

## Outdoor Grilling Tips for the Upcoming Memorial Day Weekend

Memorial Day is traditionally the start of the outdoor grilling season, a time when families and friends gather in the backyard or around the pool and enjoy time visiting, reminiscing, and eating. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, it is important to remember several important guidelines when grilling outdoors to ensure that your grilled food reaches the table safely.

- **Marinate safely.** Marinate foods in the refrigerator - *never* on the kitchen counter or outdoors. In addition, if you plan to use some of the marinade as a sauce on the cooked food, *reserve a portion separately* before adding the raw meat, poultry, or seafood. **Do not reuse marinade.**
- **Cook immediately after "partial cooking."** If you partially cook food to reduce grilling time, do so *immediately before* the food goes on the hot grill.
- **Cook food thoroughly.** When it's time to cook the food, have your food thermometer ready. Always use it to be sure your food is cooked thoroughly.
- **Keep "ready" food hot.** Grilled food can be kept hot until served by moving it to the side of the grill rack, just away from the coals. This keeps it hot but prevents overcooking.
- **Do not reuse platters or utensils.** Using the same platter or utensils that previously held raw meat, poultry, or seafood allows bacteria from the raw food's juices to spread to the cooked food. Instead, have a clean platter and utensils ready at grill-side to serve your food.

Proper food temperatures are critical in preventing the growth of food borne bacteria while grilling outdoors or picnicking. It is extremely important to remember to never let your picnic food remain in the "Danger Zone" - between **40° F and 140° F** - for more than 2 hours, or 1 hour if outdoor temperatures are above 90° F. This is when bacteria in food can multiply rapidly, and lead to food borne illnesses. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recommends following these simple rules for keeping cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Cold perishable food should be kept in the cooler at **40° F** or below until serving time. Hot food should be kept hot, at or above **140° F**.

For more information about proper outdoor grilling procedures please contact June Ureste at the Live Oak County Extension Office at 449-1703.