



# Focus Sheet / Barbeques



## Food and Fire Safety

### Foodborne illnesses and barbeques.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the number of foodborne illnesses consistently peak during the summers. Why? For a couple of reasons. First, the weather is much warmer and bacteria grow best in warm temperatures. Second, safety precautions such as refrigeration, and hand wash sinks which are found in most kitchens are not readily available for outdoor cooking. These facts, however, should not interfere with your summer cookout. Here is what you should do each time you barbeque to minimize the chance of a foodborne illness.

### BBQ Preparation

- Keep meat chilled by placing in a refrigerator/freezer.
- Immediately after purchasing, place wrapped meat into a separate plastic bag or container to avoid contamination of other foods.
- Keep and transport perishables below 41° F.
- Allow meat to thaw completely in the refrigerator before placing on the grill. Do NOT thaw at room temperature!
- Wash hands with warm, soapy water and don gloves for food handling. **Note:** wearing gloves is NOT a substitute for hand washing.
- Keep an alcohol based sanitizer in your cooking area.
- Avoid cross contamination by keeping meat and other foods separate. Have two insulated coolers: one for raw meat and another for other foods. Do not contaminate foods like lettuce, cheese, etc which will not be cooked.
- Be cautious with marinades, they do not kill bacteria, do not keep marinated meats at room temperature and NEVER reuse marinade on cooked foods.
- NEVER USE GASOLINE!!!
- DISPOSE OF CHARCOAL SAFELY! Hot charcoal is a fire hazard and UW does not furnish metal cans. Bring a sturdy metal can to put hot coals in or enough water to soak them thoroughly if you cannot wait for them to burn out and cool before you remove them from campus.



### At the Grill

- Avoid cross contamination. Use one set of plates and utensils for raw foods and another set of plates and utensils for all other foods. Wash hands and change gloves after touching raw foods
- Consider using pre-cooked meats. They simplify preparation and are safer to use because they are free of pathogens.
- Cook meats to 165°F or hotter to kill many microbes associated with foodborne illness.
- Verify temperatures by using a digital thermometer, thermocouple, or T-Stick.
- Cook meats until there is no pink and juices run clear.



# Focus Sheet / Barbeques

---

## After Cooking

- Keep the meat hot (above 140° F) until served.
- Keep meat cool. Avoid overgrowth of bacteria by storing food in a refrigerator/cooler within two hours of serving.
- Refrigerate leftovers immediately in shallow containers.
- Food left out more than two hours should be considered contaminated as a result of heat exposure. When in doubt, throw it out!

## Barbecue Fire Safety Precautions

In addition to an increase in foodborne illnesses associated with summer barbeques, fire burns also increase. Annually, 5,000 people in the U.S. are injured by charcoal/wood burns and propane grills. EH&S prescribes the following guidelines to keep you and your group safe.

All barbecues must be located at least 25 feet from any university structure. NO barbecues can be located on porches, balconies, or roof decks. Locate barbecues so that cooking smoke does not enter air intakes for buildings. Also, an ABC type of fire extinguisher must be readily available and located within the immediate area of the cooking equipment. It is recommended that all cooking occur on a noncombustible concrete surface or a very green and plush lawn area.



## Charcoal and Wood Barbecues

- Use only “approved” starter fluids.
- Never add fluid to the fire once it has been started. Even a smoldering fire can cause the fluid to flash and follow the stream back to the can.
- NEVER USE GASOLINE!!!
- DISPOSE OF CHARCOAL SAFELY! Hot charcoal is a fire hazard and UW does not furnish metal cans. Bring a sturdy metal can to put hot coals in, or enough water to soak them thoroughly if you cannot wait for them to burn out and cool before you remove them from campus.

## Propane Fueled Barbecues

- Make sure the connecting hose is not crimped: check all connections, hoses, regulators, and grill connections for leaks.
- If you smell gas, shut off the valve at the tank.
- Keep the cylinder out of direct sunlight: the added heat increases the pressure inside the cylinder.
- Always leave the cylinder in an upright position: propane tanks contain both liquid and gas, laying the cylinder down can cause a serious liquid leak.
- Never store propane cylinders inside a building, basement, or garage: a minor leak in the cylinder can cause a major explosion.
- Remember! Open Fires are Never Allowed.

## Contact us

For food related questions contact our University Public Health Advisers at 206.543.7209 or 206.616.1623.

For fire safety questions contact our fire safety professional at 206.543.0465.

**Environmental Health & Safety**  
201 Hall Health Center Box 354400  
Seattle, Washington 98195-4400  
206.543.0465 FAX 206.543.3351  
[www.ehs.washington.edu](http://www.ehs.washington.edu)

For copies of this and other EH&S focus sheets, visit [www.ehs.washington.edu](http://www.ehs.washington.edu) or call 206.543.7262.