

Give your grill the third degree

With today’s fabulous indoor and outdoor grills, you can enjoy great taste year ’round. But you do need some barbecue smarts to keep your menu safe and yummy. Read how getting your license to grill doesn’t take much.



It seems that every summer we hear warnings about how to keep our backyard barbecue from getting charred with dangerous food substances. The warnings centre around two important health matters:

1. Grilling animal products and cancer.

Cancer-causing substances — or carcinogens — can arise within either red or white meat that you set on the grill. Known as heterocyclic amines (HCAs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), you can help minimize the production of these carcinogens by:

- Grilling smaller cuts of meat — to reduce your portion size
- Grilling leaner cuts of meat — less fat means less flare-ups (which can deposit HCAs and PAHs on the meat)
- Poking holes in aluminium foil and spreading it on the grill — to reduce flare ups and still allow fat to drain
- Precooking meat — briefly in the microwave to speed up grilling time

2. Food poisoning.

Health Canada reports that about 2 million Canadians suffer from food poisoning every year. To help keep food safe and prevent food poisoning when grilling, use a digital food thermometer to ensure the food has reached the following minimal internal temperature:

Food	Recommended internal temperature
Beef (fresh) — medium	71° C / 160° F
Beef (fresh) — roasts or steaks	71° C / 160° F
Beef (fresh) — well done	77° C / 171° F
Beef (fresh) — rare	63° C / 146° F
Chicken, turkey (ground)	80° C / 176° F
Chicken, turkey (pieces)	77° C / 171° F
Ground meat (beef, pork, veal)	71° C / 160° F
Pork chops	71° C / 160° F
Port roasts	71° C / 160° F

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Tips for being king (or queen) of the grill

While you wow backyard guests with your flip-ability, use these tips to keep food safe and spice up your usual barbecue fare:

- Keep food in the refrigerator until you're ready to grill. If you're using a cooler, avoid opening it more than you need to and keep it in the shade. Read [Smart food storage](#) for more information on keeping your food safe.
- Have two tongs handy. To prevent cross-contamination, use one to handle raw meat, fish and poultry and the other for cooked foods.
- Test the food's internal temperature. To check the internal temperature of the meat on the grill, insert a digital food thermometer into the thickest part, away from fat, gristle and bone.
- Adjust the heat. If the food starts to get charred during grilling, raise the grill or reduce the heat. Remember that it's the internal temperature that will let you know if the food is safe to eat or not; not how it looks on the outside.
- Keep plenty of clean platters handy. The juices from raw meat and poultry may contain bacteria. Use a separate platter to serve food, or ensure a used platter is clean.
- Break from the usual. Zest up your usual barbecue menu with unexpected — but delicious — fare. For instance:
 - Take your skewers and thread mushrooms, red onion, cherry tomatoes and green peppers.
 - Try grilled fruit. Put larger pieces of peaches, pears, plantains or mangos directly on the grill or on skewers if you prefer bite-sized.
 - If you have sandwich lovers to feed, cut panini (Italian buns) in half and place them facedown on the grill alongside zucchini, eggplant or red peppers. When grilled to perfection, add some cheese, luncheon meat or anything else you have on hand and — voila! — instant gourmet.