

## Grilling Tips: Safety first will help keep the fun in outdoor eating

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Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee says getting ready for the outdoor grilling season requires one important tool in addition to tongs, a spatula and oven mitts.

“Grab that meat thermometer, too,” said Blakeslee, who is also coordinator of the university’s Rapid Response Center, a source of information on food safety and other consumer topics.

“A thermometer is your best defense against any foodborne illness and checking for doneness,” she said. “Don’t rely on color, because it’s really misleading. Internal temperature is the best way to check for doneness.

She added that depending on the type of meat you are grilling, there are three temperatures to remember:

165 degrees F – For any type of poultry, whether it’s chicken or turkey, and regardless if it’s ground or even whole.

160 degrees F – For any type of ground meat, including beef, pork or lamb.

145 degrees F – For steaks and chops, whether it is beef, pork or lamb.

“Insert the tip of the thermometer into the thickest part of the cut,” Blakeslee said. “For burgers or thinner cuts of meat, try to insert the thermometer in from the side, not from the top. That will give you a better reading.”

Blakeslee shared other tips to make sure your grilling experience is successful:

Cleaning the grill - Caked-on grease or food can cause a fire. Brush and scrub the grate well.

She also advised inspecting the cleaning brush.

“If you’ve got a brush where those little metal bristles are starting to come loose or break, it’s time to throw it out and get a new one,” she said. “Those may break off on the grate itself and if you don’t see them, they could get stuck on your food, and you could ingest them.”

Food safety - Blakeslee cautioned against cross-contaminating foods.

“The main thing is if you’re handling raw meat with tongs, don’t use those same tongs that handled the raw meat with your cooked vegetables or meat,” she said. “Wash your tongs in between handling raw and cooked foods. If you have an extra set, use a clean set instead.”

“Once you take your meat off the grill, don’t put it back on the plate that had the raw meat on it. And eat it right away. Once it starts to get warmer outside and up over 90 degrees, you can leave food out for about an hour, but after that, put it in the refrigerator or ice chest.”

In cooler, springtime weather, Blakeslee said food can be left out for up to two hours, but then should be refrigerated.

Safety precautions - Blakeslee also advised keeping a fire extinguisher or easy access to water nearby when grilling. Set the grill in an open area, away from the house and never grill inside your garage.

“Supervise the grill all the time,” she said. “Pay attention to what’s going on, because if you leave it unattended, it could spark a fire, or if kids or pets are running around outside, they may accidentally tip it over.”

More grilling and food safety tips are available from the Kansas State University Rapid Response Center, [www.ksre.ksu.edu/foodsafety](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/foodsafety).