



MSU-ES Dawg Tracks

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Safety Tips: Rules for Enjoying Barbecues



One of the great summer pastimes nationwide is outdoor cooking, better known as cooking out or grilling out in the South. In the North and Midwest it's just plain barbecuing. Regardless of its name, outdoor food is just outright good and better in my estimation. The Hearth, Patio and Barbecue Association shows that more than 80 percent of all U.S. households own and use one or more grills.

Anytime fire is involved there are potential hazards. A study by the Propane Education & Research Council reveals that approx. 4,000 grilling incidents occur each year in the U.S. This statistic relates only to incidents involving propane-fueled grills.

It behooves all of us to be more cognizant of the hazards and risks involved in our outdoor cooking activities. Following are 12 safety tips that can increase our awareness for safe use of propane and charcoal grills for the remainder of this season and seasons in the future:

- Read the owner's manual to get completely familiar with the use of your grill and all safety rules.
- We all know that barbecue grills are strictly for outdoor use, so never use them in any enclosed areas such as homes, garages, trailers, tents, etc. Carbon monoxide can be a product of combustion and can accumulate and cause death.
- Use the grills in outside, well ventilated areas. They should be used on flat and level surfaces, located at least 10 feet away from buildings and combustible materials.
- Never use an electric starter in the rain or while standing on a wet surface.
- Don't lean over the grill when lighting, igniting or cooking.
- Don't move a grill during the time that you're cooking.
- While cooking, do not wear loose clothing with strings hanging from the garments or other decorative components.
- Do not leave a grill unattended while it is lit.

- Keep children and pets away from the grill while cooking. A good rule of thumb that I have always heard and read is to have a 3 foot clear zone around the grill area.
- **With charcoal grill use:**
 - ~ Use the proper charcoal starter fluid. Never use gasoline or other combustible or flammable liquids in the place of regular starter fluid.
 - ~ Store the can of starter fluid out of reach of children and away from heat sources.
 - ~ Never add starter fluid to an already ignited fire.
- **With gas-grill use:**
 - ~ Check the metal tubes leading to the burner. Sometimes insects can nest or block clear passage. Clean the tubes according to the manufacturer's instructions, using pipe cleaners or wire. This will usually do the job.
 - ~ Check the hoses for cracks, holes and sharp bends. Obviously, you should replace any damaged parts.
 - ~ Each time that you change cylinders check the connections to be sure there are no leaks.
 - ~ Do not attempt to connect a cylinder unless all connections completely match.
 - ~ Always keep the lid or grill top open when igniting the grill to avoid a flash-off from gas buildup.
 - ~ If you smell gas, turn the grill off immediately and don't use it until the problem is corrected.
 - ~ Do not store gas cylinders indoors, even if you're sure that it is empty.

When finished grilling:

- Dispose of charcoal ashes in heavy foil and soak them with water to be sure that all the coals are out. Dispose in a non-combustible container.
- Close off the propane burner controls and close the cylinder service valve.
- Periodically remove the grease and fat buildup from the trays below the grill, which will keep it from igniting by the hot grill.

Observing these tips will reduce your chances of a serious accident or incident involving your outdoor cooking experience, thus allowing it to always be a fun and delicious time.

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