

Seven Tips for Great Grilling

Now that drier and warmer weather is here, you might be anxious to get upstairs and get your grill on. Just a few simple hints can help make your summer grilling a tasty success.

1. **A clean grill is a happy grill.** Not only does a clean grill ensure you don't get the charred remains of the last person who used it, it ensures that you don't leave most of your food stuck to the grill. If your neighbor has done their job, there shouldn't be any "old" food on the grill. Turn the burners on to high, close the lid, and wait about five minutes. Use the grill brush and rub down all the grates to loosen anything else that might be there. Close the lid again and wait another five minutes. Then use a paper towel soaked in cooking oil (hold it with tongs) and rub down the grates. The paper towel will get black, and you will have clean and lubricated grates.
2. **Choose your grillables.** Of course you can grill most meats and seafood, with the exception of delicate white fish. For halibut or salmon filets, consider not oiling the skin and cutting a piece of foil to fit over it. Grill with just the skin side down, and when the fish is done the skin will stick to the foil leaving you cleaned filets to serve. Marinate firm tofu in some white wine and spices. Cut vegetables into 2" chunks or wedges. Use wedges of pineapple or other firm fruit. For all of your grillables, rub them with cooking oil just before they go on the grill and sprinkle with seasonings.
3. **Brining is good.** A key to moist and tender meats on the grill is soaking them in a salt-sugar brine for 30 – 90 minutes before cooking. This works on most "white" (poultry, pork) meats and seafood. The basic brine is ¼ cup of table salt (1/2 cup of kosher salt) and ¼ cup of sugar dissolved in one quart of water. Soaking time varies with the thickness and denseness of the meat. Thirty minutes is good for boneless chicken breasts, shrimp, sea scallops, or thin pork chops. An hour is good for thick chops or a whole chicken. For a pork loin roast, 90 minutes is usually enough. Remove the meat from the brine, give it a quick rinse and dry off with a paper towel. Proceed to oil the meat and add any seasonings (not salt!) you want.
4. **Think about your side dishes.** Is there something you are planning as a side dish that can benefit from time on the grill? How about lightly grilled onions in your potato salad? Or grilled sweet potato wedges? Or even grilled fresh peach halves over ice cream?
5. **When is it done?** A thermometer is going to be your best friend when you grill. Fish and shellfish are done when the internal temperature is 140 degrees. For beef and lamb, 125 is rare, 160 is medium well. Chicken breasts are done at 160 degrees, bone-in chicken thighs need to be 180 degrees.
6. **Meat needs its' rest!** After your meat is done cooking, it needs time to rest for the juices to redistribute. This can often be the difference between a moist, flavorful steak or chicken breast and a dry, flavorless piece of meat. After removing the meat from the grill cover it with foil and let it sit for 10-15 minutes. While the meat rests, you can move to Step 7...
7. **Refer to #1: A clean grill is a happy grill.** While your meat rests, be courteous to your neighbors and clean up the grill. Turn the heat to high and close the lid for five minutes. Open the lid and scrub down the grates with the grill brush until no food residue is left. Turn off the grill and go enjoy a great meal!

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