

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Grill Masters - Alert!

Grill masters - Alert! Tomorrow's your big day. Everyone who's anyone will be out grilling for the 4th of July. Your job, besides making great tasting food, is to be sure no one goes home sick. That's a big responsibility, but hey, Grill Masters can shoulder it. All you need is a grasp of the big basics when it comes to grilling.

First things first - if you don't have a food thermometer, head out right now and get one! There's no way, by pinching, squeezing, twisting, slicing, looking at or feeling a piece of meat to know if it's hot enough to kill all the bacteria. You know bacteria are there, lurking, waiting for a chance to jump. Give them a chance and they're going to take it! So stop them in their tracks with enough heat to fry them dead.

If you use a thermometer you'll know just when to stop the heat too, so that juicy pork loin or gorgeous steak won't be overcooked into shoe leather territory. There will be no excuse for overcooking with your trusty thermometer at your side.

The temperatures to look for are: steaks, chops and roasts - 145° F if you want them medium rare. If you prefer your meats more done, 160° F will give you a safe and juicy medium. Burgers and ground beef or pork needs 155° F. This meat is riskier, since it's been ground and mixed, so don't cut corners here. Now all the stuff that had feathers - chicken, duck, turkey, whether it's whole, in pieces or ground, has to reach 165° F. And if you're cooking the healthy stuff - fish for the holidays - then 145° F is your goal. The same goes for veggies on the grill, 145° F.

Next, set out two sets of plates, platters or serving trays, and two sets of tongs or spatulas. One is for the raw things on their way to the grill. The other is for the ready-to-devour goodness as it comes off the grill. And don't you dare let them get mixed up! Putting cooked meats on the same plate the raw pieces were on just gives the bacteria a free pass to the big game, right down some poor sucker's throat. No way do you want to do that to your kids. So as soon as the meat is on the grill, get the dirty plate out of sight and into the sink or dishwasher.

As long as you're out buying a thermometer, stock up on plenty of ice for the coolers too. As warm as it has been recently we'll only have 1 hour of safe time for our cold foods out of the refrigerator. That includes the potato salad Sis is bringing, the macaroni salad your brother makes, and yes, all the fruit and salad your dieting daughter will want. Cut fruits and veggies need to be kept on ice to keep the bacteria from taking first bite out of their juices.

If marinating the meats or veggies before grilling is your idea of good, go for it! Acidic marinades (wine, vinegar, lemon juice) cut down on the cancer chemicals if they get a bit over-cooked. But be sure the marinating is done in the refrigerator or on ice. Do not think that the marinade will keep bacteria from growing. It will not!

A good trick for keeping you in the party instead of tied to the grill is partly pre-cooking the meats, then just finishing them for flavor over the coals. It also happens to reduce the amount of cancer causing chemicals too. But don't try to partly cook them the night before. That's really risky. Zap them in the microwave, boil them a pot or roast them in the oven *just before* they hit the grill. The less time from start to finish, the safer you will be.

Now if all this talk about heat and cooking has you on the warm side, here's a good cool-me-down for dessert. You may well have all the ingredients on hand all ready, but if you want to be patriotic for the 4th, look for red, white and blue. If there will be children at the party use smaller cups and make half-sized 'sicles for them. Happy 4th of July to you and your families!

Flag-sicles

For 8 'sicles you'll need 8 paper cups (8 oz each) and 8 plastic spoons.

2 cups red: 1 pint strawberries or 3 cups watermelon cubes

2 cups white: 1 can coconut milk, or 2 cups apple or white grape juice, or lemonade

2 cups blue: 1 pint blueberries or 2 cups grapes, grape juice or pomegranate juice

Set the cups in a muffin pan and put a spoon in each one. Purée the whole fruits separately in a food processor. Keep the purées and juices cold. Pour ¼ cup of a red purée into each cup. Freeze for half an hour, until set. Add ¼ cup of white juice to each cup. Freeze ½ hour. Add ¼ cup of blue juice to each cup. Freeze 30 to 40 minutes or until ready to serve. Warm the cups slightly with your hands or in warm water to release. Use the spoons as handles. Makes 8 flag-sicles.

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