

GRILLING SAFETY TIPS

Fire in the grill, under hot dogs and burgers, is a welcome sight at the family cookout. But fire anywhere else can make your summer kick-off barbecue memorable for all the wrong reasons.

Safety tips

Propane and charcoal BBQ grills must only be used outdoors. If used indoors, or in any enclosed spaces, such as tents, they pose both a fire hazard and the risk of exposing occupants to toxic gases and potential asphyxiation.

Position the grill well away from siding, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.

Place the grill a safe distance from lawn games, play areas and foot traffic.

Keep children and pets away from the grill area: declare a three-foot "safe zone" around the grill.

Put out several long-handled grilling tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames when flipping burgers. Avoid long, loose sleeves when cooking.

Periodically remove grease or fat buildup in trays below grill so it cannot be ignited by a hot grill.

Charcoal grills

Purchase the proper starter fluid and store the can out of reach of children, and away from heat sources.

Never add charcoal starter fluid when coals or kindling have already been ignited, and never use any flammable or combustible liquid other than charcoal starter fluid to get the fire going.

Propane grills

Check the gas cylinder hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year. A light soap and water solution applied to the hose will quickly reveal escaping propane by releasing bubbles. If you determine your grill has a gas leak, by smell or the soapy bubble test, and there is no flame, turn off the gas tank and grill. If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again. If the leak does not stop, call the fire department.

If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not attempt to move the grill.

Use only equipment with the label of a recognized testing laboratory. Follow the manufacturers' instructions on how to set up the grill and maintain it.

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