

Summer Home Improvement

Dishing on popular grilling methods

Grilling is not only a way to prepare meals; for many, it's also a passion. Flavor, lifestyle and entertainment are the prime reasons people grill.

"Barbecuing is no longer just a pastime, but an integral part of the North American lifestyle," said Jack Goldman, president and CEO of Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA). "We expect consumers' passion for flavorful food and entertaining their family and friends to continue to increase."

The HPBA's 2017 industry survey found that 70 percent of adults in the United States own a grill or smoker. Those numbers are even greater in Canada, where 80 percent of adults have a grill to call their own.

When it comes time to replace or upgrade a grill, the age-old question remains: Do I choose a charcoal- or gas-fueled grill? That decision can spark heated debate among grillmasters, but for many it may boil down to a number of factors.

Cost

Charcoal grills tend to be less expensive than gas grills. The food and beverage trend reporter Chowhound indicates that a low-end grill can be purchased for around \$25. However, deluxe charcoal kettles and other charcoal alternatives tend to be considerably more expensive. The most popular gas grills may cost anywhere from \$130 to \$300. Those who prefer more



options and high-end offerings can pay between \$800 and \$1,500.

High heat searing

When cooking expensive, well-marbled steaks or other dishes that benefit from high-heat searing, charcoal grills seem to outperform gas ones, at least according to the experts behind The Sweethome, a product recommendation site owned by The New York Times Company. That isn't to say gas counterparts can't come very close. And deploying a cast-iron pan on top of the grates can help concentrate the heat and allow the meat to cook in its own fat.

Convenience

There is no doubt that gas grills are a marvel in regard to convenience, especially when they are directly tied into a home's propane or natural gas system. In such instances, one never has

to worry about running out of gas. Gas fuel tends to be cheaper than charcoal and easier to clean, and some gas grills come with side burners that enable cooks to prepare side dishes right next to their grilled entrees.

Portability

For those who want to grill at home and on the go, then a charcoal grill is the right investment. A charcoal grill can be brought to a campsite or a park without going to great lengths.

Clean-up

Gas grills generally are easier to clean, and home chefs do not have to wrangle much ash or leftover coals once they're done cooking.

Charcoal and gas grills each have their merits. It is up to consumers to decide which features reign supreme as they shop for new grills.

Prevent the hazard of overloaded circuits

A home is a safe haven for its residents. No matter what's going on at school or the office, many people know they can relax in comfort and safety when they arrive home at the end of a day.

Safety at home is something that can be taken for granted until it's too late. The National Fire Protection Association notes that each year more than 47,000 home fires in the United States are caused by electrical failure or malfunction.

Overloaded electrical circuits are a frequent culprit in residential fires. Fortunately, overloaded circuits are preventable. According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI), the following are some potential indicators that circuits are overloaded.

- Flickering, blinking or dimming lights
- Frequently tripped circuit breakers or blown fuses
- Warm or discolored wall plates
- Cracking, sizzling or buzzing from receptacles
- Burning odor coming from receptacles or wall switches
- Mild shock or tingle from appliances, receptacles or switches.

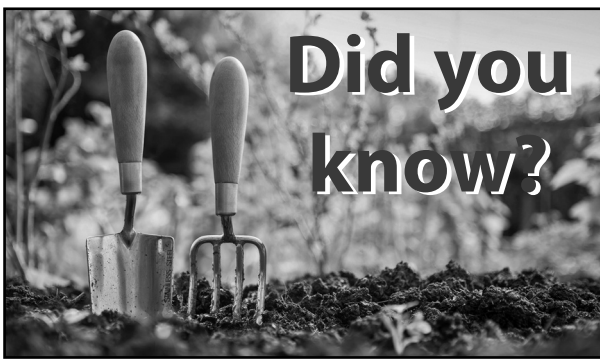
Learning to recognize the signs of overloaded circuits is an important step in making homes safe, as the NFPA notes that home fires contribute

to hundreds of deaths and more than 1,500 injuries each year. Such fires also hit homeowners in their pocketbooks, causing an estimated \$1.4 billion in property damage annually.

Prevention is another key component when safeguarding a home and its residents from fires sparked by electrical failures or malfunctions. The ESFI offers the following tips to prevent electrical overloads.

- Never use extension cords or multi-outlet converters for appliances.
- All major appliances should be plugged directly into a wall receptacle outlet. Only one heat-producing appliance should be plugged into a receptacle outlet at any given time.
- Consider adding new outlets to your home. Heavy reliance on extension cords indicates that your home does not have enough outlets. Bring in a qualified electrician to inspect your home to determine if more outlets are necessary.
- Recognize that power strips only add additional outlets; they do not change the amount of power being received from the outlet.

Fires sparked by electrical circuit overload pose a significant threat. Thankfully, such fires are preventable. Learn more at www.esfi.org.



Did you know?

Weeding is a chore few gardeners relish. Weeds can seemingly pop up overnight. And when left to their own devices, weeds can quickly grow out of control. There are a few key tips to weeding that can make the process easier. First off, start with wet soil. Choose to weed after it rains, as wet soil makes it easier to pull the full weed, including the root, out of the ground. Removing the weed all the way down to its root prevents it from growing back. If there's no rain in the forecast, water the garden before attempting to remove weeds. If the ground is compacted and you're weeding in a pinch, at least remove the head of the weed to prevent seeds from spreading and starting new weed growth.



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Restore rusty tools

Many people may be tempted to discard rusty tools that have gone unused and sat in a garage or shed for a significant period of time. But tools encrusted with rust do not need to be relegated to the trash bin, nor do gardeners have to toil for hours scraping and sanding off the rust.

There's a much easier way to restore rusty tools that relies on a common household

ingredient: vinegar. Pour vinegar into a deep enough vessel to submerge the metal part of the tool. Soak the tool overnight. The next day, use a scouring pad to rub off the rust. If the tool is too big to fit into a can or bucket, simply wrap it with a vinegar-soaked rag and cover the whole tool with a tightly secured plastic bag. Follow the same procedure the next day.



After all the rust is gone, rinse the tool in cool water and dry thoroughly. Then return it to regular usage.

Identify & treat a garden mole problem

Lawn and garden enthusiasts often must address unforeseen issues when tending to their lawns. Weeds can be a blight, and drought can compromise the look and integrity of a lawn.

Another, more deceptive potential adversary is moles. After a spring and summer spent tending to their gardens, no homeowner wants to have their hard work compromised by moles.

"The Old Farmer's Almanac" says that moles are ground-dwelling insectivores that feast on insects in the soil. Moles grow to be

roughly six to eight inches long and have gray or black, velvety fur. Their snouts are slender and hairless, and they have very small eyes and ears. Their large front feet have long claws that scoop dirt out of the way like a garden hoe.

Even though moles are more likely to snack on grubs, worms and beetles than plants, they damage gardens and lawns because of their underground tunneling behavior. Moles make subterranean channels throughout the yard in search of food. Some of the telltale signs include sprouted mounds

of displaced soil, holes and raised burrows and hills. Tunneling can separate roots from soil, eventually killing vegetation in the process, according to the home and garden experts at BobVila.com.

There are various ways to address mole problems in a lawn or garden. Some professionals may recommend fumigants, home remedies and repellents. But these methods are not always effective, according to Better Homes & Gardens. Using insecticides can rid the lawn of some of the foods that moles dine upon, ultimately discouraging them from coming onto a property. However, many experts agree that trapping is the only reliable means of stopping these creatures.

Homeowners can trap moles humanely by catching the mole in the act. This involves waiting for a mole to start channeling, then using two shovels to block egress on either side of its path. The mole can be removed to a box and relocated. There also are various mole and gopher traps available for sale that operate with spring-loaded snares. Individuals should check if trapping moles is legal where they live.

For more information regarding moles, visit www.almanac.com or www.bobvila.com.



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