

BRYCE WYLDE'S
THE GOOD
AND THE BAD
AND THE BBQ

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You know your summer love is back from a winter eviction when suddenly the mouth-watering smell of someone barbecuing wafts across the neighbourhood. It's that time of the year again — the season to uncover the backyard barbecue and dream of the day when you can finally trade in that blackened, tarnished beast for a stainless steel culinary masterpiece with 1,000-square-inches of grilling space, complete with a mounted side burner.

Nearly all of us will either host or attend a barbeque that offers up a smorgasbord of grilling selections, including healthy ones such as fish, chicken, and vegetable shish kabobs and burgers — the tasty goodness can last all summer long. The nice thing about firing up the barbecue is the minimal effort and little cleanup required to enjoy one of North America's favourite pastimes. Most of the food cooked on a barbecue simply needs to be thawed or marinated a few hours before and then slapped on the grill for that smoky great taste. But is it healthy for you? The reality is barbecuing does come with a few risks, some you may already be aware of. However, you may not know about its many health benefits!

LIMITING THE RISK OF FOOD POISONING

Many North Americans will succumb to food poisoning this year from undercooked or improperly handled meat. If you take chances, bacteria like salmonella, campylobacter, listeria, and E. coli sure can put a damper on your backyard bash and even the rest of your summer. So right from the point of purchase, carefully choose selections that are cold and tightly wrapped for freshness, and be sure to check the 'best before' dates. Don't be shy to request smaller cuts at the meat counter as this may minimize your concern about how to store extra meat. If you don't plan to use your meat within one to three days, freeze it immediately. Alternatively, it can be stored in the fridge for up to three days maximum, or in the freezer for up to six months; airtight packaging will prevent freezer burn. Defrost meat in the refrigerator overnight — never at room temperature — and be sure to examine your fridge for meat juices dripping onto other foods. It's highly recommended that you store meat at the bottom of the fridge. An important thing to note is that eggs are porous and if meat juices drip onto a carton of eggs, you should immediately wash them and re-refrigerate or discard the eggs in order to prevent contamination.

When preparing meat, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly before and after handling. Use two different cutting boards: one for raw meat and the other for vegetables and other foods in order to prevent cross-contamination. Refrigerate any leftovers within two hours. Lastly, invest in a meat thermometer, they're easy to use and can reassure you that meat has been safely and adequately cooked.

GOLDILOCKS

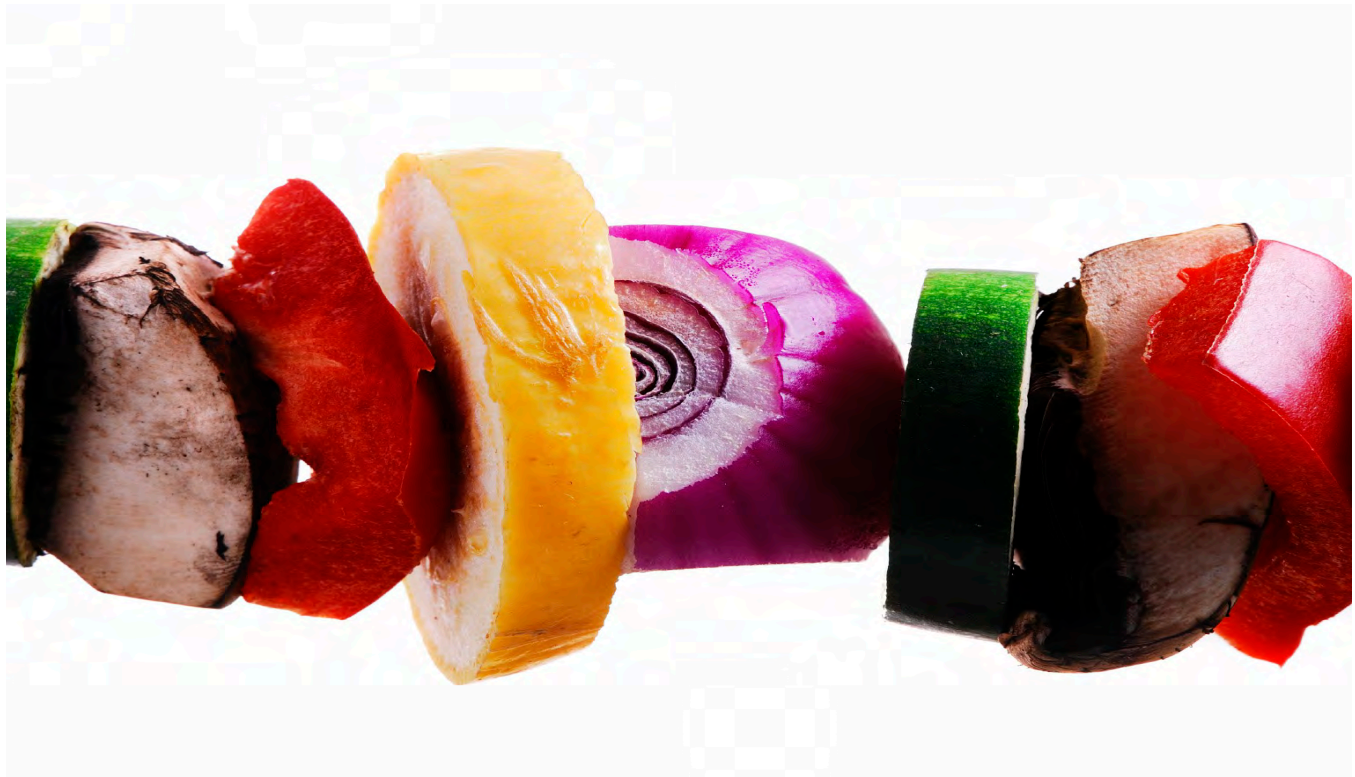
It is hazardous to undercook your meat, but you also don't want to burn or char it. You need to monitor your food closely when barbecuing since it actually cooks more rapidly; also keep an eye out for flare-ups and hot-spots which can cause uneven cooking, burning and charring. The burnt part of the meat contains polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon's (PAH's), which are considered a very dangerous substance found inside vapourized animal fat; PAH's have been investigated for their cancer-causing effects. I strongly suggest using a flat grill on your barbecue, which will greatly minimize the occurrence of flame-burnt meat. And since red meat is already an acclaimed artery clogger — burnt or not — if you insist on barbecuing it (and no harm if only the very rare occasion), consider using a marinade with apples, cherries and sage as they have been found to help your body detoxify PAH's.

A POTENTIAL FIRE HAZARD

If you use a charcoal grill either at home or in the park, food can easily burn if not monitored closely. But beyond the health risk of PAH's, charcoal grills carry a risk of starting a fire somewhere you may not want one because of the hot ash and embers that float through the air and fall from the draft holes at the bottom of the grills. It might be wise to keep a bucket of water or a fire extinguisher nearby.

SUN PROTECTION

It's one thing to burn meat on the barbecue and expose yourself to the known risks of PAH's, but quite another to barbecue yourself in the sun. No doubt, it is healthy to get about 15 minutes of unprotected, full-body, sun exposure daily (which is translated in your body to about 10,000 IU of naturally derived vitamin D), but remember, one blistering sunburn can more than double your chances of developing melanoma. So be sure to protect yourself before spending subsequent hours either as a sunbather, gardener, or chef in the sun. While wearing the chef's hat, keep in mind that the heat emanating off the barbecue makes it even more difficult to know exactly how much sun you're really getting.



As it is, most of us living north of the 32nd parallel already don't get enough vitamin D throughout the year, which often entices us to over-do it during our few months of summer. Protect yourself from over-exposure by considering a vitamin D3 supplement of 1,000-2,000 IU/day — only after running a simple blood test with your family doctor to determine your needs (known as serum 25(OH)D). However, before slathering on the first sunscreen you find around the house, think again. The Fourth Annual Sunscreen Guide by Environmental Working Group (EWG) gives low marks to the current crop of sunscreen products, with a few notable exceptions: EWG researchers recommend only 39 of 500 (or 8 percent) beach and sport sunscreens on the market this season. The reason? A surge in exaggerated SPF claims (SPF's greater than 50) and recent developments in understanding the possible hazards of some sunscreen ingredients, in particular, new government data linking a form of vitamin A used in sunscreens to accelerated growth of skin tumours and lesions. This is important information for you and your entire family this summer, so it might be prudent to visit their consumer guide at www.ewg.org for additional sunscreen tips and a list of effective brands that they suggest.

A GREAT WAY TO GET YOUR VEGGIES!

The nice thing about using a barbecue, whether it's a gas or charcoal grill, is that the techniques used are pretty universal when it comes to cooking your food. What is too often overlooked is that the barbecue was not exclusively designed for cooking meat. Grilling vegetables is an excellent way to get your family closer to, or sufficient in, the recommended optimal level of seven servings per day. In fact, grilling (without burning) your vegetables helps to release enzymes in the vegetable, which naturally increases its oxygen radical absorbance capacity (ORAC value). ORAC is also known as the antioxidant level of that vegetable. Where this is not true for all vegetables (such as green leafy ones), lightly grilled peppers, onions, tomatoes, and the like that you would typically include in a vegetable kabob have a higher antioxidant value compared to their raw equivalents.

DRESS IT UP AND DRINK IT UP!

A good barbecue is suddenly a great barbecue and a healthy barbecue with the right complement of drinks and dressings. More good news in this area — yes, go ahead and decant some red wine — studies have time and time again shown that the dark pigment in red wine has heart protective properties. The resveratrol found in the grape skin actually has anti-aging qualities and the phenolic substances possess anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. No matter your choice of alcoholic drink, don't over indulge (studies support healthy benefits from one drink if you're female and two if you're male). And if you don't like alcohol, consider a tall, ice-cold pomegranate juice with similar, if not better, properties to red wine. Next, ditch the high calorie condiments and switch to organic sauces, spices and other sides.

SAFE INTERNAL MEAT TEMPERATURES

Hamburger	71° C (160° F)
Roast, Steaks	63° C (145° F) medium rare 71° C (160° F) medium 77° C (170° F) well done
Ground Poultry	74° C (165° F)
Poultry Parts	82–85° C (180–185° F) Cook until juices run clear.
Turkey	85° C (185° F) Cook until juices run clear.
Pork	70° C (160° F) – 71° C (160° F) medium, 77° C (170° F) well done.
Fish	63° C (145° F) Should be opaque and should flake easily

HERE ARE SOME OF MY FAVOURITE GARNISHES WITH HEALTH-INDUCING PROPERTIES:



A HEALTHIER, TASTIER, TOMMY SAUCE – KETCHUP

Health properties of ketchup: strong antioxidant, prostate protector, lowers risk of cardiovascular disease.

Daily dose: 3 to 4 tablespoons.

Ketchup contains the antioxidant lycopene. U.S. Department of Agriculture research biologists and many other scientists well understand the powerful antioxidant in ketchup. They say it may slow the process that leads to atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). While all ketchup contains some lycopene, a study in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* found that organic versions contain up to 60 percent more per gram than conventional brands. The researchers also found that organic ketchup had the highest levels of vitamins A, C, and E.

Serving Tip: Use a naturally dark-coloured (with no artificial colours) organic ketchup for the highest lycopene concentrations. Great on veggie burgers, baked sweet potato fries, or mix with chopped garlic and olive oil to marinate grilled chicken.



A HEROIC HERB – ROSEMARY

Health properties of rosemary: eliminates food-borne carcinogens like PAH's.
Daily dose: 1 to 2 tablespoons.

Rosemary minimizes or eliminates carcinogens formed when cooking some foods, according to scientists at Kansas State University, who found that seasoning beef with rosemary before grilling can reduce those cancer-causing PAH's aforementioned by more than 30 percent. Dr. Leif Skibsted, PhD, professor of food chemistry at the University of Copenhagen, reports that the antioxidants in rosemary "scavenge" the harmful compounds.

Serving Tip: Add 1 to 2 tablespoons per 2 pounds of lamb, or spread a paste of chopped rosemary, Dijon mustard, garlic, and coarse sea salt on your meat before cooking. You may also want to try stuffing lean chicken or turkey with citrus fruit and rosemary sprigs before barbecuing.

BRAIN JUICE – OLIVE OIL

Health properties of olive oil: protects the heart, balances cholesterol, and supports brain and nervous system function.
Daily dose: a few generous drizzles.

Olive oil is a top source of oleic acid, an omega-9 fatty acid that is converted during digestion to oleoylethanolamide (OEA), a hormone that helps keep brain cells healthy. In a new study from the University of California, Irvine, rodents fed OEA were better able to remember how to perform two tasks than those that didn't eat it. Researchers hypothesize that OEA signals the part of the brain responsible for turning short-term memories into long-term ones. "OEA seems to be part of the glue that makes memories stick," says Daniele Piomelli, PhD, a professor of pharmacology and biological chemistry at the university.

Serving Tip: Drizzle on roasted vegetables (after barbecuing) or salad, or mix with crushed garlic and a pinch of salt and spread on toasted whole grain bread. You may also wish to blend equal parts olive oil, balsamic vinegar and water, followed by a squeeze of lemon and few gratings of lemon zest, then use as a dip for crisp vegetables like radishes or cucumbers.

FIRE IN THE HOLE! – HOT PEPPER AND HOT SAUCE

Health properties of hot peppers/hot sauce: curbs appetite and speeds metabolism.
Daily dose: a few slices/dashes.

Researchers at Laval University in Quebec found that eating hot peppers can speed up your metabolism and cool your cravings. A chemical called capsaicin found in jalapeno, chili, and cayenne peppers that give them their notorious heat can temporarily stimulate your body to release more hormones that can speed up your metabolism and also cause you to burn more calories. Research in the European Journal of Nutrition reports that eating just one meal containing capsaicin not only reduces levels of hunger-causing ghrelin but also raises GLP-1, also known to scientists as an appetite-suppressing hormone. Other scientists found that people who drank capsaicin-spiced tomato juice before each meal over two days ingested 16 percent fewer calories than those who drank it plain.

Serving Tip: Splash grilled vegetables, a side dish of brown rice, or make a Spicy Caesar already! Hot sauce also pairs well with citrus. Top half a grapefruit with a few shakes of hot sauce and drizzle 1/2 teaspoon of maple syrup on top. This novel backyard barbeque dessert may just help to metabolize your recent indulgence.

AN ALTERNATIVE RELISH – SAUERKRAUT

Health properties of sauerkraut: powerful digestive support.
Daily dose: 1/2 cup.

Some of the simplest foods are also the nutritional powerhouses. Sauerkraut (pickled cabbage) is one of them. Loaded with vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, and beneficial bacteria that strengthen digestive power, it has a noteworthy content of the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin, both associated with preserving eye health. Other nutrients in sauerkraut include calcium, potassium, magnesium, and vitamins C and K. Most importantly as it relates to good digestive health, sauerkraut is full of probiotic bacteria such as *Lactobacillus plantarum* that can help relieve the gas, stomach distension, and discomfort associated with “PBBS” or post-barbeque bowl syndrome! (Note: PBBS isn’t a real medical condition.)

Serving Tip: Use fresh sauerkraut as a relish for grilled meats or lean turkey hot dogs. Fresh sauerkraut has more of the probiotic bacteria than its jarred counterpart. At some later rainy day when a barbeque is out of the question, you may want to try tossing sauerkraut into a vegetable and tofu stir-fry.

JIMMY CRACK CORN AND YOU SHOULD CARE! – BLACK PEPPER

Health properties of black pepper: guards against cancer.
Daily dose: to taste.

Piperine, the active compound in black pepper, may help interrupt the self-renewing process of cancer-initiating stem cells, according to new research out of Michigan. It works by limiting the number of stem cells in your body. And, by limiting the number of stem cells, theoretically, you also limit the number of cells with the potential to form tumours. The lead study author, Madhuri Kakarala, MD, PhD, is a clinical lecturer in internal medicine at the University of Michigan Medical School. Serving Tip: Sprinkle on all of your favourite barbecue items; to increase the “heat score” and add texture, toast whole peppercorns before grinding. Also, get adventurous and try mixing fresh pepper into plain yogurt and use as a topping on fresh fruit. It makes for a wonderful patio dessert and matches nicely with most full-bodied Cabernets.

On that note, raise a glass

