

MELT^{his} heart

Best gift may be barbecue goods

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Times Record News

Ah, Fathers Day, the time when sons, daughter and wives struggle to find just the right thing to express their appreciation to dear old Daddy.

When ties and aftershave prove unappreciated and handkerchiefs lay unused in the draw, just remember, nothing says "I love you" like barbecue.

No matter their age, men still have a primal relationship with fire and anything cooked on it. The retail market is so ablaze with products these days, it's tough to know just where to start and how far to go with the budget.

Over the last few months *TRN* consumer product testers have been hard at work trying some of the latest and gratest in barbecue goods.

From cooking to clean up, testers had a chance to evaluate the practicality and price-worthiness of cookers and accessories. These are the cream of the crop for Pop:

The Big Green Egg:

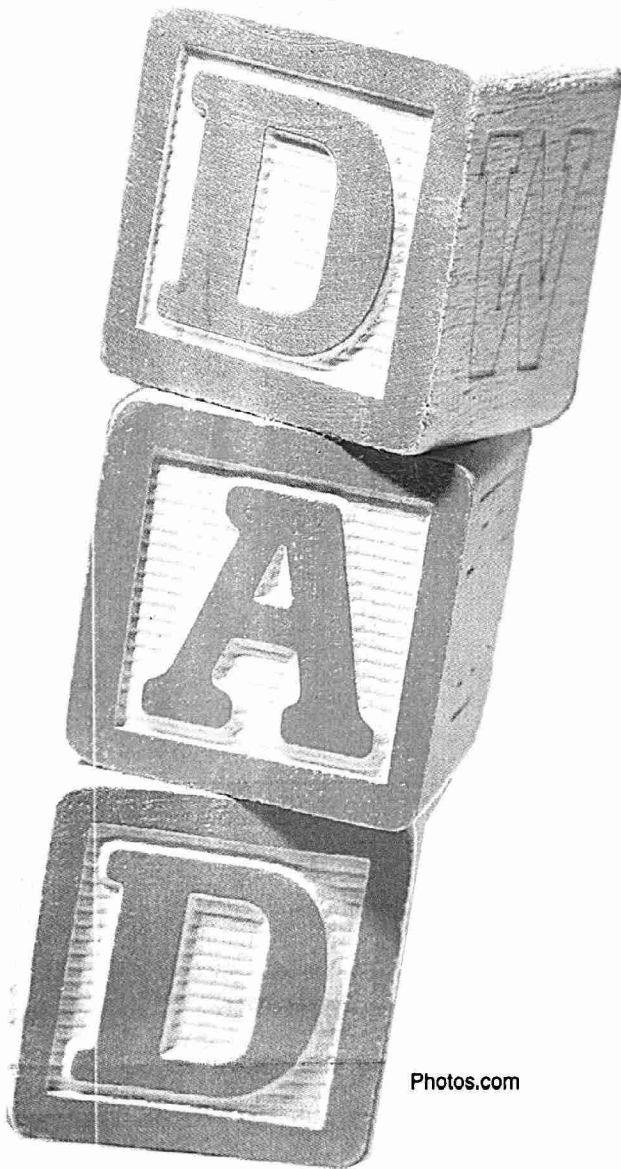
Every legend you may have heard

about the

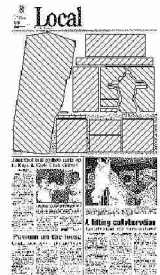
Green

Egg, an

other-worldly looking green ceramic cooker that is supposed to deliver the most perfect barbecue ever, appears to be true.



Photos.com



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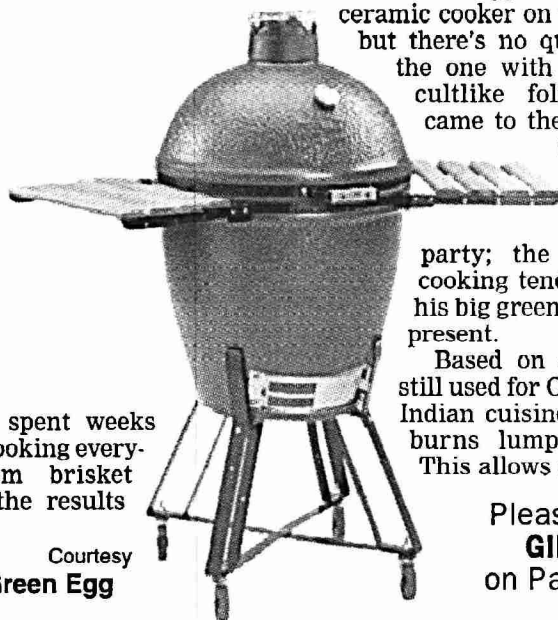
astonished seasoned cooks and beginners alike.

The Green Egg is not the only ceramic cooker on the market but there's no question it's the one with an almost cultlike following. It came to the *TRN*'s attention at a New Year's Eve party; the host was cooking tenderloins on his big green Christmas present.

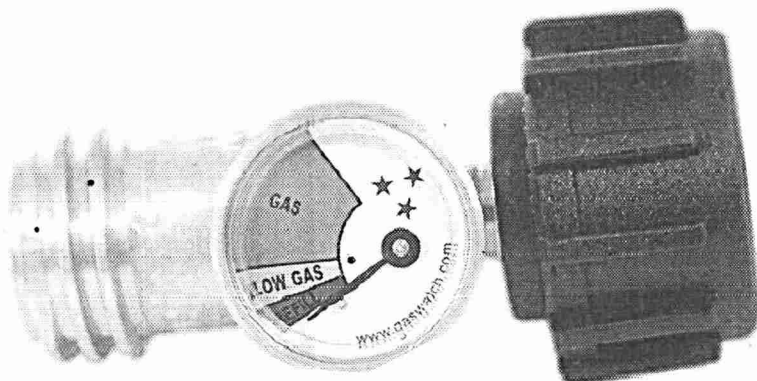
Based on clay ovens still used for Chinese and Indian cuisines, the Egg burns lump charcoal. This allows roasting or

Testers spent weeks in trials, cooking everything from brisket ribs and the results

Courtesy
The Big Green Egg



Please see
GIFTS
on Page 2B



Courtesy
Gas Watch II

smoking meat without drying and can maintain temperatures even enough to bake bread or pastry.

TRN testers cooked brisket, chicken, ribs, turkey breast, a pork butt and pork loin in the Egg, as well as using its bake stone and grill feature. The test group included cooks accustomed to both LP grills and wood fired smoker/cookers.

All admitted it took a little bit to master the ratios of fuel to air needed to maintain temperatures over longer times but said the results well worth the effort. Several appreciated helpful tips on the www.biggreenegg.com online forum.

The team's longtime wood-fired smoker user was flabbergasted by the Egg's ability to hold temperature without further adjusting the fuel. Struggling to trust the device at first he said "I wasted a bunch of time running back and forth to the patio to check it."

Other testers reported great results with poultry, meat and a small cobbler. The attempt with grilling sirloin steaks and chicken did not yield the finish some outdoor chefs might expect but it would do better with a thick London broil.

A Green Egg is a gift for dads who are serious about their barbecue. Available only through a network of distributors listed on its Web site (GE says beware of other online sales, which will not carry their warranty), the cookers begin at about \$250 for the tailgate size to \$1,000 for a cooker that will hold two 20 pound turkeys.

The Ember Shop in Wichita Falls also carries other brands of charcoal-fired ceramic cookers.

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Testers first looked at the **Grill Daddy and Grill Daddy Pro** with a bit of trepidation; after all they both

looked big enough to be used as a murder weapon.

The idea, however, of a heavy duty grill brush that adds just enough water to hot grill grates to help steam debris off them soon caught on.

Especially for those outdoor chefs who finish their chicken, steaks or ribs with barbecue sauce, the time tested technique of simply firing up and burning the debris off doesn't always work.

Users fill the handle of a Grill Daddy brush with water and turn a release valve to use. Water trickles through the bristles to create steam on the hot grates. A second handle on both devices gives the user enough leverage to really get in and get the job done.

Which one Dads might prefer depends on the size of the grill they use. The regular Grill Daddy, (\$20) 14-inches long, worked well for smaller charcoal grills or campfire situations. The Pro model, (\$25) at 22 inches is the right size for large grills or smokers.

Brushes are detachable and dishwasher safe; replacements are available.

Testers found one drawback which, if cooks pay attention, can be avoided: Don't lay the plastic body of this brush down on a hot grate.

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Most outdoor chefs have shared the same sinking moment; they open the lid of the propane grill to check the steaks or chicken only to discover the tank has run out of gas. The hungry company is not impressed.

There are a number of gadgets on the market to measure how much LP is left in the tank with greater or lesser degrees of accuracy. TRN testers liked **Gas Watch II**, a digital sensor that is connected between the tank and regulator.

The electronic device

has a remote

LED display that sounds an alarm when the tank level is low. If a leak is what's causing the mysterious loss of LP, this can make it much easier to detect.

TVL makes both the Gas Watch I (\$20 retail), a dial-type reader, but for seniors or anyone else who doesn't care to get behind the grill and stoop to read it, the digital Gas Watch II is worth the \$30 investment.

Gas Watch, available at Lowe's and Target, would also be handy for other propane appliances like RVs, camp stoves, turkey fryers and patio heaters.

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While many dads think of beef as their grilling forte, sometimes it's because they've encountered difficulties with chicken. Whole chickens in particular.

Burned on one side, raw on the other, it's enough to make a dad give up.

Beer can chicken has brought some back and now there are dozens of vertical chicken roasters on the market, everything from cast iron bases with tubes big enough for a beer to ceramic and non-stick models. TRN testers, however, liked the **Poultry Pal**.

The two-piece cooker includes a base pan, about the size of a cake pan, with a perforated platform and "infusion tower" that fit like a lid. Add whatever liquid (beer, soda, wine, juice or chicken broth) and seasonings you like (herbs, garlic, onion or liquid smoke) to the base pan, place the infuser on top and the chicken on the infuser tower. Place the pan on your barbecue grill at medium-high heat and you're in business.

What testers liked best was, unlike chick-

ens literally cooked sitting on a beer can, the Poultry Pal prevented burning on the bottom part of the chicken. The nonstick surface makes it easy to clean.

Better still, instead of letting essential juices burn away in the cooking fire, the Poultry Pal re-circulates them through the Poultry Pal and collects them back in the base pan, perfect for preparing a sauce or gravy.

The Poultry Pal can handle a bird up to 8 pounds, but can use used with a small turkey by placing the entire thing on a cookie sheet to catch drippings and prevent flair-ups.

Retailing for \$20 (there are also some nice gift packages with seasonings), the Poultry Pal is available at beercanchicken.com.



Few things top off a great steak like a good bottle of wine. Sadly, too many of us have watched our dads or others struggle with wine openers; it seems the expensive ones sometimes don't operate any better than the cheap ones.

The swankest solution any of the testing team had ever seen was the Elis Electric

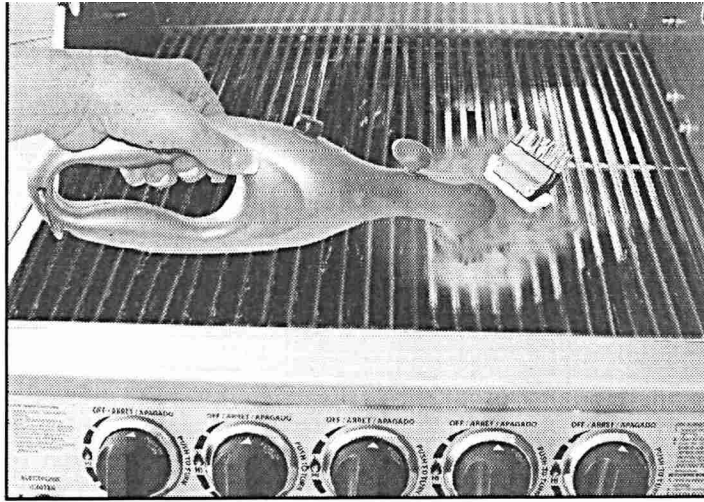
Rechargeable Corkscrew from Peugeot. (This may be the closest Dad will ever get to the famous raring stallion logo.)

While some people might think a rechargeable electric cork puller sounds a bit extreme, testers immediately thought of grandparents, aunts and a variety of friends who have a hard time getting a bottle of wine open.

The idea is to place the bottom of the stainless steel cylinder over the top of the bottle, press the "down" button and the corkscrew lowers itself into the bottle. Now press the "up" button and the corkscrew lifts the cork from the bottle. (Users quickly learned they did have to grip the bottle well enough to keep the device from turning it instead of the cork.)

With the rechargeable feature you never need buy batteries and one charge will keep the opener going through a fairly festive party or picnic.

The 9-inch tall Elis rechargeable works on all types of corks, even the hard synthetic ones. (Don't try this on any sparkling wine like champagne.) In an attractive gift box it retails for about \$120 and is available online at williamsonoma.com.



Courtesy

The Grill Daddy Pro

BARBECUE COOKBOOKS

Now that your dad has all the barbecue equipment his heart desires, it's time to start making suggestions about what he should cook first.

Steaks and brisket are nice but it's always good to add something different to the repertoire so three new cookbooks caught our eye.

■ **"BBQ Bash"** by Karen Adler and Judith Fertig goes straight to the heart of what a cookout is all about — entertaining family and friends.

From appetizers like Thai grilled flank steak in lettuce cups to entrees such as cherry-smoked rack of pork with cider-mustard-bourbon sauce, the book is full of great ideas not only for cooking up a great meal but adding those extra touches that make it a party.

Including technique tips, wine and cocktail suggestions and ways to display dishes to their best advantage, **"BBQ Bash"** is a good fit for younger dads or even new bridegrooms. From Harvard Common Press.

■ Got a dad who has been given his marching orders to cut down on cholesterol? Even though the word "vegetarian" might seem a little scary at first, author Andrea Chesman makes a great case for meatless outdoor cooking in **"The New Vegetarian Grill."**

Chimichangas on the grill, tomato-basil panini and wok-grilled Chinese fried rice are just a few of the dishes that make it easy to forego the heavy animal fats. Layer in some maple-grilled pound cake with peaches and dad could realize hot tasty life is on the light side of the fire box.

■ For the dad who can be found on a golf course when he isn't presiding over a rack of ribs, there's **"I'd Rather Be Grilling!"** a small cookbook of easy recipes with golf-themed names. Par 5 juicy blue cheese burgers and gimme another buffalo wing would go perfect with mulligan margaritas. The book is available at www.idratherbegrilling.com, and can be gift packed with grilling spices and golf accessories.