

Bug Free Barbeque
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Bugs love a barbeque. Ants, yellow-jackets and mosquitoes enjoy sharing an evening with food and friendship. These bugs, however irritating, succumb easily to swatting and sprays. Not so with the bugs found in the food, the bugs that can cause stomach pains, illness and even death. Prevent these deadly food-borne bugs from attending the next family barbeque with these simple tips from the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Food safety begins before the food makes it into the house. While grocery shopping, organize the list so cold and frozen foods become the last foods added to the basket. Go straight home from the market and get that cold and frozen food put away quickly. If the ride home takes longer than an hour, or if the temperature seems excessively hot, consider taking an ice chest loaded with ice to the market to keep the food cooled on the trip home.

Once the menu for the barbeque has been decided, figure out what steps to take to ensure that the food remains bug-free. The common adage, “Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold,” helps to determine how to store, prepare and serve common barbeque foods. If thawing frozen food, keep safe by thawing it in the refrigerator. Need to get that food thawed faster? Use the microwave defrost setting if the food will be cooked immediately after thawing. Be sure meat and poultry have thawed completely to avoid frozen spots that will not cook thoroughly.

Marinades enhance the flavor of many foods. Marinate poultry and cubed meats for up to two days, beef, pork, veal and lamb roasts and chops for up to five days, always in the refrigerator, not on the countertop. Keep some marinade saved for dipping before using it for meats. To reuse marinade that has had meat products soaking in it, boil the marinade to kill those bugs. Cook all meats to proper temperatures before serving and use a thermometer to be really accurate. Here is a handy chart:

SAFE MINIMUM INTERNAL TEMPERATURES

- 🕒 Whole poultry: 165 °F
- 🕒 Poultry breasts: 165 °F
- 🕒 Ground poultry: 165 °F
- 🕒 Ground meats: 160 °F
- 🕒 Beef, pork, lamb, and veal (steaks, roasts and chops): 145 °F and allow to rest at least 3 minutes.

Use a clean plate and clean utensils for food coming off the barbecue. Keep all surfaces in contact with food clean. Maintaining the proper food temperatures and avoiding cross-contamination by cleaning thoroughly will keep those bad bugs away from the next barbecue. As for the ants.....well, good luck with that!

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website

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