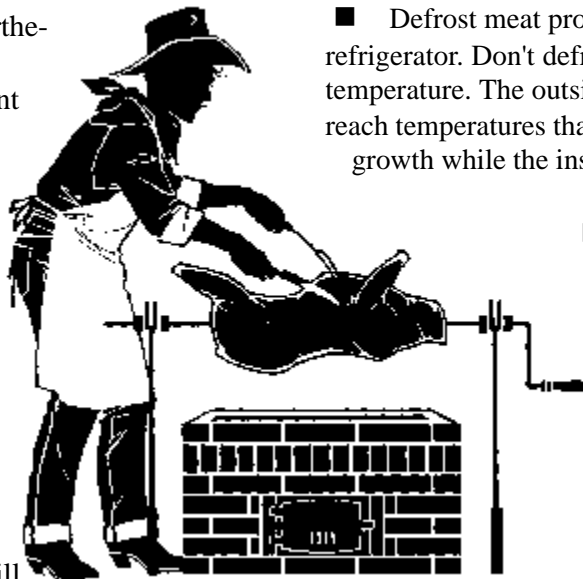


Roasting Food on the Grill in a Safe Manner

In Order to Prevent Food Poisoning

An English translation of a Spanish publication of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas A&M University, entitled "Asando Alimentos a la Parrilla de Manera Segura Para Prevenir la Enfermedad Alimenticia." Translated by permission.

Spring and summer encourage us to cook outside on the grill. Nevertheless, cooking outside requires extra measures of care to prevent food poisoning caused by bacteria. Exercising care when roasting food on the grill can also prevent carbonized or excessively smoked food, which can be unhealthy. In order to ensure that foods prepared in the open air are healthy and enjoyable, follow these simple rules about the appropriate preparation of food and cooking it on the grill.



- Defrost meat products in the refrigerator. Don't defrost them at room temperature. The outside of the meat can reach temperatures that permit bacterial growth while the inside is still frozen.

- Store food marinated in sauce in the refrigerator. Don't use leftover sauce on cooked food. Sauce in which raw meat was marinated may contain bacteria and contaminate cooked meat.

- Always wash your hands with hot water and soap before and after touching raw meat or poultry. Keep raw and cooked foods separated.

Preparing the Food

- Select high-quality, fresh meat, poultry, or fish in order to get the best results when roasting it on the grill.

- Refrigerate meat products at 40° F or less until just before cooking them on the grill.

- Wash food preparation surfaces and cutting boards completely with hot water and soap before and after preparing meat for the grill. To disinfect, clean with a solution of 1½ to 2 teaspoons of chlorine bleach per quart of water. Use one cutting board for meat and another for raw vegetables and fruits.

- After placing the meat on the grill, wash the plates and utensils in hot water and soap before using them again to serve the meat. Cooking kills bacteria but cooked food can be recontaminated if the utensils are not washed.

- After cooking the meat, serve it within two hours and refrigerate the leftovers immediately at 40° F or less.

- Chicken, pork, duck and ground beef should be cooked completely to kill all bacteria. Roast them until the juice turns clear and the middle is not pink.

- Don't partially cook hamburgers in order to use them later.

- Raw and half-cooked meats represent an increased risk for people who have been sick, who are recovering from surgery or who have weakened immune systems. Cook the meat completely in order to kill all the bacteria and protect yourself from food poisoning.

Cooking on the Grill

These additional suggestions will help you to keep from charring the meat and excessively smoking it. It will also keep you from getting so much smoke in your eyes!

- Grease that drips over the coals causes smoke and flames. For this reason, choose meat with little fat to cook on the grill. Cut off the fat before cooking. Avoid using sauces with too much grease.

- Cover the grill with aluminum foil, making holes between the grid for the juice

to run down. If the fat that drips down creates a thick smoke, move the food to another part of the grill, turn the grill or reduce the heat.

- Learn to control the heat. Cook the meat thoroughly but without burning it. Remove any charred part that forms on the surface of the food. Don't eat it.

- Some foods, especially fish and vegetables, can be covered in aluminum foil to protect them from smoke while they cook.

- If you want to prepare the food more quickly, you can precook many foods, including poultry and ribs, by boiling or microwaving them and then grilling them quickly to add that special flavor. However, you must be sure to grill the precooked food immediately and cook it completely. Partially cooked foods may speed the growth of bacteria that causes food poisoning. Barbecueing is always a popular family and social activity. For your safety and that of your family follow these simple

rules when it comes to cleanliness, food safety and healthy cooking.

The New Guidelines for Handling Food Safely

Under a new regulation of the USDA, all meat and poultry products that are not considered "ready-to-eat" should display information about four fundamental areas of food safety:

- the safe storage of raw products



- the prevention of contamination (dissemination of bacteria from one food to another)
- safe cooking procedures
- the appropriate handling of leftovers.

The USDA calculates that food poisoning stemming from meat and poultry products costs the nation some \$4 billion each year. The new protocol is another step in educating consumers about the safe handling, preparation and storage of meat and poultry products.

The Following Is an Example of the Required Protocol: Instructions for Safe Handling

This product was prepared with approved and registered meat and/or poultry. Some food products may contain bacteria that can cause illness if the product is handled badly or inadequately cooked. For your protection, follow these instructions for appropriate care. Keep the meat refrigerated or frozen. Defrost it in the refrigerator or microwave oven. Keep raw meat and poultry separate from other foods. Wash the work surfaces (including cutting boards), utensils, and your hands after touching raw meat or poultry. Cook the meat completely. Keep the hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or throw them away.

The information in this pamphlet was provided by Dan Hale, Extension Specialist in Meats; and Peggy Gentry, Extension Nutrition Specialist, Texas Agriculture Extension Service, The Texas A & M University System.

Chicken Fajitas

- 1 tablespoon of oil or liquid margarine
- 1 chicken breast or fillet
- 1/2 sweet pepper, diced
- 1/2 onion, diced
- fajita seasoning (powdered)

Sprinkle both sides of the chicken breast completely with the seasoning. Set the seasoned chicken aside while you dice the vegetables.

To prepare the fajitas in the kitchen, heat one tablespoon of oil or margarine in a skillet. Cook the fillet on 3/4 heat.

To cook on the grill, place the chicken on the grill over the coals.

For both methods, cook the chicken approximately 4 minutes on each side. It is necessary to cook the chicken quickly in order to prevent the meat from drying. The chicken is done when the meat is white throughout.

A couple of minutes before the chicken is ready, put the vegetables in a skillet over the grill. Add oil and sautee the onion and pepper until lightly cooked but no more. Put them on a plate. Cut the cooked chicken into strips of 1/4 inch by 2 inches. Cooking the chicken before cutting it makes for softer meat but if you want to reduce cooking time, you may cut the chicken before cooking it.

Serve the chicken on hot tortillas with guacamole, sour cream and pico de gallo.

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