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## Grilling Outdoors Safely

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Grilling outdoors is a wonderful alternative to heating up your kitchen during these hot, summer months. It is also a great way to spend time with family and friends. However, the Texas AgriLife Extension Service would like to remind you of some simple rules to keep in mind to ensure you keep your cookout safe.

First, make sure you purchase meat that is fresh and high quality. Upon leaving the store, make sure you take it straight home and put it in the refrigerator. If the trip home takes more than 30 minutes, it is best to put it into an insulated cooler. Meat such as steak or pork chops need to be cooked within 4 or 5 days, while poultry, fish, seafood, or ground beef should be cooked within 1 to 2 days.

If you are thawing out frozen meat, the best way to thaw it is on the bottom shelf of your refrigerator. If you thaw it in the microwave, you must cook it right away. Many of us have thawed out meat at room temperature sitting on the cabinet top, but this is an old habit we must break! This greatly increases the risk of bacteria that can make you sick. It is better to be safe than sorry!

Nothing is better on grilled meat than a great marinade (I have some great recipes for marinades, call me!) A good rule of thumb is to prepare 1/3 cup of marinade per pound of meat or poultry. You marinate up to 2 hours if you only want to add flavor, but up to 24 hours if you want to tenderize your meat. Always marinate your meat in the refrigerator and make a separate batch to marinate the meat after it has finished cooking.

When cooking meat on a grill you will find it can brown very quickly, but that doesn't necessarily mean it is done. The only safe way to tell if it is done or not is to measure it's internal temperature with a food thermometer. Beef, veal, lamb, and roasts - 145 degrees F. – 160 degrees F., hamburgers - 160 degrees F., poultry - 165 degrees F., pork – 160 degrees F., and hot dogs (already cooked) – 165 degrees F. Place the thermometer in the center-most part of the food – away from the bone.

After your food is grilled, you need to keep it at 140 degrees F. or warmer until served. You can move it to the back side of your grill away from the coals or fire or place it in the oven at 200 degrees F. Cooked foods, such as meats should be eaten or refrigerated right away. Never let it set out for more than 2 hours. If the weather is 90 degrees F. or above, then the rule is 1 hour.

I have included a marinade I use on chicken that I personally love! I got it from the Texas Beef Council website at <http://www.txbeef.org>.

## Caribbean Jerk-Style Marinade

### Ingredients

3/4 cup prepared Italian dressing  
1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce  
1 Tbsp. packed brown sugar  
1 large jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely chopped  
1 tsp. ground allspice  
1 tsp. ground ginger

### Instructions

Combine all ingredients in small bowl.  
Pour over meat and refrigerate 2 hours to overnight. Discard marinade.  
Grill meat as directed.

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