

Avoiding BBQ blunders

Tips for using outdoor barbecues; safe and healthy outdoor cooking hints; and solutions for common problems around the house.

Summer BBQ tips

- Use baking soda to control a grease fire on a stove or barbecue.
- If you need to dispose of charcoal barbecue ashes before they are completely cool, place them in heavy-duty foil and soak them completely with water before putting them in a non-combustible container.
- Throughout the summer, visually inspect the hoses on a propane barbecue for abrasion, wear and leaks. A soap and water solution can be used to test for leaks. Never use a flame to check for gas leaks. Replace faulty hoses immediately.
- When shopping, put meat, fish and poultry into the grocery cart last. At the checkout counter, put packaged raw meat in separate plastic bags so leaking juices cannot cross-contaminate other foods.
- Load grocery bags with meat and other refrigerated foods in the air-conditioned section of the car, not in the trunk.
- Take groceries home immediately or bring along a cooler with ice packs and place the meat in it. Refrigerate or freeze it as soon as possible. Put a plate under the package to avoid juices dripping on to refrigerator shelves
- Thaw frozen food in the refrigerator, never on the counter. Allow enough time – a day, or overnight. Or immerse packaged food in cold water to thaw. If you're in a hurry, thaw in the microwave just before grilling it.
- Marinate foods in the refrigerator, never on the counter. If you plan to baste with the marinade used for the raw meat, or serve it with the cooked meat, you must boil it first to destroy bacteria. Never save marinades for a second use.
- Wash your hands in hot soapy water before preparing food, after each time you touch raw meat, and after any interruptions such as using the bathroom, handling pets, or stopping to do something else.
- Thoroughly wash cutting boards, knives, platters, etc., before letting them come in contact with raw foods you're preparing or with cooked foods you're about to serve.
- Sanitize cutting boards and countertops with chlorine bleach. Pour on a small amount and let stand several minutes, rinse thoroughly and air dry or dry with a clean paper towel. Soak sponges and dishcloths in hot, soapy water to which you've added chlorine bleach to kill bacteria.
- Pre-cook foods immediately before grilling. Never let partially cooked food sit for more than a few minutes before putting it on the grill to finish cooking it.
- Cook meat thoroughly. As a guideline, heat poultry to 180°F/82°C; beef, lamb or veal roasts and steaks to 145-160°F/63-71°C; and burgers or pork to 160°F/71°C.
- According to the book *Haley's Hints* (www.haleyshints.com), you can barbecue or fry hamburgers faster by poking a hole in them, so the centre will cook as quickly as the outer edges.
- Reheat foods or fully cooked meats like hot dogs by grilling to 165°F/74°C, or until steaming hot.
- Refrigerate leftover food within two hours.

And when you're back inside...

- Chrome cleans up well using a cloth dampened with an ammonia-based product.
- To soften brown sugar, place a few slices

of apple or a slice of fresh bread in the bag and reseal it for a few hours. If you can't wait, run the hard lumps over a grater.

■ You can clear up cloudy honey by putting it in the microwave on a medium setting. Try a minute at a time until it clears.

■ Like milk? Keep it cold in the fridge and a closed container will last over a week. But leave it out on the kitchen counter and it will go bad in a day.

■ Does it annoy you when spaghetti sticks together after cooking? Try running hot water over it.

■ Reduce stovetop cooking time by making sure the lids on pots fit tightly. Escaping steam lets out heat and flavour.

■ Do you still have some of your parents' furniture? To remove white moisture spots from mahogany wood items, coat the affected area with petroleum jelly (Vaseline). Leave it on for a couple of days and the spots will be gone when you wipe it off.

■ Hair ball headaches: If cat throw-ups stain your carpet, try using foamy shaving cream to remove the mark.

■ Red wine stains are trouble. Tackle the spill immediately by sprinkling salt on it to absorb the wine. Remove the salt. Fabrics can then be washed in cold water. For carpets, gently apply foamy shaving cream and rinse with cold water.

■ Who came up with the obtuse idea of measuring metric mileage as litres per 100 km? For drivers who still think in miles per gallon, here's a conversion tip. If your vehicle goes about 7 km per litre of gas, that's roughly the same as 20 miles per gallon; 9 km/L is around 25 mpg (lucky you) and just 5 km/L is less than 15 mpg. 🍀