



Healthy BBQ eating - August 2009

Inside this months issue

Choose lean organic meats

Vegetarian Options

Cook Meat safely

Choose healthy side dishes

Healthy Desserts

When you think of summer what comes into your mind, warm sunny days, glass of Pimms and BBQ's in the garden. Your choice of eating at BBQs can be as healthy as you want it to be and it doesn't have to equal unhealthy food!

In this months newsletter there are several tips to help you enjoy the BBQ season while still eating healthy!!!

Choose lean organic meats

Choose organic lean or extra lean meats. Visit your local butcher and when purchasing meat ask him to trim any visible fat or remove prior to cooking. Choose kebabs with chicken or turkey and add some peppers, onions or mushrooms.

Another delicious option is to serve fish of some description. You could go for monkfish cubes, with alternate chunks of mango, then drizzle with a little olive oil to cook, served with wedges of lemon or lime.

Or, if salmon's more your thing, place salmon fillets into separate sheets of foil to make individual parcels, squeeze some lemon juice over, wrap up and pop on the barbecue for around 10 minutes.

Try marinating (make your own) your meats for a few hours before you begin cooking to add delicious flavours.

Mix together a little red wine, some lemon, soy sauce, whole grains mustard, honey with some herbs (basil & coriander)

Or Worcestershire sauce, low sodium soy sauce lime juice, and tomato paste, work really well.

Vegetarian Options

Serve a vegetarian option, veggie burgers or vegetable kebabs. You could try grilling extra - firm tofu, it will work really well on a skewer with some vegetables. Or, if you're making up kebabs try layering onion slices with peppers, zucchini, aubergines, or any combination of your favourite veggies.

Another option is to serve barbecued halloumi - this cheese is firm so it won't melt when cooked, this means you can slice or cube it to cook over the barbecue until browned on the outside and soft on the inside.

Barbecued vegetables are delicious, and it's a great way to add more variation and colour to your party food. Try wrapping different vegetables in foil and then popping straight onto the grill. Whole mushrooms, corn on the cob, and asparagus spears barbecue really well.

Cook Meat safely

Not only should you improve the quality of the meat you are consuming but also the cooking methods you use to prepare them. The temperature at which you cook your meat and the way you eat it - i.e. well-done, rare, medium-rare, etc. - is also extremely important to focus on.

Research has shown that cooking certain meats at high temperatures creates chemicals that are not present in uncooked meats. A few of these chemicals may increase cancer risk. For example, heterocyclic amines HCAs are the carcinogenic chemicals formed from the cooking of muscle meats such as beef, pork, fowl, and fish.

You should avoid cooking your meat at a very high temperature over long periods of time. When meat is burnt or charred then there is an increased risk of producing these chemicals and an increase risk of cancer. In addition over-cooked meats tend to be harder to digest.

Try cooking the meats medium-rare and removing any blackened or charred pieces, the worst parts for you. You can cook the meat partially in the oven before putting it on the grill to cut down cooking time, which gives the HCAs less time to form, or cook smaller pieces, which cook more quickly.

Marinating in red wine for six hours prior to grilling has been shown to substantially reduce the amount of HCAs. You can add high antioxidant fruits like blueberries or cherries into the meats prior to cooking as well. Using olive oil, lemon and garlic can also lower HCA levels.

Choose healthy side dishes

Reduce your portion sizes of meat, avoid the bread & rolls and fill up on healthy side salads, rices, pastas, coleslaw, pulses instead.

Make sure to complement any meal with lots of vegetables - especially green leafy veggies

like kale or spinach, and preferably some raw as well as cooked. Green leafy vegetables provide your body with nutrients to counteract some of the harmful effects of the other foods at a BBQ. Summertime is a great time to find locally grown and organic produce in abundance since it is a great time for farmers markets.

Make up some healthy rice and couscous dishes with lots of raw vegetables - onions, cucumber, peppers, celery - practically any raw veg can be added to rice, pasta and couscous.

Make the most of the lovely small potatoes, serving hot or make-up a potato salad.

Slice up some onions, cabbage & carrots, and make up your own coleslaw with reduced fat mayonnaise.

Another really healthy dish is mixed pulses (beans) - these are vegetable proteins. You can buy tin mixed beans and add some raw vegetables to them with a little lemon, olive oil and some fresh herbs from the garden.

Healthy Desserts

A large bowl of fresh fruit salad, served with low fat yogurt makes a healthy dessert.

Summer is the season for berries - raspberries, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, recurrent are full of wonderful antioxidants to help keep the immune system strong with all this Swine Flu around.

Or, you could finish off your BBQ with barbecued bananas - when the charcoal starts to die down, wrap bananas in foil in their skins and pop on the shelf, leave for about 10 minutes then unwrap and enjoy with a little creme freiche!