

FactSheet

Para Su Información

Grilling Food Safely

Outdoor grilling is a favorite summertime activity, and increasingly is practiced year round. When cooking outside the kitchen, it particularly important to follow food safety guidelines that prevent harmful bacteria from causing foodborne illness. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service offers these simple guidelines for barbecuing and grilling food safely:

Buy Meats Last... Refrigerate at Home Promptly

At the grocery store, buy cold food like meat and poultry last, right before checkout. Separate raw meat and poultry from other food in your shopping cart, and guard against cross-contamination by putting packages containing raw meat into plastic bags.

Plan to drive directly home from the grocery store (this is particularly important during the Las Vegas summer heat). If you have a long distance to drive, you may want to take a cooler with ice for perishables. Be sure to refrigerate perishable foods within 1 hour when the outdoor temperature is above 90°F. Keep meat and poultry refrigerated until ready to use.

Defrost Safely

Frozen meat and poultry should be defrosted fully before grilling to promote even cooking. Thaw items slowly in the refrigerator, or thaw sealed packages in cold water. You can use a microwave to defrost foods that will be placed immediately on the grill.

Marinate Properly

Meat and poultry are often marinated to tenderize or add flavor. Refrigerate meats as they marinade. Do not marinade foods on countertops or anywhere else without refrigeration. Set aside any marinade to be

used as a sauce on cooked food before adding raw meat. Any marinade used for raw foods should be discarded.

Use Coolers

When carrying food to another location, keep it cold to minimize bacterial growth. Use an insulated cooler with sufficient ice or ice packs to keep the food at 40°F or below. Pack food right from the refrigerator into the cooler immediately before leaving home. Keep the cooler out of direct sunlight. Consider using a separate cooler for beverages, which are accessed more frequently, which lets cold air out and warm air in.

Keep Everything Clean

Prevent foodborne illness by using separate platters and utensils for raw and cooked meats. Harmful bacteria present in raw meat and raw meat juices can contaminate safely cooked food.

If you're eating away from home, find out if there is a source of clean water. If not, bring water for preparation and cleaning, or pack clean cloths and wet towelettes for cleaning surfaces and hands.

Precook Food Safely

Precooking food partially in the microwave oven, conventional oven or stove is a good way of reducing grilling time. Make sure that the food goes immediately on a preheated grill after precooking. Never partially cook meat or poultry and finish cooking later.

Cook Food Thoroughly

Cook food to a safe internal temperature to destroy harmful bacteria. Meat and poultry cooked on a grill often browns very fast on the outside. Use a food

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thermometer to be sure the food has reached a safe internal temperature:

- Poultry, 180 F
- Chicken breasts, 170 F
- Hamburgers and all cuts of pork, 160 F
- Beef, veal and lamb steaks, roasts and chops, 145 F

Fully Reheat Foods

When reheating fully cooked meats, like hot dogs, grill to 165 F or until steaming hot.

Keep Cooked Foods Hot

Cooked meats should be kept at 140°F or warmer until served. Keep foods hot by setting them to the side of the grill rack, not directly over the coals where they could overcook. At home, cooked meats can be kept hot in a warm oven (approximately 200 F), in a chafing dish or on a warming tray.

Refrigerate Leftovers

Refrigerate any leftovers promptly in shallow containers. Discard any food left out more than 2 hours (1 hour if the air temperature is above 90 F).

Tips on Smoking Foods

Smoking is cooking food indirectly in the presence of a fire. It can be done in a covered grill if a pan of water is placed beneath the meat on the grill. Meats can be smoked in a “smoker,” which is an outdoor cooker especially designed for smoking foods.

Smoking is done much more slowly than grilling, so less tender meats benefit from this method, and a natural smoke flavoring permeates the meat.

Keep the temperature in the smoker at 250 F-300 F for safety. Use a meat thermometer to be sure the food has reached a safe internal temperature, and is fully cooked.

Tips on Pit Roasting

Pit roasting is cooking meat in a large, level hole dug in the earth. A hardwood fire is built in the pit, and is allowed to burn until the wood reduces and the pit is half filled with burning coals. Pit cooking may require 10 to 12 hours or more and is difficult to estimate. There are many variables such as outdoor temperature, the size and thickness of the meat, and how fast the coals are cooking. A meat thermometer must be used to determine whether the food is fully cooked.

For more information, visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service website at www.fsis.usda.gov.



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