

Barbecue Bliss: Keeping Bacteria at Bay

Summer brings out barbecue grills—and bacteria, which multiply in food faster in warm weather and can cause foodborne illness (also known as food poisoning). Following a few simple guidelines can prevent an unpleasant experience.

Wash your hands

Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after handling food. If you're eating where there's no source of clean water, bring water, soap, and paper towels or have disposable wipes/hand sanitizer available.

Marinate food in the refrigerator

Don't marinate on the counter—marinate in the refrigerator. If you want to use marinade as a sauce on cooked food, save a separate portion in the refrigerator. Do *not* reuse marinade that contacted raw meat, poultry, or seafood on cooked food unless you bring it to a boil first.

Keep raw food separate

Keep raw meat, poultry, and seafood in a separate cooler or securely wrapped at the bottom of a cooler so their juices won't contaminate already prepared foods or raw produce. Don't use a plate or utensils that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood for anything else unless you wash them first in hot, soapy water. Have a clean platter and utensils ready at grill-side for serving.

Cook food thoroughly

Use a food thermometer to make sure food is cooked thoroughly to destroy harmful bacteria. Refer to the Safe Minimum Temperatures chart (www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html) for safe internal temperatures for foods. Partial precooking in the microwave oven or on the stove



is a good way to reduce grilling time—just make sure the food goes immediately on the preheated grill to finish cooking.

Keep hot food hot and cold food cold
Keep hot food at 140°F or above until served. Keep cooked meats hot by setting them to the side of the grill, or wrap well and place in an insulated container.

Keep cold food at 40°F or below until served. Keep cold perishable food in a cooler until serving time. Keep coolers out of direct sun and avoid opening the lid often.

Cold foods can be placed directly on ice or in a shallow container set in a pan of ice. Drain off water as ice melts and replace ice frequently.

Don't let hot or cold perishables sit out for longer than two hours, or one hour if the outdoor temperature is above 90°F. When reheating fully cooked meats, grill to 165°F or until steaming hot.

Transport food in the passenger compartment of the car where it's cooler—not in the trunk.

Put these items on your list

These non-food items are indispensable for a safe barbecue.

- food thermometer
- several coolers: one for beverages (which will be opened frequently), one for raw meats, poultry, and seafood, and another for cooked foods and raw produce
- ice or frozen gel packs for coolers
- jug of water, soap, and paper towels for washing hands
- enough plates and utensils to keep raw and cooked foods separate
- foil or other wrap for leftovers

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