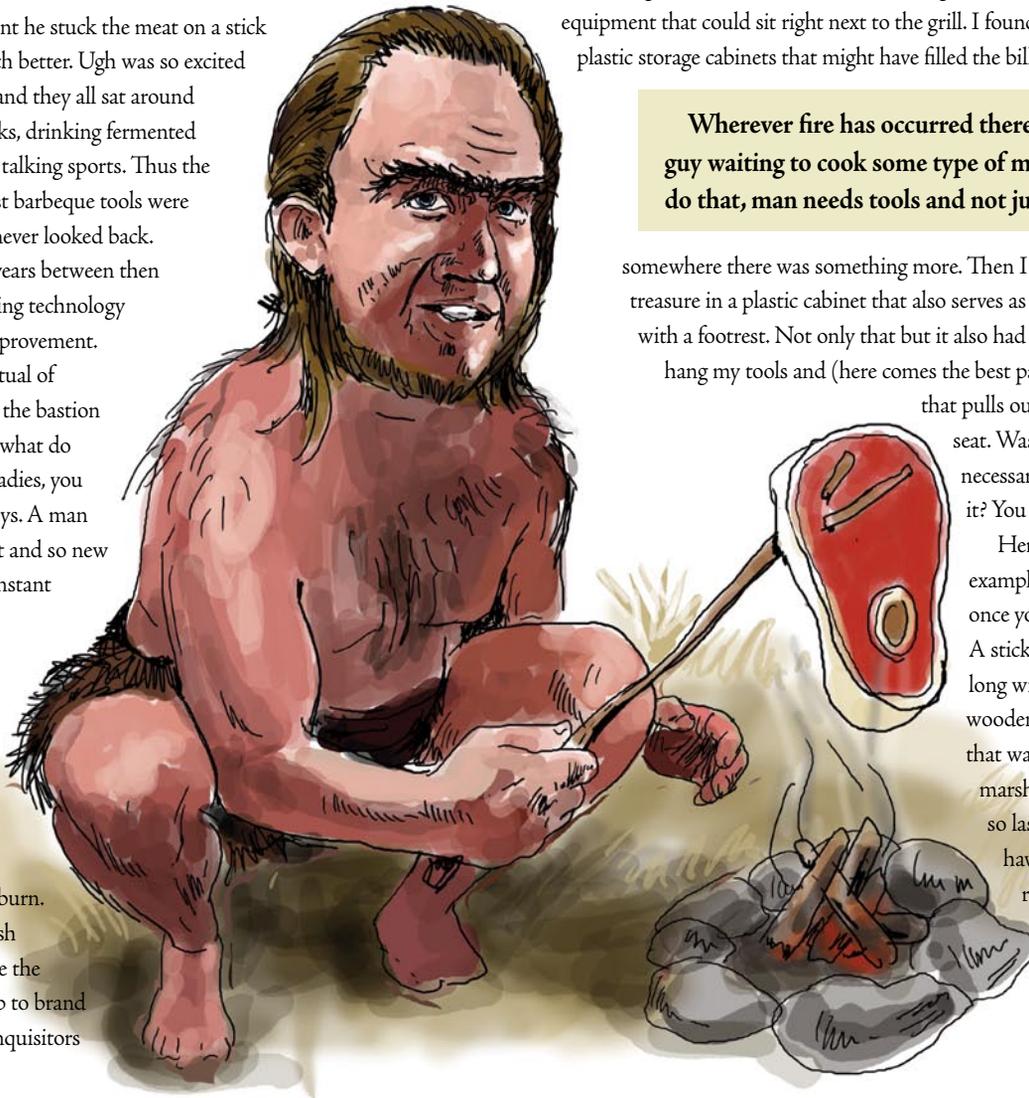
was busy trying to come up with something to grill a couple of hot dogs on the side. Wherever fire has occurred there's been some guy waiting to cook some type of meat on it. To do that, man needs tools and not just any tools. The only ones that will do are the latest, greatest, cutting-edge, fancy tools.

For a long time I have looked for something in which to store grilling equipment that could sit right next to the grill. I found a couple of plastic storage cabinets that might have filled the bill but I knew that

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somewhere there was something more. Then I found my grilling treasure in a plastic cabinet that also serves as a stool, complete with a footrest. Not only that but it also had hooks where I could hang my tools and (here comes the best part) a drink holder that pulls out of the side of the seat. Was all that extra stuff necessary? No. Did I need it? You bet.

Here are some more examples of essential gear once you know it exists. A stick or one of those long wire forks with the wooden handle was all that was needed to toast marshmallows but that's so last century. Now we have a marshmallow rotisserie. It holds three marshmallows at once and uses a battery-powered





motor inside its ergonomic handle to slowly turn them to create toasted perfection. It's also suitable for use indoor as well as outdoor.

Reading your thermometer is such a drag with actually having to look at it and everything. What you need is a remote thermometer that talks to you. Select your meat du jour and it will tell you the status of the meat from up to 300 feet away while you talk to your friends about emerging nations in a free market economy or some such thing. How can you live without one?

William Geist, in *The New York Times* magazine, said, "That outdoor grilling is a manly pursuit has long been beyond question. If this wasn't firmly understood, you'd never get grown men to put on those aprons with pictures of dancing wienies and things on the front and messages like 'Come n' Get It.'"

I think it's more than that. Grilling has remained a male domain because grilling is the cooking style that has the coolest toys. Always lurking somewhere just over the outdoor culinary horizon is the next big unnecessary tool whether it be a nuclear-powered grill light or a laser-carving knife and we, as men, will be there to buy it and be the envy of our fellow grillers.

In the meantime, I need a beer to put in my stool's drink holder. Grab one for yourself while you're at it. My stool can hold two.

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