

THE TOP 9 GRILLING MISTAKES AND HOW TO FIX THEM



AP Photo/Mary Altaffer

Steaks cook on a grill in New York. If you are cooking food by the direct method (hamburgers, hot dogs, boneless chicken breasts, small steaks, vegetables, etc.), flip only once halfway through the cooking time.

By **ELIZABETH KARMELE**
Associated Press

I love to grill, and barbecue, and I have devoted my career to outdoor cooking for more than two decades. In that time I've seen a lot of mistakes, and people tend to make them over and over. So I put together a list of the biggest grilling don'ts and how to avoid them. Print this list and refer to it the next time you get ready to grill!

NEVER OIL THE GRILL

Many people oil the cooking grates — big blunder! Follow my mantra: "Oil the food, not the grates!" If you brush oil on hot cooking grates (and a lit grill), you run the risk of a big flare-up. The oil that you have brushed on will instantly burn, leaving a sticky residue that will "glue" your food to the grates, making it stick, break apart and dry out—like dehydrating food. If you oil the food, it will stay juicy, promote caramelization — those great grill marks — and help to prevent "stickage."

DON'T PUT FOOD ON A COLD GRILL

Always preheat a gas grill with all burners on high or wait until charcoal briquettes are covered with a white-gray ash. Preheating also burns off residue and makes it easier to clean the grill. Contrary to popular belief, you don't ever need to cook on a grill that is hotter than 550° F. The hotter the grill, the more likely

you will burn the outside of the food before the inside is cooked.

CLEAN THAT DIRTY GRILL

An outdoor grill is like a cast-iron skillet. It gets better and better the more you use it, but you do need to clean it every time you use it. Clean the grill grates twice every cookout with a stiff metal bristle grill cleaning brush — before and after you cook. If you do this, it will never be a big job to clean your grill. If you don't have a grill cleaning brush, crumble a ball of heavy-duty aluminum foil and hold it in a pair of 12-inch locking chef tongs to use to clean the grill.

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DIRECT AND INDIRECT HEAT

The most frequent mistake is to choose the wrong cooking method. To be a good griller, you must know the difference between direct, indirect or combo grilling and when to use them. Direct grilling means that the food is set directly over the heat source — similar to broiling in your oven. Indirect grilling means that the heat is on either side of the food and the burners are turned off under the food — similar to roasting and baking in your oven. Combo grilling means that you sear the food over direct heat (i.e., to sear a tenderloin, or large steak) before moving it to indirect heat to finish the cooking process. Remember



AP Photo/Alex Brandon

A man grills hamburgers and hot dogs in Arlington, Va.

this general rule of thumb: If the food takes less than 20 minutes to cook, use the direct method. If the food takes more than 20 minutes to cook, use the indirect method.

THE RIGHT WAY TO DEAL WITH FLARE-UPS

Never use a water bottle to extinguish a flare-up. Spraying water on a hot fire can produce steam vapors which may cause severe burns. The water can also crack the porcelain-enamel finish, resulting in damage to your grill. Fire loves oxygen, so cook with the lid down and don't peek. Repeatedly lifting the lid to "peek" and check the food while it's cooking lengthens

cooking time. If you have a full-on fire, turn all the burners off, remove the food and extinguish the flames with kosher salt or baking soda. In a worst-case scenario, use a fire extinguisher but know that it will ruin your grill.

AVOID FREQUENT FLIPPING

If you are cooking food by the direct method (hamburgers, hot dogs, boneless chicken breasts, small steaks, vegetables, etc), flip only once halfway through the cooking time. All protein will stick to the grates as soon as it makes contact with the hot grill grates. As it cooks, it will naturally release itself, and that is when you can turn it over

with a pair of tongs. Just remember to oil the food, not the grates.

DODGE CROSS-CONTAMINATION

One of the most common mistakes backyard cooks make is using the same tongs for raw and cooked foods. This creates cross-contamination and can result in food-borne illness. It's easy to fix this problem. I have been color-coding my 12-inch locking chef tongs with red and green duct tape for as long as I have been grilling. The different colors help me to remember which pair of tongs I used for raw food (red), like chicken, and which are safe to use for the cooked food (green). And remember to use a separate

clean platter for your cooked food, too.

DON'T SAUCE TOO SOON

If I had a dime for every time I saw someone pour thick sweet barbecue sauce on bone-in-chicken pieces or a whole rack of ribs while they were raw, I would be a very wealthy griller! All barbecue sauces have a lot of sugar in them, and sugar burns very quickly, almost always burning the outside of the food before the inside cooks. Generally I only brush food with sauce during the final 10-15 minutes of cooking time. With ribs that cook 2-3 hours, I will brush with a diluted sauce (half beer and half sauce) for the final 30 minutes of cooking time.

RESIST TESTING FOR DONENESS BY CUTTING

Cutting your food to test for doneness is another common way people bungle their food. When you cut any protein, you are letting the precious juices escape and if the food is undercooked, the area where it was cut will be over-cooked when you put it back on the grill. Use an instant-read meat thermometer to test for doneness, and always let your food rest for at least 5 minutes before cutting into it.

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Paradise Lodge is wilderness bliss on the Rogue River in Southwest Oregon

By **JAMIE HALE**
The Oregonian

MEDFORD — Whether you hike in, raft down the river or show up on jet boat, Paradise Lodge is always a welcome sight.

Perched above the rolling Rogue River, deep within the Wild Rogue Wilderness, the historic lodge can be accessed only by dirt trail or water, making it a remote and beautiful getaway in the thick of one of Oregon's most scenic natural areas.

The isolation is a stark departure from our modern, connected world — there's no cell service or internet at the lodge — but that's all part of the appeal.

"I think it's the remoteness, you know? We're out in the middle of nowhere," manager William Benavente said about why people come to Paradise. "It forces people to talk again."

With cozy shared areas and family-style dinners, the lodge encourages guests to interact with each other. But surrounded by miles upon miles of wilderness,

it's also an easy place to get away on your own.

Paradise offers no shortage of activities. There's a disc golf course, volleyball net, board games and books on lodge grounds, as well as fishing in the river and hiking on the 40-mile Rogue River Trail, which runs through the backyard. It's welcome news for the active among us, but there's also something to be said about taking it easy.

"People are always asking us what they can do when they get here," Benavente said. "We say, 'relax.'"

The 85-acre property was first homesteaded around 1903 and began operating as a lodge in the 1950s. Today the lodge, can accommodate about 50 guests, with guest rooms in several buildings. They charge \$175 or \$165 per person (rafters get a break), which includes all the meals during your stay.

The lodge is continually updated, piece by piece, over time, Benavente said. Over the last two years, owners have replaced all the dining room tables and re-paneled some of the walls. On



Photo contributed by Paradise Lodge

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our last visit this spring, they were working on changing out all the guest room lamps. The rooms and bathrooms are modern, but they retain that rustic lodge aesthetic, giving the whole place a timeless feeling.

Over the years, Paradise Lodge has hosted a steady stream of customers. Most guests are rafters, Benavente said, with the rest riding a jet boat in, courtesy of Jerry's Rogue Jets, or hiking in along the Rogue River Trail.

There have also been some well-known names.

Faded photos line the wood-paneled walls of the dining room, showing many of the notable guests over the years. There's Laura Bush, who stayed at the lodge on a rafting trip down the Rogue River in 2009, the same year Elijah Wood stopped by. On one wall there's a big movie poster from "The River Wild," which starred Meryl Streep, Kevin Bacon and John C. Reilly. When the

cast and crew filmed on the river in 1993, they bunked up at Paradise.

The Paradise Lodge is one of several lodges on this stretch of the Rogue River. The Black Bar Lodge, Clay Hill Lodge, Half Moon Bar Lodge and Marial Lodge are all found in the wilderness area nearby (making up a nice lodge-to-lodge hiking tour), with several others farther upriver and downriver.

Benavente said that while there's definitely some com-

petition among all the lodges, there's also a strong feeling of community among those living and operating on the wild and scenic Rogue.

In recent years, that community has been united by the growing and persistent threat of wildfire. Though the Wild Rogue Wilderness has been spared, fires have burned in nearby forests, pouring smoke into the canyon.

In 2013, when the Big Windy Complex fire burned for weeks in July, August and September, the Paradise Lodge lost a full season of business, closing for almost 40 days during what's typically the busiest time of year.

"I don't think we've ever recovered from that," Benavente said.

But despite the threat of fire and smoke, crowds continue to show up at Paradise, drawn by the beautiful natural setting and alluring sense of remoteness. Staying at the lodge forces you to disconnect from the world and reconnect with nature and the people around you.

In other words, it's a getaway where you really can get away.