

Born to Barbecue



The *Kids BBQ Championship* winner tells us what it's like to be crowned a grilling king—in sixth grade!

Most seasoned pitmasters have been grilling and smoking longer than Tyler Zager has been alive. But the 12-year-old, from Weston, FL, is ready to join their ranks. This summer, he wowed the judges on *Kids BBQ Championship* with his inventive hot dogs and smoky ribs, and walked away with the \$20,000 grand prize. Here's how he got fired up for the high-stakes competition.

Q: How did you learn to grill?

A: My mom taught me how to work our gas grill when I was 10. I also took cooking classes and watched tons of Food Network.

Q: So your mom and dad really let you play with fire?

A: Yep! But my mom watched every move I made—and in the beginning, she had to open and close the grill for me because I was too short to reach it. Now that I'm older, I do it on my own. I cook dinner for my family three or four nights a week.

Q: What was the show's funniest moment for you?

A: In the first episode, we had to cook a whole chicken and also make wings. Everyone was running around looking for ingredients, and I panicked and forgot which part of the chicken is the wing! Luckily, one of the other competitors pointed it out for me.

Q: Which was your favorite episode?

A: The finale. We started at 8 a.m. and got to use a smoker and a charcoal grill—it was *real* barbecuing.

Q: How did it feel when the judges said you won?

A: My heart was pounding really hard, then my mom, dad and I cracked up laughing because we couldn't believe it!



TYLER'S MIAMI HOT DOG

ACTIVE: 20 min | TOTAL: 20 min | MAKES: 8

- 1 tomato, diced
- ½ cup diced mango
- 4 scallions, chopped
- 1 small bunch fresh cilantro, chopped
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped seeded jalapeño pepper
- 2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 8 slices applewood-smoked bacon
- 8 beef hot dogs
- Spicy mustard, for serving
- 8 hot dog buns
- Crushed potato chips, for topping

- 1.** Preheat a grill to medium. Combine the tomato, mango, scallions, all but a few tablespoons of the cilantro, the jalapeño, vinegar and garlic powder in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper and mix until combined. Refrigerate until ready to serve.
- 2.** Wrap a slice of bacon around each hot dog. Grill, turning, until the bacon is browned, about 5 minutes. Spread mustard on the buns; fill with hot dogs. Top with the mango salsa, crushed potato chips and the remaining cilantro.