

## Safe Grub On the Grill!

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As the weather warms up, many of us enjoy cookouts, backyard barbecues, and tailgating with family and friends. Unfortunately, barbecue season brings an increase in foodborne illness. Follow these guidelines to avoid foodborne illness when grilling and tailgating.



### Marinate in the refrigerator

Always marinate raw meats, fish, or poultry in the refrigerator, NEVER on the counter. Set aside a portion of the marinade before adding raw meat or poultry to use later as a dip or basting sauce. Do NOT reuse the marinade the raw meat was soaked in unless you can boil the marinade for five minutes to be sure to kill any bacteria from the raw meat.

### Watch out for cross-contamination

The main thing when handling raw meat with tongs is: don't use those same tongs that handled the raw meat with your cooked vegetables or meat. Wash your tongs in between handling raw and cooked foods, or if you have an extra set, use a clean set instead. Also, once you take your meat off the grill, don't put it back on the plate that had the raw meat on it.

### Use a Meat Thermometer

A meat thermometer is your best defense against any foodborne illness. To kill harmful bacteria, thoroughly cook meat and poultry to a safe internal temperature. Don't rely on color, because color can be really misleading. Internal temperature is the best way to check for doneness.

Digital, instant-read thermometers are the best type to use for grilling because the sensor is on the point of the thermometer. They will give you a reading in about 10 seconds. Insert the tip of the thermometer into the thickest part of the cut. For burgers or thinner cuts of meat, try to insert the thermometer in from the side, not from the top for a better reading.

Depending on the type of meat you are grilling, there are three temperatures to remember:

**165 degrees F** – For any type of poultry, whether it's chicken or turkey, and regardless if it's ground or even whole.

**160 degrees F** – For any type of ground meat, including beef, pork or lamb.

**145 degrees F** – For steaks and chops, whether it is beef, pork or lamb.

**Serve immediately**

Serve hot, grilled foods immediately. Perishable foods should be eaten within 2 hours, or 1 hour if outside temperature is above 90 degrees F. Keep cold foods cold (below 40 degrees F) and hot foods hot (over 140 degrees F). Avoid the "danger zone" of 40 to 140 degrees F. Also, refrigerate any leftovers promptly. Divide larger quantities into small, shallow containers for faster cooling.

**Pack an ice chest**

When transporting or storing food outside, keep food at 40°F or below. This is best done by using an insulated cooler with plenty of frozen ice packs. You should pack the cooler immediately before leaving home, moving food from the refrigerator right to the cooler. Keep the ice chest in a covered area or out of direct sunlight.

**Clean the grill**

Caked-on grease or food can cause a fire, so brush and scrub the grate well. Some spray-on grill cleaners can be effective at removing residue. Remove the grate and clean leftover grease and food particles from inside the grill. If you are using a brush where the metal bristles are starting to come loose or break, it's time to replace it with a new one. The bristles may break off on the grate itself and if you don't see them, they could get stuck on your food, and you could ingest them. This is also a good time to check the propane tank to make sure it's full and ready to go, and that there are no cracks in the hoses.

For more information, contact the Wildcat Extension District offices at: Crawford County, 620-724-8233; Labette County, 620-784-5337; Montgomery County, 620-331-2690; Wilson County, 620-378-2167; Pittsburg Office, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP), 620-232-1930. Wildcat District Extension is on the Web at <http://www.wildcatdistrict.ksu.edu>. Or, like our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district](http://www.facebook.com/wildcat.extension.district).

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