

Great Grilling

The Ins And Outs Of Safe Outdoor Cooking

(NAPSA)—Your next barbecue may be better if you follow these 10 tips from the experts at the United States Department of Agriculture on keeping food safe when cooking outside:

1. When shopping, buy meat and poultry last. Choose packages that feel cold and are not torn. Separate raw meat and poultry from other food in your shopping cart to guard against cross-contamination. Plan to go directly home from the grocery store.

2. At home, freeze or refrigerate meat and poultry immediately. Freeze poultry and ground meat that won't be used in a day or two; freeze other meat within four or five days.

3. Completely thaw meat and poultry before grilling so it cooks evenly. Use the refrigerator for slow, safe thawing or thaw sealed packages in cold water. You can microwave defrost if the food will be placed immediately on the grill.

4. Keep meat and poultry cold until you're ready to put it on the grill. If you're carrying food to another location, keep it in an insulated cooler with sufficient ice or ice packs so it stays at 40° F or below. Keep the cooler out of the direct sun and avoid opening the lid too often.

5. Start with clean hands—wash them for at least 20 seconds with warm, soapy water—and a clean grill and utensils.

6. Be sure the grill is hot enough to safely cook your food.

7. Remember, meat and poultry cooked on a grill often brown very fast on the outside. Use a thermometer to be sure the food has reached a safe minimum internal temperature—poultry: 165° F; ground meats: 160° F; beef, pork, lamb and veal, steaks, chops and roasts: 145° F—and allow to rest



Grill It Safe. Keep hot food hot and cold food cold.

at least three minutes before carving or consuming.

8. Keep hot food hot. After cooking meat and poultry on the grill, keep it hot until served—at 140° F or warmer. Refrigerate perishable food within two hours (one hour if the temperature is 90° F or above).

9. When taking food off the grill, use a clean platter. Don't put cooked food on the same platter that held raw meat or poultry. Any harmful bacteria present in the raw meat juices could contaminate safely cooked food.

10. Refrigerate any leftovers promptly in shallow containers. Discard any food left out more than two hours (one hour if temperatures are above 90° F). Bacteria can grow rapidly between 40° and 140° F.

Learn More

If you have any food safety questions, you can call the USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline and speak with a food safety expert, in English or Spanish, at (888) 674-6854, M–F, 10 am–4 pm EST. Ask a food safety question 24/7 at AskKaren.gov or via smartphone at m.askkaren.gov. Also, visit www.fsis.usda.gov for safety information on all types of foods.