

York University Staff Association Health and Wellness News and Views

Well here we are with the month of July in full swing. Many of you may not know that July is **National Grilling Month**. Grilling is a staple of Canadian life. Backyard barbecues, fire pits at the cottage, hibachis at campgrounds all become a place to create delicious meals over a coal bed or wood fire.

Our family really does enjoy grilling our meals, and many times it is the entire meal we cook on the BBQ. My husband does a great job grilling for our family. Usually we do the tag team approach and I try to do the prep work before he gets home and then once he is home from work he just fires up the grill and takes the prepped food out to the backyard to cook, enjoy and relax after work. I must admit, it is sometimes nice to give up some of the control you would have in the kitchen in order to be outside and spend precious time with the family. Sometimes control is overrated anyway.

There are many ways that you can turn your BBQ into a flavourful and fun way to cook, but also a healthy way to eat. Choose foods that are low in fat, high in nutrients and full of flavor. Grilling not only adds that delicious smokey flavor, but most times foods are cooked without adding excessive fats and oils. Think of a delicious seasoned grilled chicken breast served with a delicious summer salad!

Grilling has become such a social event. Since forever, cooking with fire has always meant gathering the clan outdoors, and there is no more intimate assembly than standing around the fire, a drink in hand, with the sweet aroma of smoke in the air, and loved ones gathered at the table. There's nothing like a good old BBQ to bring family and friends together. Today a simple text message alerting friends that the drinks are cold and the grill is hot, will result in a backyard full of people relaxing and talking about their day. We celebrate all our summer holidays outback by the grill.

The flame war between charcoal fanatics and gas grill hotheads burns brighter than ever. The age-old

debate over which grilling method is “better” involves several variables, from flavor, to food choice, to convenience, to cost. When it comes to which is healthier? Props go to propane. Studies show that charcoal-grilled meats contained more carcinogens than meat heated with propane. When fat drips from meat it creates PAH-infused smoke, which coats your food. Also, charcoal flames are hotter, which chars meat and creates heterocyclic amines another carcinogen. Propane still produces some PAHs and HCAs, so always trim fat. Lean meats create less drippings and less smoke, which reduces PAHs. Studies also show that marinades not only add flavour, add moisture and tenderize, marinated meats reduce HCAs levels by 90 percent. And don't forget to flip frequently. Studies also show that turning meat frequently results in fewer HCAs. From a taste perspective, on the other hand, many prefer the smokier, richer taste of food cooked on a charcoal grill. If taste is paramount to you, then go charcoal. If convenience is paramount, go gas. Or best of all, get both. There are several dual fuel grills on the market today.



“Don't play with your food” doesn't apply when you're eating BBQ. If you don't get it on your shirt you're not doing it right. There are a few basic rules for a BBQ. Keep your grill clean, avoid charring meats, choose healthy foods and cook meats to the required temperature. And remember that grilling doesn't need to be limited to meats – you can cook your vegetables and even some fruits on the BBQ as well.

For a quick, easy and healthy marinade for beef, chicken or salmon try a good olive oil (Cold pressed)

an aged balsamic vinegar, a little salt and pepper to taste. Marinade for a few hours and enjoy.

My family loves fish. An easy and healthy way to cook fish is to place a fish fillet (ie tilapia) on a large sheet of aluminum foil with herbs, a little garlic, some lemon slices or even a splash of white wine. Carefully fold the aluminum foil into a packet and place it on the grill and cook until fish is light and flakey.

Keep your meat consumption in check! Sometimes it's a great idea to let veggies steal the spotlight. Nowadays, there's more to barbecuing than tossing a few hunks of meat on the fire. Vegetables and fruit deserve equal rights on the grill, as well as making your backyard BBQ more colourful, adding produce to the menu will please vegetarians, as well as carnivores on your guest list. Portobello caps make excellent mini casseroles. Top with tomato and cheese and grill to a smoky perfection. Replace the traditional beef burger with a yummy portabella mushroom burger that even a meat lover would love. Marinade the mushroom then grill and top with melted Swiss Cheese, grilled red onion, tomatoes, spinach, and avocado. That said, fish is a great source of healthy fats, but some of the same nutrients are found in fact found in avocados. A grilled avocado is elegant in its simplicity! Simply brush with lime juice and place on the grill to infuse this rich green fruit with savory smoke. The grill marks make for delicious presentation, and you can up the ante by serving fresh salsa smack-dab in the middle. Add a dash of cayenne, sour cream, cilantro, and garnish with a lime wedge. For a healthier version of French fries, spray the inside of an old metal cake/lasagna pan with non-stick cooking spray, then scatter thinly cut wedges of raw potatoes in the pan, brush lightly with olive oil and dust with favourite seasonings. Place the pan on the grill over a low flame and turn the potatoes occasionally until tender and golden brown. Tomatoes not only add colour to your meal. They are an excellent source of vitamins. Try grilling your tomatoes with a little olive oil. Add some parmesan cheese and balsamic vinegar to kick it up a notch.

Grill pineapple for dessert. This is so easy. You can use either fresh or canned pineapple. Cut into slices if needed. Place pineapple on med/hot grill and cook them until they are heated through, just a couple of minutes each side. Serve the pineapple rings with some frozen yogurt and a sprinkling of your favourite nuts. Make sure to leave room for the occasional s'more!

Outdoor grilling can be both healthy and flavourful. But most of all it keeps us where we want to be: Outdoors! Having great times with good friends and delicious food. So, get outside and ENJOY!
Happy Grilling!

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