

# Grilling for Seniors

Right now, we are all doing our part to rid our nation of the coronavirus – we’re staying home, practicing social distancing when we absolutely need to go out and being more aware than ever of basic health habits. No one knows for sure when this pandemic will pass and life can return to normal (or, as some predict, a “new normal”). But whenever that comes, you can be sure that we’ll want to once again share good times with people who are important in our lives. Never will there be a greater reminder of the importance of living life to its fullest.

For many of our members, there is no more perfect way to spend a summer afternoon or evening than a cookout with family and friends. And once this current storm passes, we’ll all want to get back to creating new memories. But as we get older, hosting a backyard gathering suddenly becomes a little more challenging on two fronts: What are some safety tips to follow, and what can you serve that will be appealing to and healthy for everyone?

## **Safety First.**

When it comes to safety, there are a few tips not just for seniors but for anyone planning a barbecue. These include:

- Propane and charcoal barbecue grills should only be used outdoors.
- The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under leaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep young ones and pets away from the grill area.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- If you use a starter fluid with a traditional charcoal grill, be sure to keep that fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources. And when you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.
- If you use propane, check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year. If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not move the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.

## **What to Serve.**

As we age, it is more important than ever to consider our diets, so here are five ideas to keep in mind when you’re grilling for seniors:

If you are having friends over, see if there are any dietary restrictions they may have. Having this information can help you make some simple changes to your menu that make more dishes accessible to more people. If, for example, you have a few guests who are on sodium-restricted diets, opting to forgo the salt when seasoning your food (but instead having a salt shaker at the table) gives everyone more options to choose from.

- Counterattack high cholesterol by avoiding fatty food. Put a boneless, skinless chicken breast on the grill for a low-fat, protein-packed meal. There are also a variety of hamburger options ... for



- example, try turkey burgers instead of red meat.
- Seafood is great on the grill and has tremendous health benefits. Many nutrients in fish, like omega-3, provide many benefits for our bodies; so be sure to include some salmon or shrimp at your next cookout.
  - Fruits and vegetables are good for all ages. A raw vegetable platter or fresh-cut watermelon are a great addition to any barbecue, but don't forget that you can also grill your veggies and fruit! Try some vegetable kabobs or slice up some pineapple and toss it on the grill.

- As part of the barbecue fun, don't forget to stay hydrated. For beverages, try to stick with water, homemade lemonade or fruit juice blends that aren't terribly high in sugar.

**In a nutshell, keep it simple.** And remember that there are many ways to create a barbecue menu that accommodate common senior dietary restrictions but do not skimp on flavor. The point is to have fun, so as long as there is a mix of healthy, enjoyable foods to choose from, everyone is sure to have a great time.