

“Grillertaining” Guidelines for Summer Barbecue Buffs. New Survey Reveals Americans Need to “Beef Up” Food Safety at the Grill

Chicago, June 16, 2004 – From Fourth of July cookouts to afternoon barbecues, summer ranks first as Americans’ favorite time of year for entertaining – or “grillertaining” that is, with four out of five hosts planning to fire up the grill when summer guests stop by. But just as party plans heat up during the warm weather months, so does the risk of foodborne illness...which makes practicing proper food safety more important than ever.

A new survey conducted by the American Dietetic Association reveals many grillers take a vacation from safe food handling when the summer entertaining season rolls around. In fact, when asked to grade themselves on how safely they handle food when grilling, 63 percent of grillers gave themselves a B or worse.

While a ‘B’ is usually considered a good grade, when it comes to food safety, anything less than an ‘A’ can put you and your guests at risk of foodborne illness. When entertaining outdoors, it’s important to think of your grill or picnic table as an extension of your kitchen and remember to follow the same food safety steps both inside and out.

This summer, keep your al fresco feast safe and fun with these “grillertaining” guidelines from ADA.

Meaty Advice

According to the survey, nearly half of all Americans typically grill two or more different kinds of meat at one time. And one in four expects to grill a greater variety of meats this year compared to last year, with a majority (55 percent) citing a need to accommodate different taste/dietary preferences of family members as the main reason why.

While traditional fare such as hamburgers (88 percent), steak (80 percent), chicken (77 percent) and hot dogs/brats (72 percent) continue to top grills regularly, an adventurous few also will cook up more imaginative fare such as fajitas/quesadillas (5 percent), bison (2 percent) and pizza (2 percent). But beware: Most grillers don’t know if foods are cooked properly before serving them.

Survey results show nearly 70 percent of us don’t know the proper internal temperature to which hamburgers or chicken should be cooked. And more than four out of five grillers do not consistently use a meat thermometer to gauge the doneness of meats – instead, most (75 percent) cook meat until it “looks done” or until “the juices run clear.”

Guessing when meats are safe to eat is a recipe for disaster. The only reliable way to ensure that meats are safe and ready to eat is by using a thermometer to make sure foods reach a safe internal temperature – for hamburgers, the magic number is 160 degrees Fahrenheit; for chicken breasts, it’s 170 degrees Fahrenheit.

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