

Grill Smarter This Summer

Make grilling healthier



Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™:

1. Read "Make Grilling Healthier."
2. Create a plan to make grilling healthier this summer.
3. Track your progress in case your organization requires documentation.

When the grill fires up on *Beat Bobby Flay*, the popular Food Network cooking competition, two chefs get one shot at the ultimate culinary prize: Beating Bobby Flay at his own game. Most don't succeed.

But here's something Flay will tell you himself. It's not just about grilling the ultimate steak. It's about cooking smarter.

When Flay hit 40, he stepped on a scale and didn't like what he saw. His solution wasn't to quit cooking. It was to change how he cooked.

He wrote a cookbook called *Grilling for Life*, built around one idea: You don't have to give up great flavor to eat healthier.

Herbs, spices, marinades, and lean proteins can make grilled



THE HIDDEN RISKS OF BACKYARD BARBECUES



CHARING

High heat can create HCAs linked to cancer risk.



PROCESSED MEATS

Hot dogs and sausage are linked to colorectal cancer risk.



RED MEAT

Frequent intake may increase risk of heart disease and diabetes.



HIGH SODIUM

Processed meats are often loaded with sodium.

food taste just as good, without the health risks that come with charred meat and heavy sauces.

Most Americans could use that same lesson. Six out of 10 own a grill. Nearly half fire it up at least once a week.



The most popular items on the grill?

Burgers, hot dogs, and steaks. And from June through August alone, Americans eat 7 billion hot dogs, roughly 818 every second.

Grilling doesn't have to mean charred meat and heavy sauces. There's a better way. Ready to fire up the grill?



Take this month's challenge: Grill Smarter This Summer.

GRILL ►



Burgers, hot dogs, and sausage are backyard staples, but high heat and charring come with health risks.



4 Health Risks Sizzling on the Grill

Before you fire up the grill for your next backyard barbecue, here's what you need to know



Most backyard cookouts have one thing in common: a lot of red and processed meat. And that's worth paying attention to.

1 HCAs and charring. When fat drips down during grilling and burns, it goes back into the food. That's how charring happens and how heterocyclic amines, or HCAs, are formed. Research shows HCAs can cause changes in DNA that may increase the risk of cancer.²

2 Heart disease. High consumption of red and processed meat is consistently linked to increased risk of heart disease.³ Processed meats like hot dogs, sausage, and bacon are especially problematic due to their high sodium content.

3 Type 2 diabetes. One recent study found that eating red meat daily may raise the risk of type 2 diabetes by 27 percent.³

4 Colorectal cancer. Processed meat is also linked to colorectal cancer, now the leading cause of cancer death in men under 50.⁴

The good news? Small changes at the grill can make a big difference.



Grilling Season: Burned or Beautiful?



How much do you know about healthy grilling? Take the quiz to find out.

T | F

- ☐ ☐ Charred or overcooked meat can produce compounds linked to cancer.
- ☐ ☐ Marinating meat before grilling can help reduce harmful compounds.
- ☐ ☐ Fruits and vegetables produce the same harmful compounds as meat when grilled.
- ☐ ☐ Fish and chicken are healthier choices on the grill than red meat.
- ☐ ☐ You have to give up great flavor to grill healthier.



Check Your Answers

How did you do?
Charring meat at high temperatures produces compounds called heterocyclic amines, or HCAs, which are linked to increased cancer risk.



30 Minutes The good news? Marinating meat for at least 30 minutes before grilling can significantly reduce HCA formation.¹

Fruits and vegetables don't produce HCAs on the grill at all.



Fish and poultry are lower in saturated fat than red meat and are linked to a lower risk of heart disease and certain cancers.



And grilling healthier doesn't mean giving up great flavor. Herbs, spices, and marinades can make healthy grilling taste just as good.

Answers: 1. True. 2. True. 3. True. 4. True. 5. False.



GRILL ►

Healthy Grilling Secrets for Summer



8 Ways to Make Your Next Barbecue Healthier



Grilling healthier doesn't mean giving up steak, burgers, and hot dogs. It means making smarter choices about how you cook, what you cook, and how you season it.

Ready to fire up the grill? Here's how to make your next barbecue healthier.



1. Control the heat & flip often



High heat is the main driver of charring and HCA formation. Cook over medium heat when you can, and flip meat frequently. The less time one side stays in direct contact with high heat, the less char forms.

2. Marinate before you grill

Marinating meat for at least 30 minutes before grilling can significantly reduce HCA formation.¹ Use a mixture that includes vinegar, lemon juice, or wine along with herbs and spices for the best results.



3. Trim the fat



Before putting meat on the grill, trim visible fat and remove skin from poultry. Fat dripping onto the flame is what causes flare-ups and charring in the first place.

4. Watch your portion size

A healthy serving of meat is 3 to 4 ounces, about the size of a deck of cards.⁵ Most portions served at cookouts are two to three times that size.



OR



5. Try fish or chicken

Fish and poultry are lower in saturated fat than red meat and are linked to a lower risk of heart disease.



Salmon, shrimp, and chicken breasts are all great on the grill.

GRILL ►

► GRILL

6. Skip the processed meats

Hot dogs, sausage, and bacon are high in sodium and linked to increased cancer risk. Swap them for lean burgers, turkey patties, or plant-based options.



7. Grill fruits and vegetables



Fruits and vegetables don't form HCAs on the grill. Try zucchini, corn, peppers, mushrooms, pineapple, or peaches. They're easy, flavorful, and add color to any cookout.

8. Flavor with herbs & spices

Heavy sauces are often loaded with sugar and sodium. Fresh



herbs, spice rubs, and citrus-based marinades can deliver just as much flavor without the extra calories.

Bobby Flay didn't overhaul his cooking overnight. He made smarter choices, one meal at a time. This summer, you can do the same. Pick one tip, fire up the grill, and taste the difference.

WHAT'S REALLY on the Grill?

Americans love to grill—especially these favorites. But frequent choices like these can come with health risks.

BURGERS	HOT DOGS	STEAK
 50 BILLION burgers eaten in the U.S. each year	 7 BILLION hot dogs eaten each summer (June-August)	 A TOP GRILL CHOICE FOR MANY AMERICANS
HIGH CONSUMPTION OF RED MEAT IS LINKED TO: HEART DISEASE TYPE 2 DIABETES	PROCESSED MEATS ARE LINKED TO: COLORECTAL CANCER RISK HIGH SODIUM INTAKE	FREQUENT INTAKE & HIGH-HEAT GRILLING MAY INCREASE RISK FOR: HCAs FROM CHARRING LINKED TO CANCER RISK HEART DISEASE & DIABETES

THE GOOD NEWS?
Small changes at the grill can make a big difference for your health.

- CHOOSE FISH OR CHICKEN more often.
- GRILL MORE FRUITS & VEGETABLES.
- MARINATE & USE HERBS AND SPICES.
- WATCH YOUR PORTION SIZE.
- LIMIT PROCESSED MEATS.

SMARTER CHOICES. BETTER FLAVOR. BETTER HEALTH. ❤️ GRILL SMARTER THIS SUMMER.

More Tips for Healthy Grilling

Grilling & Cancer Risk Facts
<https://tinyurl.com/bj32b7aw>

15 Healthy Grilling Recipes
<https://tinyurl.com/3nd84udu>

Safe Grilling Temperatures
<https://tinyurl.com/25z4x49p>

References

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- National Cancer Institute. (2017). Chemicals in Meat Cooked at High Temperatures and Cancer Risk. From: <https://tinyurl.com/k4macuwc>
- Shi., W., et al. (2023). Red meat consumption, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *European Heart Journal*, 44(28): 2626-2635. From: <https://tinyurl.com/ynn53mb7>
- Siegel, R., et al. (2026). Leading Cancer Deaths in People Younger Than 50 Years. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 335(7): 632-634. From: <https://tinyurl.com/5n9xyec>
- American Cancer Society. (2025). Understanding Portion Sizes. From: <https://tinyurl.com/m78w96hf>

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Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Create a plan to make grilling healthier.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to Make Grilling Healthier This Summer.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	NOTES
HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	
ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	
HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	
ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	
HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	
ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	
HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	
ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	
HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	HC ☐	
ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	ex. min. ____	

_____ Number of days this month I made choices to Make Grilling Healthier.

_____ Number of days this month I exercised 30 minutes.

Other wellness projects completed this month:

NAME _____ **DATE** _____