



Grilling and Food Safety



The sun is shining, and the grills are out! People all over are looking forward to grilling outdoors. It is one of the most anticipated activities of the summer. Grilling can be a healthy and low-fat way to cook your favorite meals. Wednesday, June 7th is World Food Safety Day. The Federal government estimates that there are about 48 million cases of foodborne illness annually – that's about 1 in 6 Americans each year. Each year, these illnesses result in an estimated 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. To avoid foodborne illness and accidents, follow these tips to stay safe and prepare healthy meals.

As simple as grilling can be, it is important to remember building, personal, and food safety rules. Thousands of fires and injuries are reported each year due to grilling accidents. Keep these safety tips in mind:

- Propane and charcoal grills should be used outdoors only. Grilling inside can cause a fire and carbon monoxide poisoning.
- The grill should be placed at least 10 feet away from the house.
- Check the propane grill tank hose for leaks before using the grill.
- Keep children and pets away from the grill until the grill has cooled.
- Never leave a grill unattended.



Here are seven tips to make grilling a happy, healthy, and nutritious experience:

1. Always wash your hands and wrists with warm, soapy water for at least 20 seconds before, during and after handling food. Bacteria thrive in moist environments, so it is important to remove all moisture from your hands by drying them thoroughly.
2. Use separate utensils, cutting boards, and serving dishes for raw and cooked foods. Thoroughly wash each item that has come in contact with raw foods with warm, soapy water before re-using. Never serve grilled food on the same platter that held raw meat, poultry, or fish. This is considered cross-contamination and can result in yourself and others becoming sick.
3. Never thaw or marinate food at room temperature. Marinate foods in the refrigerator. If you plan to use the marinade on the cooked food as a sauce, reserve a portion separately before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. However, if the marinade used on raw meat or poultry is to be reused, make sure to let it come to a boil first to destroy any harmful bacteria.
4. Keep raw foods that will be grilled such as meat away from foods that will not be cooked such as a salad.
5. Vegetables can easily be grilled. Large vegetables such as corn on the cob can be placed directly on the grill. Wrap chopped vegetables in aluminum foil before grilling.
6. Make sure your grill is hot before you put food on it. If you are using a charcoal grill, preheat the coals for at least 20 to 30 minutes before adding food.



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7. Use a food thermometer to make sure food reaches the correct internal temperature.

- 145°F—whole cuts of beef, pork, lamb, and veal (then allow the meat to rest for 3 minutes before carving or eating)
- 145°F—fish (or cook until the flesh is opaque and separates easily with a fork)
- 160°F—hamburgers and other ground beef
- 165°F—all poultry and pre-cooked meats, like hot dogs

After grilling, keep food hot:

- 140°F or warmer—until it's served.

Divide leftovers into small portions and place in covered, shallow containers. Put in freezer or fridge within 2 hours of cooking (1 hour if above 90°F outside). It is okay to put small portions of hot food in the refrigerator since they will chill faster.

Grilling is a great way to prepare healthy and nutritious food for all. Keep the above tips in mind the next time you are ready to grill!

References

<https://food.unl.edu/food-calendar/june/world-food-safety-day>

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/communication/bbq-iq.html>

<https://food.unl.edu/article/grilling-safely>



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