Grilling Tips to Live by This Summer

Anna Schremmer
Phillips-Rooks District Extension Agent
Family and Consumer Science

Last Sunday was a beautiful day! A beautiful day to get out the grill! Warm weather, spring time, and May is Beef Month all leads to grilling. Whether you use a charcoal grill, a gas one, or even a smoker here is a list of tips and tricks for making the most out of outdoor cooking time.

**Season meat** - Big, thick steaks need a lot of seasoning, so be sure to cover them liberally with any rub or marinade before grilling. Be sure to allow 15 – 20 minutes for this before grilling.

**Clean your grill grate** - A clean grill will allow for non-stick grilling. Invest in a good grill brush and at the beginning of each cooking session, after you’ve preheated your grill, give it a good scrub down with the brush to remove any remains from the previous session. After scrubbing the grate, dip a wadded paper towel in a little oil and, using tongs, wipe the oil evenly over the grate.

**Preheat your grill** - Give your grill plenty of time to preheat. To gauge the heat of a charcoal fire, hold your hand about four inches above the grate and start counting: “One Mississippi, two Mississippi.” Over a hot fire, you’ll get to 2 or 3 three Mississippi before you’re forced to move your hand; over a medium-low fire, 4 to 5 Mississippi; over a medium-high fire, 8 to 10 Mississippi.

**Don’t move** - Let your steak develop a seared crust on the grill before moving or flipping it. If you try to lift the meat before it’s ready, it’ll stick to the grates.

**Don’t poke** - When checking for doneness, resist the urge to repeatedly poke, stab, or pierce your meat with a fork or prongs. The juices will escape, making the meat drier and less flavorful. Use a spatula or tongs to gently move and flip your food.

**Use the right fat** - Don’t use olive oil on steaks before grilling. The oil burns easily and gets bitter. Try using peanut oil or other vegetable oil with a high smoke point.

**The bigger the cut, the lower the heat.** - This is true for the double-cut pork chop or thick steak or any meat. Most of us tend to fire up the grill and char away, but for large cuts, turning down the heat is essential to get a perfectly done and tender piece of meat.

**Don’t sauce too soon.** - Be careful not to sauce food too early, especially if you are using a sweet sauce, as the sugars burn. Wait until the last few minutes of grilling to add the sauce when using a sauce that contains sugar.

**Timing is crucial** - Food continues to cook after it comes off the grill, so it’s best to remove it just before it has reached the desired doneness. Err on the side of undercooking a steak rather than overcooking it. You can always put it back on the grill.

**Doneness** - Always use a digital thermometer. A thermometer is the only way to guarantee that your meat has been cooked to the correct internal temperature and it makes it really easy to get consistently great results from your grilling efforts.

**Let it rest.** - Once your meat is off the grill, wait at least 5 minutes before slicing. This gives the juices a chance to settle back into the meat. But don’t place them directly onto a plate or tray. To preserve the crispy grill marks, you worked so hard to achieve, place the meat on a cooling rack. This allows enough air to circulate underneath that it doesn’t have to rest quite as long. Tenting it with foil helps keep the meat warm until serving.

**Clean grill grate…. again.** - Clean the grill while it’s still hot to easily remove burned bits of food stuck to the grate.

May is Beef Month, fire up that grill and enjoy a juicy hamburger, kabobs, or steak. “Knowledge for Life” provided by Phillips-Rooks Extension District #5 and K-State Research and Extension. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.