

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Great Grilling

If you can get there between the afternoon showers, now's the time to be using the grill! Keep the kitchen cooler, have meals ready in a flash, make a variety so everyone in the family is happy - what's not to like about grilling? But there are those nagging concerns from some years ago that grilled meat might cause cancer. Hmm. Should we worry?

Actually, the evidence seems to be growing even stronger that we should worry. More problematic compounds are being found in charred or grilled meats. The doctors are starting to figure out how they work and what they do to increase our chances of cancer. The clues are making it look worse and worse for grilled meats. But wait, there's no need to trash the grill! There are ways to grill and ways to season what you grill that greatly reduce the risks. Here are some things you can do to keep the flavors you love, and keep your health.

First, give your meal plans enough time to include marinating. While a quick dip might add some flavor, to add protection marinate meats, poultry and seafood for at least 1 hour. Two hours are better. Use something acidic in the marinade. Acidic choices include lemon or lime juice, vinegar, dry wines, tomato juice or buttermilk. Use between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of juice or other acid for each pound of meat. Add enough water to cover the meat and refrigerate it in a glass or plastic container.

You can add whatever other seasonings you want to the marinade, as long as it's not sugar. So toss in the rosemary, crush the garlic, slice the onions, just leave out the honey or molasses. Skip the ketchup too, since it's basically tomato jam. The problem with sugar is that it helps both the grill and our bodies make more of the cancer-causing compounds. Good, quick, easy and ready-made marinades include light Italian or vinaigrette salad dressings. Check the label to be sure there's no sugar.

Another good method for reducing cancer risk is to partially precook the meat. Boil it or microwave it until it's about half done. Then finish it on the grill to get the flavor you crave. Moist heat cooking doesn't make nearly as many cancer-causing chemicals as dry heat. Precooking with

moisture can cut the cancer-causers by almost half.

When the meat's on the grill, don't let it char. Get it brown on the outside, but try to avoid those black streaks. It's the black or really dark stuff that's the big problem. Be sure to keep the grill itself clean, and use a cooking spray on the grill before you start cooking. That too will help reduce the dark streaking that's the concern.

Pre-trim the meats to remove most of the visible fat, and don't let dripping fat or juices flare up. Set the meat off to the side, not directly over hot coals to avoid flare ups. Those flames will darken the meat and create the compounds we want to avoid. And don't press on burgers. Any juices that are squeezed out can cause flare ups, as well as dry out the burger. Turn the meat or burgers over frequently. This will let the meat heat and cook without getting too hot or too dark on one side.

Did you notice that most of this is referring to meats? Meats, including poultry, are the biggest offenders. Seafood, even when it's grilled, is likely to create fewer cancer-causing compounds. And vegetables and fruits generally don't make them at all. So if you really want a grilled-flavor fix, grill the tomatoes, the zucchini, the peaches or the mangoes. As an added bonus, the veggies and fruits have antioxidants that can help neutralize the cancer-causing problems.

Here's a flavorful burger for dinner. Look for ground beef that is at least 93% fat free. Use a thermometer to check the temperature to be sure it's done, and don't overcook. Serve with your favorite toppings.

Beefy Burgers

1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms	1 pound lean ground beef
1-2 Tbsp yellow or spicy mustard	½ tsp black pepper

Buns, lettuce, tomato, pickles of your choice

Chop mushrooms in food processor until fine. Mix in large bowl with beef, mustard and pepper.

Form into 4 patties about 4 inches across. Make the middles a little thinner than the edges so they cook evenly without overcooking. Spray grill with cooking spray and place over heat. Cook burgers 6-8 minutes, turning often, until the thickest part measures 160° F. Serve with bun and condiments.

Serves 4.

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