

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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August 14, 2008

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Are you're trying to keep the kitchen cool by doing the cooking on the patio? It smells like everyone in the neighborhood is cooking outside these days. Of course we have to time it well, between the downpours. Still, food done on the grill has its own special flavor, whether it's a steak or a rack of zucchini and tomato halves.

The unfortunate flip side of grilling and eating on the patio is that summer also usually brings an up-swing in the number of food poisonings. Some of this is probably due to picnics and parties on the beach. Bowls of food left sitting in the heat on the picnic table are open invitations to bacteria. Bring plenty of ice and keep things in the cooler till the very last minute. Throw leftovers away rather than trying to bring them home again.

Another factor that contributes to food poisoning is too little cooking. Maybe the rain is threatening, so you grab the chicken and head inside just as the first drops splatter around you. Safe? Maybe, maybe not. Or the kids come charging up from the water hungry and ready to eat. The burgers smell great, look brown, so you flip them onto some buns and everyone chows down. Happy now? What about later?

What was missing from both of those scenes? No one used a food thermometer to check if the food was really safe. There are pictures, and plenty of sick people, to prove that brown hamburger does not mean it's done. Color lies! A drumstick bone that wiggles is not proof of safety. If you're the cautious kind who overcooks everything "just

to be sure”, you will be pleasantly surprised at how juicy a safe but not overdone pork chop can be. Either way, get yourself a food thermometer!

There are lots of styles of food thermometers available, from the \$5 dial type to the \$50 barbeque fork with built in thermometer tips. You can also get single-use disposable thermometers in packs of 10. These are preset to register the correct doneness temperature for beef, poultry or fish. Each meat has its own color. Be sure you use the right one.

For most foods cooked on the grill you need to use a digital thermometer, one that shows the numbers on a small screen. A digital thermometer only needs to have the tip of stem (the long metal rod) inside the food to read correctly. The disposable thermometers only need about half an inch of the tip inside the food. If you use a dial thermometer, at least 1 ½ inches of the stem must be inside the food to get an accurate reading. This can be very difficult if you are grilling burgers!

Be sure to give the thermometer enough time to register the full temperature. Digital thermometers are almost instantaneous, they just need a couple of seconds until the numbers on the screen stop changing. Dial thermometers might need half a minute or longer in the food before the needle stops moving. Then you can read the correct temperature. Don't forget to wash them between uses.

What temperatures must you look for? Here are the magic numbers for keeping foods safe. Beef, veal and lamb chops or steaks and all fish must reach **145° F** inside to be safe. Pork chops or roasts and all ground beef must get to **160° F**. Chicken and turkey parts or whole birds must reach **165° F** in the thickest part to be safe.

Here's a good way to stretch a little bit of grilled steak into a satisfying meal for a

whole family without heating up the kitchen with a lot more cooking. If you prefer, an Asian sesame or honey mustard salad dressing could also work here. Enjoy!

Brown Rice and Beef Salad

about 1 pound grilled steak	2 cups broccoli florets
1 medium yellow summer squash	3 cups hot, cooked brown rice
1 cup diced, seeded tomatoes	1 can garbanzo beans
1/4 cup fresh basil, thinly sliced	1/4 cup Italian salad dressing
1 tsp olive oil	Salt if desired

Cook rice according to directions on the package to make 3 cups cooked rice. Slice beef thinly across the grain. Drain and rinse beans. Cut squash in half lengthwise, then across in 1/4 inch slices. Heat oil in nonstick pan on medium-high until hot. Add the broccoli and squash, cook and stir until tender, about 7 minutes. Toss with other ingredients in large bowl. Serve with steak slices on top. Serves 4.

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