

Environmental Services

Barbecue Safety



One of the many pleasures of the summer months is eating out of doors. However every year there is a seasonal rise in cases of food poisoning from June to September, when numbers increase by about 75%. Among the cases investigated by Environmental Health Officers, some are unfortunately linked to barbeque meals.

Popular food items like burgers, kebabs, steaks and chicken can become carriers of harmful bugs such as campylobacter, salmonella and E.coli 0157 if not handled and cooked properly. These germs can cause illness in anyone who consumes them. Babies, young children and the elderly are particularly vulnerable. So it is worth taking special care...Remember charred food doesn't mean that it is thoroughly cooked!

Here are some tips to help you enjoy a safe barbeque.

Buying the food

- Choose foods that are well within their 'use-by' dates.
- Put raw meat in plastic bags.
- Put chilled foods in cool bags/boxes.
- Don't buy too much food.
- Take food home straight away.

Storing the food

- Refrigerate chilled foods immediately.
- Keep your fridge at or below 5°C

- Put raw meats below ready to eat foods in your fridge.
- Cover all foods.

Setting up the barbeque

- Position it outside, away from fences, trees and neighbouring properties.
- Make sure the site is level.
- Light the barbeque well in advance. Make sure the charcoal is glowing red, with a powdery grey surface before cooking.
- Use only approved lighting fuel e.g. firelighters or impregnated bags of charcoal, not petrol.
- Keep children and pets well away from the barbeque.
- Provide fire-fighting equipment e.g. a garden hose or a bucket of sand.

Preparing the food

- Wash your hands thoroughly before you start and in between handling raw and ready to eat foods.
- Defrost foods in the fridge or microwave and ensure it is properly thawed before you cook it.
- Prepare foods as late as possible and keep foods in the fridge until required.

- Use separate utensils for raw and ready to eat foods.
- Wash salads and vegetables thoroughly.
- Marinate foods in the fridge; don't put raw meat into a marinade if it is to be used as a sauce. Reserve a portion of the marinade to be specifically used as a sauce.

Cooking the food

- Use long handled tools to avoid burns and keep a lid and/or damp cloth nearby in case of flare-ups.
- Keep raw and cooked foods at opposite ends of the barbeque.
- Use separate cooking utensils for raw and cooked food to avoid cross contamination.
- Keep raw meat away from other foods, such as salads or burger buns, as it can contain food poisoning bugs that can spread to these foods.
- Turn the food regularly and move it around the barbeque to cook it evenly.
- Make sure all meat is cooked thoroughly with no pink bits in the middle and that the juices are running clear.
- Be especially aware of chicken legs, which can look well charred on the outside but be undercooked inside. It is advisable to pre-cook chicken in the oven, microwave or by boiling, using the BBQ at the end to give it the desired flavour.

- Be careful of steam when opening foil parcels, it may burn.
- Never put cooked food on a plate or surface that has been used for raw meat (Unless it has been washed thoroughly).

Serving the food

- Wash your hands before serving food.
- Eat the food as soon as it is cooked.
- Never allow your guests to add sauce or marinade to their cooked food that has already been used with raw meat.
- Lay your food out in a shady area, not in sunshine, and protect from dust and insects.

After the barbeque

- Cover and refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours, or throw it away.
- Leave the barbeque to cool down completely before emptying and storing away.
- Dispose of all refuse in covered bins to deter pests.

If you have any queries regarding the information in this leaflet please contact

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For information on food safety please visit our website
<http://www.rochford.gov.uk> follow the links from Business to Food
Safety or telephone 01701 318045.



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