

## **Don't Let Grilling Mistakes Spoil the Meal!**

Outdoor meals can be celebrations, yet, as the grilling season progresses, backyard chefs who may run short on time or become distracted by conversation with family or friends can jeopardize food safety, quality – and property. Moving a meal outdoors can keep the heat out of the kitchen, but doing so adds some food safety steps, said Karen Blakeslee, K-State Research and Extension food scientist and coordinator of K-State's Rapid Response Center.

### **Tips to prevent food safety and outdoor cooking mistakes include:**

- \* Position a grill away from home, garage or other structures, such as a covered patio, and out from under trees.
  - \* Clean the grill at the beginning of each season, after each use, and at the end of the season, before storing.
  - \* Invest in grill tools, including long-handled spatulas and tongs, grill baskets for smaller food items (such as cut fruits or vegetables to be grilled), and hot mitts.
  - \* Preheat grill. If using a gas grill, allow time for the grates to heat; if using charcoal briquettes, allow time for coals to ash and flaming to subside.
  - \* Oil grill grate to prevent food from sticking. If using a charcoal grill, preheat the grate along with the coals; if using a gas grill, heat the grill first. Protect hands with a hot mitt and tongs and lightly brush the grill grate with cooking oil. Or try using a small wad of aluminum foil dipped into cooking oil to swab the grill grate.
  - \* Reserve separate utensils for raw and cooked foods. Reserve one plate or platter to take the raw meat or poultry to the grill, and a second clean plate or platter, spatula or tongs to remove cooked food from the grill and to serve. Keep food covered and out of direct sunlight.
  - \* Start meats and poultry first. Consider size in estimating cooking time for cut fruits and vegetables, which typically take less time to cook. Turn grilled fruits and vegetables with a spatula or tongs reserved for that purpose (and not used for raw meats and poultry).
  - \* Wash hands frequently, and particularly after handling raw or cooked foods and other, non-food activities.
  - \* Check temperatures with a meat thermometer. Insert meat thermometer from the side to check done temperatures of patties or other cuts of meat one-inch or less in thickness, as the probe on the thermometers typically has a dimple (temperature sensor) that must be inserted in the meat or poultry to measure temperature.
- Whole cuts of beef, lamb, pork and veal (steaks, chops, roasts and tenderloins are examples) should be cooked to 145 degrees F. Ground beef, lamb, and pork should be cooked to 160 degrees F, and poultry should be cooked to 165 degrees F.