



# Keep Food Safe During Grilling Season

## Shopping

- When shopping, choose meat and poultry last, right before checkout. Keep meat, poultry and seafood separate from other groceries in your cart.
- Make the grocery store your last stop. Perishable foods, such as meat and poultry, should not be out of refrigeration for more than two hours (one hour if the temperature is above 90 F).

## Preparing

- At home, refrigerate meat and poultry immediately. Raw meat and poultry always should be stored below other foods to prevent cross-contamination.
- Freeze ground meat and poultry that will not be used within two days. Larger cuts of meat, such as steaks, should be used within four days or properly wrapped and placed in the freezer.
- Unwashed hands are a major cause of foodborne illness. Wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds before and after handling food.
- To assure even heat distribution while cooking, completely thaw meat and poultry before grilling. Thaw meat or poultry in the refrigerator or by running cold water over sealed packages. Defrosting meat and poultry in the microwave is a safe practice if the food will be placed on the grill immediately.
- Marinating is used to tenderize and add flavor to meat and poultry. Marinate food in the refrigerator, not on the counter.
- Don't re-use meat marinades on cooked meats or other foods. If some of the marinade is to be used as a sauce on cooked food, reserve a portion before placing raw meat and poultry in it.



## Transporting

- Transport meat and poultry to the picnic site in an insulated cooler with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs. Transfer food directly from the refrigerator to the cooler just before leaving home.
- Keep the cooler inside the vehicle (preferably air-conditioned) while driving and in the shade at the picnic site.

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## Getting Ready

- At the start of the season, check the gas lines and valves on gas grills to make sure there are no cracks, holes or blockages. It's safest to find someone with the expertise to do the checks.
- If you suspect a gas leak, don't use the grill until the problem is fixed.
- Store liquid petroleum (LP) tanks in a secure, upright position. Don't store extra full containers under the grill. Follow the current tank expiration date recommendations.
- Don't operate gas or charcoal grills in enclosed areas such as garages, campers or tents.
- Follow manufacturer's directions for using gas grills.
- When using charcoal, follow the directions on the charcoal bags. Be sure charcoal is completely extinguished before discarding.
- Keep the grill on level ground at least 10 feet away from a building, shrubs or anything that could catch fire.
- Don't leave grills unattended. To prevent burns, keep children and pets away from grills.

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## Grilling

- If needed, scrape the grill with a grill brush to remove charred particles. Preheat your grill and cook at medium heat to prevent flare-ups from fat dripping off meat.
- Use a food thermometer to check food doneness. Insert the thermometer in the thickest part of the food, away from bone, fat or gristle. Hamburgers and ground beef should reach an internal temperature of 160 F; whole poultry and poultry breasts, 165 F; ground poultry, 165 F; all pork cuts, 160 F. Beef, veal, lamb steaks, roasts and chops should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 F.
- After grilling meat and poultry, keep it hot until served (140 F or warmer). Keep cooked meats hot by placing them to the side of the grill rack, not directly over the coals.
- To prevent cross-contamination, use a spatula or clean tongs for removing meat or poultry from the grill. Place on a clean plate.
- Discard any food left out for more than two hours or one hour if the temperature is above 90 F. When in doubt, throw it out!
- Clean the grill after each use. Charred food particles can be removed with a grill brush.

For more information on summer food safety, visit the NDSU Extension Service Web site:  
[www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/food.htm](http://www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/food.htm)