

# Barbecue safety guide

**Before happily firing up your barbecue this summer, be it natural gas, charcoal, propane or electric, make safety your priority.**

If your barbecue is movable, as is the case with most charcoal or propane-fuelled models, when you do fire up, think about where you want to place it and be certain that you follow these safety measures:

1. Do not place the barbecue where anything will be dangling above it, such as low-hanging tree branches. And be sure it is far enough away from any structure to avoid smoke stains or discolouring. Never try to move your barbecue while it is alight.
2. Make sure your barbecue is on solid ground so that it doesn't roll or tip.
3. Even if your barbecue uses natural gas and has a permanent location, survey the surrounding area before you light up, especially the first time in the spring. Greenery can grow surprisingly fast and leaves and twigs might have accumulated where they shouldn't be, so clean up all debris first.
4. Realise that wind can blow the fire back on you, so be sure to take precautions with it. But do not light the barbecue in your garage or other indoor area to avoid the wind.
5. Don't add anything flammable to lit charcoal, such as lighter fluid, paraffin, kerosene, or petrol.
6. Never leave the lit barbecue unattended, especially if there are children in the vicinity, even next door in a fenced garden. A ball hitting the barbecue could be disastrous. Even if the lid is in place, a ball could still cause the barbecue to tip over.
7. Always have a fire extinguisher nearby and keep a source of water handy, just in case.
8. If you have no choice but to place your barbecue on a wooden deck, be sure it is free from debris such as dry leaves, twigs, etc.
9. Clean-up is crucial. Don't let grease build up on your barbecue as it catches fire easily and can be difficult to extinguish. If that does happen, quickly close the lid.
10. Do not wear loose sleeves or other clothing that could cause problems.
11. Wait until the barbecue has cooled down completely before you empty or clean it. Fires have been started from putting hot coals into a plastic containers.
12. For gas barbecues, be sure the tap is off before you try to change the cylinder, and always do that outdoors.



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13. If you think you might have a leak in your gas cylinder or in your connection, brush soapy water around it to see if it bubbles. If it does, try tightening the joint, but don't overdo it.

14. For gas barbecues: do not turn the cooking controls off first. Turn the gas cylinder off before you do that to be sure that residual gas in the pipe is used up.

### Keep children safe

There really is no excuse for children ever to be harmed at a barbecue. Just use some common sense and this short checklist:

1. Always be sure that no children are in the immediate area when you decide to fire up your barbecue. If you don't have a fenced garden with a lockable gate, you will have to keep an eye out so that neighbours' children don't wander into the area.
2. Be sure to teach your own children to respect the barbecue, letting them know in no uncertain terms that it is not a toy and they are not to go near it, lit or not.
3. And if children are going to be at your barbecue, be sure to keep an eye on them after the cooking is done, as well. Hot coals or leaking gas can be lethal.

And those precautions are not the only ones to consider. Food safety is an absolute must, especially when cooking outside. If you abide by the following rules, you should never have a problem.

**The barbecue food safety guide continues on the next page ...**



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## Use the following checklist to make sure your barbecue food stays safe:

1. Start with freshly washed hands.
2. Do not let raw meat juices drip onto other food.
3. Wash your hands again after handling raw meat.
4. Use separate utensils and plates for cooked and raw meat.
5. If you have marinated raw meat, don't add that sauce to food unless it has been boiled first. And always marinate in the refrigerator, not on the worktop.
6. Keep raw meat cold until you are ready to put it on the grill, especially when temperatures reach above 25 degrees C.
7. Always thaw meat in the refrigerator or in cold water.
8. If using charcoal, be sure that it is hot and ready (grey and powdery looking) before cooking.
9. Be sure your food gets cooked thoroughly by completely thawing it before putting it on the grill and repositioning it from time to time as it's cooking.
10. As a further assurance that your food will be thoroughly cooked, pre-cook it in the kitchen.
11. A charred exterior is no guarantee that the food is done. Cut into it to be sure.
12. To prevent excessive charring and also possible flare-ups, remove the visible excess fat and push the coals away from the centre, keeping the food in the middle.
13. Get a good meat thermometer and use it. Never stop cooking meat once you've started and resume later. Finish cooking it all the way; otherwise, it will not be safe to eat.
14. Keep all meat at a temperature of 60 degrees C or more after it has been cooked. Do that at the side of the grill in a covered pan or dish or in the oven at the lowest setting.
15. Never put the cooked meat back on the same platter that was used for the raw meat; bacteria could transfer to your cooked meat.
16. Finally, don't let food sit out for more than an hour, especially in hot weather. Refrigerate it in non-plastic containers, if it is still warm.

