

Summer Food Safety

Barbecues are fun. Food poisoning isn't.



If you're aiming to round off a sensational summer with a barbecue in the garden or park, we've served up some advice to help make it a sizzling and safe success. It's the little things that you do that will help keep your loved ones and friends safe.

We all want to serve up a sensational barbecue that also helps keep our family and friends safe. And it's great to look spontaneous, but it's safer and easier on the day if you prepare in advance. You can help avoid the build-up of food poisoning bugs by taking the following simple steps. Cases of food poisoning almost double during the summer, and research shows that the undercooking of raw meat and the contamination of bacteria onto the food we eat are among the main reasons.

Avoid cross-contamination:

You can do this by storing raw meat separately before cooking, and use different utensils, plates and chopping boards for raw and cooked food. There's no point in serving up food with a flourish if you're adding bugs back into the mix. (You should of course wash your hands after touching the bin, going to the toilet, blowing your nose, or touching pets.)

Don't wash raw chicken or other meat, it just splashes germs. Cooking will kill any bacteria present, including campylobacter. On the other hand, washing chicken, or other meat, can spread dangerous bugs on to your hands, clothes, utensils and worktops by splashing.

Pre-cook: Pre-cook, it's a very good idea to cook all chicken (including chicken on the bone) in the oven prior to giving it a final 'finish' on your barbecue. Your friends and family will still experience that special barbecue 'scorched' taste – and you will know that you've cooked the chicken all the way through. This technique can also be used for sausages, burgers and kebabs if you're cooking for large numbers, as you'll want to avoid providing undercooked food.



Charred doesn't mean cooked: Make sure that burgers, sausages, chicken and all meats are properly cooked by cutting into the meat and checking that it is steaming hot all the way through, that none of it is pink and that any juices run clear. Turning meat regularly and moving it around the barbecue will help to cook it evenly. Charred on the outside doesn't always mean cooked on the inside so, it's always safer to cut open and check your burgers, sausages and chicken. If in doubt – keep cooking.

Disposable BBQs take longer: Always check that your meat is cooked right through.

Keep plates and cutlery away from raw meat and fish, never serve your guests cooked food on a plate or surface that's had raw meat or fish on it, and don't use cutlery or marinades that have been in contact with raw meat. There's no point in serving up food with a flourish if you're adding bugs back into the mix.



Did you know?

Barbeque Bugs include:

Campylobacter - the most common food poisoning bug in the UK, and it can be found on nearly 65%* of chicken sold in our shops and supermarkets. It's passed on through undercooked poultry. It can lead to serious illness including permanent disability. Most people recover, but not all.

E-Coli – passed on through raw and undercooked meats, can lead to bloody diarrhoea, stomach pains and vomiting.

Salmonella - found on raw meat and undercooked poultry. It leads to fever, vomiting and stomach pains and it can make you ill for weeks.

Listeria - can turn up in pates and salads. It can lead to fever, muscle pain and chills. Those most at risk are pregnant women, children and older people.

Understanding 'use by' and 'best before' dates: 'Use by' dates appear on foods that go off quickly. It can be dangerous to eat food past this date, even though it might look and smell fine. But if cooked or frozen its life can be extended beyond the 'use by' date. Check the 'use by' dates on the food in your fridge on a regular basis and be sure to use (eat, cook or freeze) food before its 'use by' to help you avoid throwing food away unnecessarily. Once food with a 'use by' date has been opened, follow any storage instructions such as 'eat within 3 days of opening'. 'Best before' dates appear on food with a longer shelf life. They show how long the food will be at its best quality. Using food after the 'best before' doesn't mean it will be unsafe. The exception to this is eggs, providing they are cooked thoroughly, they can be eaten a day or two after their 'best before' date.



Find out more:

If you want your barbecue to be a sizzling success, find out more about the FSA's top tips at: www.food.gov.uk/lovebbq

For advice on barbecue safety and local by-laws for using barbecues in open spaces, contact your local authority.

