



Your Best Summer Ever: Ten Tips for Beef on the Grill



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Grilling, a form of dry heat cooking, is one of the most exciting and healthy ways to enjoy beef, whether you're cooking on a gas or charcoal grill. Here are 10 tips sure to make this one tasty summer!

1. Chill out. Grilling times are based on beef going directly from the refrigerator to the grill. There is no need to bring beef to room temperature. Shape burgers in advance, cover and refrigerate until the grill is ready.

2. Only you can prevent flare-ups. Remove visible fat before grilling to help prevent flare-ups, charring and excess smoke formation.

3. Take a dip. Always marinate in the refrigerator. Tender beef cuts can be marinated for 15 minutes to 2 hours for flavor. Less tender beef cuts should be marinated at least 6 hours, but no more than 24 hours, in a mixture containing an acidic ingredient or a natural tenderizing enzyme. Pat beef dry after removing from marinade to promote even browning and prevent steaming. Do not save marinade for reuse. If a marinade has been in contact with uncooked beef, it must be brought to a full rolling boil before it can be used as a sauce.

4. Reach a happy medium. Grilling over medium heat ensures even cooking and flavorful, juicy meat. If beef is grilled over too high heat, the exterior can become overcooked or charred before the interior reaches the desired doneness.

5. Give it some gas. Since gas grill brands vary greatly, consult the owner's manual for information about preparing the grill for medium heat.

6. Be cool with charcoal. Never grill while the coals are still flaming. Wait until the coals are covered with gray ash (approximately 30 minutes), spread in single layer. To check cooking temperature, cautiously hold the palm of your hand above the coals at cooking height. Count the number of seconds you can hold your hand in that position before the heat forces you to pull it away; approximately 4 seconds for medium heat.

7. No piercings allowed. Use long-handled tongs for turning steaks; spatulas for burgers. A fork will pierce the beef causing loss of flavorful juices. And don't be tempted to press down on burgers – it only releases the juices and creates flare-ups.

8. Use the right tool for the job. The best way to determine doneness of burgers and steaks is to use an instant-read meat thermometer, inserted horizontally from the side to penetrate the center of the meat. Allow 10 to 15 seconds for the thermometer to register the internal temperature.

9. Get 'er done. Cook burgers to at least 160°F. The color of cooked ground beef is not a reliable indicator of doneness. Cook steaks to at least 145°F (medium rare doneness). The color will be very pink in the center and slightly brown toward the exterior.

10. You gotta keep 'em separated. Keep raw beef separate from other foods both in the refrigerator and during preparation. Wash hands, all utensils and surfaces in hot soapy water after contact with raw beef. Never place cooked beef on platters that held raw product. Use clean serving platters and utensils. Serve cooked food promptly and refrigerate immediately after serving (within two hours after cooking).