

Fun Fact of the Week

Top Ten Tips for Healthy Grilling and Barbecuing*

Grilling is a fun and flavorful way to cook no matter the season – even if it's cold outside! Who doesn't love to cook together with friends outdoors in the summer and tailgate at the games during the fall and winter?

The best part is that grilling can be one of the healthiest ways to cook! Just follow our top ten tips for healthy grilling and barbecuing.



1. Pick the perfect protein.

Fish, skinless chicken breast and lean ground poultry are all healthier choices. The good fats in fish like salmon and trout actually have health benefits. And when you grill with skill, your guests won't even miss the red meat, which usually has more [saturated fat](#). Wrap marinated fish fillets in foil, construct colorful chicken kebabs, or make more savory turkey burgers by mixing minced portabella mushrooms and onions into the patties. If you do choose meat or pork, get "loin" or "round" cuts and "choice" or "select" grades of beef instead of "prime."

2. Rightsize your portions.

A healthy portion of any type of meat is about 3 ounces, or the size of a deck of cards, and definitely no more than 6 ounces. If that sounds small, just remember all the delicious grilled veggies and side dishes that will be keeping it company on your plate!

3. Give it a soak or rub.

We're not talking about a spa day! Marinating or rubbing spices on poultry, fish and meat can add amazing flavor with the bonus of being able to [use less salt](#). All you need is about ½ cup of marinade or 1 tablespoon of spice rub for each pound of food. Try this [simple marinade recipe](#) and find others in our [recipe center](#). Make a simple rub of your favorite spice (such as allspice, chili powder, cinnamon, cumin, garlic powder, paprika or rosemary) and black pepper. *Safety tip:* never reuse marinade or rub after raw meat has touched it.

4. Add color – lots of color.

Just about all your favorite colorful fruits and veggies can be grilled, alone or in kebabs, giving them delicious flavor that might win over even the most committed carnivore. The trick is to cut them into pieces that will cook quickly and evenly. Brush with a [healthy oil](#) to prevent sticking or use a grill basket to keep them out of the line of fire. Some favorites include asparagus, avocado, bell peppers, corn, eggplant, mushrooms, onions, potatoes, squash and zucchini.

5. Say bye to the bad fat.

Buy skinless poultry or remove the skin before cooking. Trim away any visible fat on meat. Brush or marinate foods with a healthy cooking oil. And let 'er drip – make sure fat drips away from the food while it cooks.

6. Let the simple grilled goodness shine through.

Don't drown your grilled masterpiece in salty sauces, sugary condiments or heavy dressings. Use as little of these as possible, and try making your own [healthier condiments](#). It's easier than you think! And sometimes, a simple squeeze of lemon or lime is all it needs.

7. Choose healthier sides.

Swap the traditional store-bought barbecue fare like baked beans, cole slaw, macaroni salad and potato salad – which can have a lot of saturated fat, sodium and added sugars – for healthier homemade versions. Or change it up and do a colorful bean salad, fruit salad or leafy green salad.

8. Make your buns whole grain.

Whole-grain buns and breads will complement your healthy feast with extra fiber, flavor and texture. If you're watching your calories and carbs, try an open-faced burger or lettuce wrap.

9. Grill fruits for dessert.

The natural sugars caramelize in the high heat, giving them extra sweetness and flavor. Try sliced apple, pear or pineapple or halved bananas, figs, nectarines, peaches or plums.

10. Keep it clean.

OK, so this isn't the fun part, but be sure to scrub down the rack or grill pan after each use. Removing leftover burnt pieces of food stuck to the grill prevents burning, smoking and bitter flavors the next time you use it.