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OUTDOOR COOKING

Handle with Care

One of the great pleasures of summer is eating and cooking outdoors with family and friends. The popularity of this activity is attested to by the great number and variety of outdoor grills or “barbecues” being sold each year.

Such grills can be fun to cook on and provide delicious food, but they can also be dangerous. None of them are foolproof, and all should be handled with care.

Liquefied Petroleum Gas

Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), when used to fire a home barbecue, is contained under pressure in a steel cylinder. The content of an LPG cylinder, vaporized and in a confined area, has the explosive force of several sticks of dynamite. Therefore, the wise user of LPG will be aware of the dangers involved and the precautions that must be taken to avoid accidents.

No LPG burner should ever be ignited until the following steps are taken:

- Read the manufacturer’s instructions and be sure you thoroughly understand them.
- Do not transport LPG cylinders in the trunk of a passenger vehicle. A filled cylinder should always be transported in an upright position on the floor of a vehicle with all windows open. Remove the cylinder from the vehicle as soon as possible.
- Never leave a cylinder in a parked vehicle.
- Use the proper size wrench to make sure that all connections are tight. Remember: fittings on flammable gas cylinders have left-handed threads, requiring effort in a counterclockwise direction to tighten. To make sure that connections are tight, apply a soapy solution to detect leaks. If any bubbles are produced, the connections must be tightened further.
- Make sure that grease is not allowed to drip on the hose or cylinders.
- Never let children use a gas-fired barbecue.
- Never use a gas-fired barbecue inside any structure.
- Never store any LPG cylinder—either attached to the barbecue or as spare cylinders—inside any part of a structure, including porches and balconies.
- Store cylinders, including those attached to barbecues, outdoors in a shaded cool area out of direct sunlight.

Charcoal

Although charcoal may sound less dangerous than LP gas, it is just as necessary to take precautions in using charcoal burners.

- Never use charcoal barbecues in an enclosed space. Burning charcoal emits carbon monoxide gas, which—even in small quantities—can cause injury or death.
- Once a fire has been started, never add starter fluid. Fire may follow the stream of fluid back to the container, causing an explosion and scattering flaming liquid.
- Use great caution in disposing of the ashes. Ashes may contain live coals which can start a fire if not disposed of properly. The safest method is to wet ashes thoroughly with water before emptying the barbecue.

Follow these precautions and enjoy outdoor eating in health, happiness, and good weather.

Don’t be tempted by a rainy day to use outdoor cooking equipment inside—not even in a garage or on a porch or balcony.

