

## Food Safety Series (No.5)

December 2016

# Guidance on Departmental Barbecue Safety

### WEB VERSION

#### Introduction

When planning departmental barbecues the safest option is to source the catering from either University Catering or one of the Preferred Suppliers listed with Procurement Services.

People are to be discouraged from bringing in their own food to share as there is a certain amount of risk attached to any self-catering. If a department does choose to cater for themselves by purchasing food from supermarkets to prepare their own buffet or on a “bring and share” basis there are some precautions to follow.

Catering for parties and functions may mean that there are large quantities of cooked and uncooked food competing for fridge, freezer and cooker space. It is essential you plan your cooking and food storage carefully before you begin. Cross-contamination is a major cause of food poisoning which can occur when bacteria are spread from uncooked foods, or from pets, hands, dirty cloths etc., onto prepared food.

A wide range of foods including meat/poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, rice etc. can cause food poisoning if not handled and stored properly. It is important that you have the sufficient facilities to cater safely for functions.

#### Planning and Preparation

Purchase all foods from a reputable supplier and retain receipts. People should be discouraged from bringing their own food to share or cook on the BBQ, as there is no guarantee that it has been stored and handled correctly.

Purchase food as close as possible to the date of the BBQ and store meats and salads etc. below 8°C in a refrigerator until required when transporting them to the site of the BBQ (and until they are cooked/served meats and salads should be stored in cool boxes). Keep raw meats separate from salads/ready to eat foods at all times.

Ensure there is soap, hot water and disposable paper towels available for hand washing. It is advisable to have a supply of disposable gloves for those handling bread rolls etc. Make certain that plenty of utensils are available to ensure that the same ones are not used for raw and cooked foods.

Thaw frozen food thoroughly, preferably on a plate at the bottom of a refrigerator, before cooking (unless manufacturer's instructions state they can be cooked from frozen). Do not prepare or cook food too far in advance. Hot food must be eaten within 2 hours of removal from heat, and after this time it must be thrown away. All chilled foods must be eaten within 4 hours of removal from refrigerated conditions, and after this time they must be thrown away.

If salads are to be made rather than bought pre-packed you must ensure that all utensils, chopping boards etc. are clean and have not been used for raw meats without thorough cleaning and disinfection. Wash hands thoroughly before preparing food and especially after handling raw meat.

Ensure there will be adequate provision for storage and removal of waste.

Clean the BBQ and all equipment before use.

## **Cooking**

The biggest risk of food poisoning is from raw and undercooked meat.

Raw meat can contain poisonous bacteria and must not be allowed to touch food that has already been cooked or is ready to eat (such as salads and burger buns). Anything that touches raw meat can carry bacteria to other food. Do not use plates, utensils etc that have touched raw meats for cooked/ready to eat foods. Wash hands thoroughly after handling raw meat. Do not allow raw meat to touch or drip onto cooked or ready to eat foods.

Light the BBQ well in advance and wait until the charcoal is glowing red, with a powdery grey surface, before you start to cook. Do not allow raw meat to touch partially or fully cooked food on the grill.

Ensure foods are piping hot all the way through to the center of the thickest part with no pinkness remaining and juices that run clear. It is preferable to use sanitised calibrated probe for this, if possible.

Turn food regularly, and move it around the barbecue, to cook it evenly. Even if meat is burnt on the outside, it might not be cooked properly on the inside. If in doubt, do not serve or consume.

If cooking for large numbers of people, you could cook meat indoors and finish on the BBQ for added flavour. Pre-cooked foods must be stored correctly and safely before being finished off on the BBQ.

Don't add sauce or marinade to cooked food if it has already been used with raw meat.

Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold – don't leave them standing around. Throw away any leftovers and never attempt to re-heat.

## **General Safety**

It is not advisable for the person(s) cooking to drink alcohol.

Keep children and animals well away from the BBQ.

To light charcoal, always use proper BBQ lighter fuel or self-igniting charcoal; never use petrol or other inflammable liquids to try and start the BBQ. If using gas, check joints for leaks with soapy water before use.

Ensure that the grill is lit immediately, if the grill fails to light at first or second attempt, turn off gas immediately and leave for a few minutes before relighting. Once lit, never leave a BBQ unattended. Never attempt to move a lit BBQ.

Position BBQ's on level ground, well away from fences, hedges and trees, or anything that could catch fire.

Ensure games or activities take place well away from the BBQ.

Remember BBQ's can be dangerous, the grill is very hot and can cause burns, or

even serious fires if knocked over. Take care when cooking fatty foods as lots of fat spilling onto the coals may cause them to flare up. Keep a fire blanket, bucket of water, sand or a hose/water sprayer close by in case of accidents.

Ensure the charcoal is cold and/or the gas securely turned off or disconnected before leaving the site. When using a gas BBQ, turn off the gas cylinder before the BBQ controls, this ensures any residual gas in the pipeline is used up.

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## **Further Information and Training**

Those responsible for preparing or cooking food on a barbeque should always have an understanding of the principles of food safety. As a minimum, they should read this leaflet.

## **University Fire Safety Unit**

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