

Charcoal Grilling Safety



Photo by Robert S. Donovan

Although we believe charcoal is the best heat source for grilling meat, it involves an open flame and inherent safety risks. Here are some tips to keep your cookout safe:

1. Make sure nothing flammable is located near the grill. Hopefully, the grill was lit using a [charcoal chimney](#) or fire starter so there is no lighter fluid nearby.
2. Be careful when opening or closing vents or lifting the lid. Even plastic covers can get very hot! Use a grilling glove or mitt before touching any hot surface.
3. Try to stay away from the smoke while grilling. Lower-quality charcoal can contain saw dust, coal dust, starch, sodium nitrate, limestone and borax. Although these substances exist in small numbers it is best to avoid breathing in the smoke when possible.
4. Many grillers prefer to coat the cooking grate with a non-stick spray prior to placing the meat on the grate. This can often result in flame-ups, particularly when using a baking spray such as Pam. We recommend using a non-stick spray designed for high heat grills. [Weber Grill'n Spray](#) is the best non-stick spray we have used and is specifically designed for grilling applications. This spray results in little (if any) flare-up and is much safer than a traditional non-stick spray.
5. Ensure your meat is cooked to the proper temperature. Here are the USDA Recommended Safe Minimum Internal Temperatures:
 - Cook all raw beef, pork, lamb and veal steaks, chops, and roasts to a minimum internal temperature of 145 °F as measured with a food thermometer before removing meat from the heat source. For safety and quality, allow meat to rest for at least three minutes before carving or consuming. For reasons of personal preference, consumers may choose to cook meat to higher temperatures.
 - Cook all raw ground beef, pork, lamb, and veal to an internal temperature of 160 °F as measured with a food thermometer.
 - Cook all poultry to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165 °F as measured with a food thermometer.
6. After grilling, make sure your grill is cool before touching the grill or attempting to move it. This process can often be quickened by closing all of the air vents to kill the fire. Also, be aware that even if the grill is cool enough to touch, the charcoal may still be hot.

Some of this advice may seem like common sense, but paying attention to safety will help avoid a surprise trip to the emergency room.

<http://www.charcoalgrillingtips.com/charcoal-safety/>