

Summer Grilling and Food Safety

Submitted by Franny Eastwood, Extension Agent

It is that time of year again, time to dust off the grill and enjoy our favorite foods of summer. Summer not only brings out barbecue grills, but also bacteria. Bacteria love the hot, humid days of summer, grow faster than at any other time of the year, and can make you sick- a.k.a. cause foodborne illness. Keep your barbecues with family and friends healthy and safe this summer with the following tips.

1. Keep it clean. Wash hands with soap and warm 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 or hand sanitizer available.
2. 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.
3. Keep raw food separate. Keep your barbecue safe by keeping raw meat, poultry, and seafood in a separate cooler or securely wrapped at the bottom of a cooler. 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.
4. Seeing isn't believing. Many assume that if a hamburger is brown in the middle, it's done. Looking only at the color and texture of food is not enough—you have to use a food thermometer to be sure. According to USDA research, 1 out of every 4 hamburgers turns brown before it reaches a safe internal temperature. The only safe way to know if meat, poultry, and egg dishes are "done" is to use a food thermometer. When a hamburger is cooked to 160 degrees Fahrenheit as measured with a food thermometer, it is both safe and delicious!
5. 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 wrapped well in an insulated container. Keep cold food at 40 F or below until served. Keep cold perishable food in a cooler until serving time, out of direct sun, and avoid opening the lid often.
6. Temperature and time. Keep your barbecues with family and friends safe this summer by remembering that the time perishable food can be left outside the refrigerator or freezer *drops from two hours to one hour in temperatures above 90 F*. For your next barbecue have a food thermometer, several coolers, ice or frozen gel packs, water, soap and paper towels, enough plates and utensils to keep raw and cooked foods separate, and foil or other wrap for leftovers.

Source: Lisa Franzen-Castle, RD, PhD, Nutrition Specialist UNL Panhandle Research & Extension Center. For more information on nutrition, food safety, health, or family and child development contact the Marais des Cygnes Extension District Paola (913-294-4306) or Mound City (913-795-2829) offices, or write to fmeastwo@ksu.edu or check out our website: www.maraisdescygn.es.k-state.edu