

[IMAGE]

Sizzlin' Summer Food Safety Tips

By Editorial Staff

Recent news headlines tell frightening stories about the dangers of food-borne illnesses including salmonella and e-coli. By simply following a few safety tips, you can keep your friends and family healthy while enjoying those outdoor barbeques and summer picnics.

Everyone loves a summer barbeque. The aroma of fresh-grilled burgers, chicken and veggies can certainly draw a crowd at dinner time. But there are some important grilling tips to remember when enjoying your summer barbeque:

- Bacteria begin to multiply between 40 F and 140 F, so it's important to keep food cold until you're ready to begin grilling and hot until serving time.
- When grilling, cook your hamburgers to an internal temperature of at least 160 F and chicken to at least 165 F. Use a meat thermometer to make sure your food has reached the right temperature.
- Never reuse marinades that have come in contact with raw meat, chicken or fish, and never put cooked food back into an unwashed container or the dish that contained the marinade.
- Make sure to preheat your grill to 350 F to 400 F. Starting with a hot grill also will help minimize food sticking to the grill and make cleaning up easier.
- A great way to oil up your grill without creating unnecessary flare-ups is to use a cotton towel, dipped in vegetable oil and then spread onto the grill grates.
- When using wooden skewers, be sure to soak them in water to prevent them from burning before your meat or vegetables are cooked.
- To tame flare-ups, drain off excess marinade before putting food on the grill. Less fat also will prevent flare-ups, so use leaner cuts of meat, trim excess fat to ¼ inch on steaks and chops, and remove skin and excess fat from chicken pieces.

For more food safety tips, visit the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline (www.fsis.usda.gov) or the Partnership for Food Safety Education (www.fightbac.org).

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