



Have a Safe and Healthy Summer BBQ

The days are hotter and the nights are longer. This can only mean one thing... Summer is here and it's time to fire up the grill! Whether it's for a family picnic in the park, a gathering at the lake, or a Fourth of July celebration, having a BBQ has become Americans' favorite summer pastime. There's nothing like enjoying a grilled Bratwurst wrapped in a steamed bun and topped with ground mustard, onions, sauerkraut and pickles. Then there's the mouth-watering sight of a chicken breast wearing its grilled marks like a badge of honor. But let's not give all our attention to meat. Grilled fruits and vegetables are one of the tastiest and healthiest ways to enjoy them! Are you hungry yet?

Now the warmer weather may be ideal for us to spend hours out in the fresh air, but it is not ideal for holding food. During the summer months there is a jump in foodborne illness cases. The CDC reports that 1 in 6 Americans acquire food poisoning each year and an estimated 128,000 are hospitalized due to foodborne illnesses. Knowing some basic food safety rules could save you from a trip to the ER. Here are some USDA food safety tips from the to keep in mind.

- **Clean before you cook.** Wipe down all surfaces, utensils, and hands before you start food preparation. If you are at a park bring a moist towel or sanitizer wipes. Also remember to wash all fruits and vegetables under running water. Just think, they come from the earth and with that comes dirt and occasionally a bug or two.
- **Keep foods separate.** You should always keep raw meat and poultry away from ready to eat foods like raw vegetables or salads. Use separate cutting boards, trays, plates, and utensils. This helps you avoid cross contamination. You should also never place cooked meat on a tray that held raw meat without it being thoroughly cleaned with soap and water.
- **Use a food thermometer.** Cooking food to the proper internal temperature is extremely important in guarding yourself from E.Coli, Campyobacter, and Salmonella. Whole cut meats and fish should be cooked to 145°F. Ground meats like burgers and sausages should be cooked to 160°F. All poultry should be cooked to 165°F as well as pre-cooked meat like hot dogs. All leftovers should be reheated to 165°F.

Using a thermometer, placing the tip into the middle of the thickest part of the meat, will insure that it is cooked thoroughly.

- **Hold and store food properly.** Dishes like potato salad and deviled eggs should be place on ice. Perishable food should be refrigerated within two hours, but if the outside temperatures hit 90°F or above that time drops to one hour. Leftovers should be help in a cooler at 40°F or below until you transport them home. You should also keep separate coolers for food and drinks. The drink cooler will mostly be opened often, letting the cold air escape. To ensure food coolers stay at 40°F or below they should stay closed until it's time to cook or place food in the fridge.

We all love summer grilling but no one wants to spend a long night in the hospital from food poisoning. Keep these food safety tips in mind the next time you have a cookout or go camping. Enjoy the summer to the fullest!

Contributed by Carrie Claiborne, Dietetic Intern