

Safety Tips for Outdoor Meals & Entertainment



(MS) – The warm weather is finally here, so it's time to get ready for that first back-

yard barbecue bash. CSA Group, a leading certification and testing organiza-

tion, offers these important tips for a safe, seamless summer soiree – try saying that three times quickly!

Outdoor Gas Barbecues

* Before firing up the grill for the first time, carefully inspect burners and burner tubes for blockages due to dirt, grease, insects or rust build-up. Clean or replace any blocked parts with certified replacement parts (or have a licensed technician do it).

* Check for cracked, brittle or leaking hoses by applying

a 50/50 solution of soap and water to hoses and fittings. Turn on the main gas or propane valve while leaving burners off. Any leaks will show up as bubbles. Replace any damaged hoses or fittings.

* Propane cylinders must be inspected and re-qualified every 12 years in the United States. A date stamp on the cylinder indicates when it was last qualified. Do not use a rusty or damaged cylinder. If in doubt, replace your tank.

* Keep grills and barbecues away from combustible materials such as fences, trees, buildings, awnings and carports.

* No matter how hard it's raining, never use a barbecue in a garage.

Decorative lighting
* It's time to remove the holiday lights. These lights are designed to be temporary and can be a fire hazard if left out too long.

* When installing decorative lighting on patios or along

walkways, inspect the packaging and electrical cords to make sure that it's certified and marked for use in an outdoor or wet location.

* Turn off the electricity supply before the work begins and unplug lights when possible.

* Carefully inspect lights and lamps to make sure there are no broken or cracked sockets or housings, and no bare or frayed wires. For more information on CSA Group visit www.csa-group.org.

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Tips for Perfectly Grilled Vegetables



(MS) – One of the highlights of the summer season is the incredible bounty of fresh produce, and grilling these vegetables gives them a smoky, delicious dimension. Chef BBQ Naz, a grilling expert from Broil King, shares some simple tips for flavor perfection.

• When preparing vegetables, slice them to expose as much of the vegetable to the grill surface as you can.

• Coat vegetables with olive oil before placing them on the grill. This will help prevent them from sticking to the grill.

• Use the right tool for the job. Accessories like grill toppers and skewers are perfect for keeping smaller foods like cherry tomatoes and onions from rolling around or falling through the grate.

• Don't leave vegetables unattended. Vegetables are delicate and can easily overcook if not monitored.

• Grill extras. Leftover grilled vegetables are great in soups, salads, sandwiches and on pizzas and pasta.

When grilling vegetables, consider this popular recipe.

Grilled Zucchini Rolls Ingredients

- 3 medium zucchinis, sliced 1/4-inch thick, lengthwise
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 4 ounces chevre (soft goat cheese), at room temperature
- Pinch of freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch of kosher salt
- 2 tablespoons sun-dried tomatoes, oil-packed and minced
- 1 teaspoon oil from the sun-dried tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme,

minced
• 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

Directions

Preheat the grill on medium.

Brush both sides of sliced zucchini with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Place on the grill and cook for 4 minutes per side.

When cooked, set on a wire rack to cool.

In a small bowl, combine the chevre, salt, pepper, sun-dried tomatoes, oil and thyme.

Using a small spatula, spread the cheese mixture thinly over one side of the zucchini. Lightly roll the zucchini, and place seam side down on a small, parchment-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Place baking sheet on top rack of the grill for 15 minutes.

Remove to a platter and serve.

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Cooking for One or Two

Seniors face many changes as they move into their golden years. Downsizing living spaces and vehicles is common, as is implementing certain changes to improve quality of life. Many seniors also scale back in the kitchen, where some must make changes because of medical conditions. While it seems like reducing food portions would be easy, those used to prepping meals for a large family may find it difficult. The following tips can make meal preparation efficient and cost-effective.

• Divide and store. Supermarkets are increasingly offering larger packages of food products as well as "family size" offerings to compete with warehouse clubs. Buying in bulk can help individuals save money, but it may not always be practical for people living alone or with just a spouse. If you must buy in bulk, invest in a food vacuum sealer or freezer storage bags. Immediately separate meats and poultry into smaller portions before storing them in the freezer. Otherwise, look for bulk items that are individually wrapped to maintain freshness. Many canned and jarred items can be covered and stored in the refrigerator after containers are opened.

• Plan meals with similar ingredients.

To reduce food waste, use leftovers to create casseroles or mix them in with new meals. Broiled or grilled chicken can be used to make soups, stir-fry dishes, fajitas, and sandwiches. The fewer ingredients you have to buy, the smaller the risk of spoilage.

• Cut recipes in half. Recipes can be cut down depending on how many mouths need to be fed. When baking, cutting back on proportions of ingredients can be challenging. Search online for recipe-scaling programs that can make the work easier.

• Cook on the weekend. Use a weekend day to prepare food and package it into small containers in the refrigerator or freezer. Then the containers can be taken out as needed and heated quickly in the microwave for fast meals.

• Organize a meal-sharing club. Get together with a few friends who also have empty nests and split cooking duties. If you're accustomed to cooking larger portion sizes, do so and then spread the wealth with others in the group. Then sit back and relax when it is your opportunity to have meals delivered to you.

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■ PESTS,

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are deterred by smells or certain structures in a lawn or garden. For example, inserting chicken wire into a garden bed may be enough to repel burrowing animals. Certain insects, such as flies and mosquitoes, find the aromas of citronella grass, basil and marigold offensive. Surrounding a property with these plants can create a natural bug repellent. Lavender and rosemary are other aromatics that may deter pests. Blood meal and soap solutions can repel deer and other wildlife that may feed on garden plants.

Pests attracted to food can be kept at bay with frequent sweeping or hosing down of the patio. In addition, maintain a clean grill and store trash in tightly secured receptacles.

Consider more traditional alternatives

If natural repellents do not work, you may need to rely on more traditional products to repel insects and other pests. Beetle traps lure beetles with an inviting scent before the beetle gets trapped in a bag and cannot exit. Traps for wasps and flies follow a similar premise. Bug zappers are largely viewed as an inhumane option but can be highly effective. Unfortunately, these zappers also attract and kill beneficial insects, such as bees and butterflies.

Chemical repellents also are available. Stores stock pesticides that will rid plants of damaging insects. These repellents also may be used around the patio to make the area inhospitable to insects and other pests.

Contact an exterminator

If the problem is simply too difficult to manage on your own, then you might need to contact an exterminator, who can spray the perimeter of the home for bugs and can also be called in to safely trap and remove nuisance animals. An exterminator may also have detailed knowledge of protected species and which habitats can

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