

Getting fired up about barbecue bugs: the facts

The Germans may have won the World Cup, but we've won the battle of the barbecues. In 2013, the UK hosted more than 125 million barbecues, and we were named Europe's leading barbecue nation, beating the Germans into second place.

However, as is the case with football, there are always penalties to contend with, and at barbecues, the potential penalty for foul play is food poisoning - cases of food poisoning almost double over the summer.



Barbecues may be fun but food poisoning certainly isn't – especially if your family and friends are struck down with dangerous bugs passed on through undercooked or unhygienically-handled food.

The main types of food poisoning that can be attributed to barbecues include campylobacter, E.coli, salmonella and listeria.

Campylobacter is the most common food poisoning bug in the UK, and it can be found on nearly 65%* of chicken sold in our shops and supermarkets. It's passed on to humans in undercooked poultry, and can lead to people being very ill indeed. It can even lead to permanent disability. Most people recover, but not all.

Salmonella is another common bug found on raw meat and undercooked poultry. It leads to fever, vomiting and stomach pains and it can make you ill for weeks.

E.coli, again often passed on through raw and undercooked meats, can lead to bloody diarrhoea, stomach pains and vomiting.

Listeria can turn up in pates and salads. This bug is particularly dangerous for pregnant women as it can lead to a miscarriage, but the most at risk from all the barbecue bugs are children and older people.

Research carried out for the Food Standards Agency (FSA) shows that 56%** of men say they are the 'main cook' at a barbecue, compared to 21.4%** of women.

*FSA - A UK survey of campylobacter and salmonella contamination of fresh chicken at retail sale:
<http://food.gov.uk/science/research/surveillance/fsisbranch2009/fsis0409>

**FSA Survey (July 2014)
Barbecue Factsheet – July 2014

24%

of people who aren't the main cook in their kitchen claim to be the main cook at the barbecue.**

You might imagine, then, that the problem of food poisoning at barbecues is a 'man thing', but the research also indicates that unhygienic barbecue behavior is something that we can all be grilled about.

Almost one-in-five people (19%**) do not keep raw and cooked foods on separate plates, increasing the risk of bacterial cross-contamination.

A total of 28%** don't check that burgers and sausages are cooked all the way through before serving, and 32%** don't check that chicken is cooked properly.



51%

of those surveyed used the same tongs for raw and cooked meat, which means that they are transferring bacteria from the raw meat to the cooked meat.**

It's the little things that can keep you and your family safe.

The FSA's top tips include:

- **Pre-cook** the meat or poultry in the oven first and then finish it off on the barbecue for flavour.
- **Charred doesn't mean cooked**, make sure that burgers, sausages and chicken are properly cooked by cutting into the meat and checking that it is steaming hot all the way through, that none of it is pink and that any juices run clear.
- **Disposable BBQs take longer** so, always check that your meat is cooked right through.
- **Avoid cross contamination** by storing raw meat separately before cooking, use different utensils, plates and chopping boards for raw and cooked food.
- **Don't wash raw chicken** or other meat, it just splashes germs.

Find out more

If you want your barbecue to be a sizzling success, find out more about the FSA's top tips at: food.gov.uk/lovebbq

For advice on barbecue safety and local by-laws for using barbecues in open spaces, contact your local authority.

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