

Summer Eats That Are BBQ Musts

This post has been contributed – All opinions are mine alone

There's nothing better than eating outdoors in the open air. Summer *is* al fresco. Enjoying seasonal foods, fine wines and cool, homemade drinks is the spirit of the summer season. For some reason, gathering with friends and family to eat in the sunshine lifts the spirits of everyone around. There is a real community feeling when everyone comes together, especially with such a small window of good weather for grilling! The moment the sun comes out and the skies brighten to blue, all you can smell in the neighborhood is the charcoal burning and the meat sizzling. Hot weather and sunshine pair with a great barbecue very nicely. The laughter and outdoor games that can be played just add to it!



So much goes into the planning of a cook out – contrary to popular belief, it's not all about the meat! Yes, the staple of an afternoon of grilling is the steaks and dogs you slap onto the grill, but the sides and desserts have just as much a place. Part of the cookout experience is getting the outdoors ready for all your guests. There are so many things you can

do.



First, start thinking of are the decorations. Eating outside invites bugs and other creepy crawlies so you need to set up citronella candles. The scent deters the nasties and keeps your food from being overcome by flies! Add in some hanging bunting and solar fairy lights on the fences and you have an outdoor space worthy of visitors.

Then comes the food. Oh, the food! Eating outdoors means you often prepare and eat things you wouldn't usually, and we've got a list of some of the best summer cookout foods – from mains to sweet munchies – that you will love. Even if you haven't tried some, go a little out there and taste something totally new. There's nothing quite like summer food, and when you get to have all the best flavors combined in the great outdoors, you'll be in foodie heaven. Check out the list of summer foods you cannot miss below:



BBQ Sauce. No cookout would be complete without this sensational sauce, would it? BBQ sauce gives your meat the smoky flavors that really complement the softness of the steak. Give your BBQ sauce a fruity twist with blackberries, like in the recipe here. Blackberries and meat? It's the ultimate in summer flavors!

Drink Up. Keeping drinks cold in the summer is a huge problem for large gatherings, but if you can buy a large trough and fill it with ice, you won't have any difficulties. Bottles of fresh juice, sodas and cool water for the kids and beers and iced coffee coolers for the grown-ups are perfect for the summer sunshine.

Side Salads. The word 'salad' often invokes the idea of a giant bowl of freshly washed, crisp leaves to eat. Refreshing? Yes. Boring? Absolutely. If you add the word 'potato' in front of it, it's a whole new ball game! There are so many variations on a good potato salad (like this German potato salad). The best ones always come with ripe tomatoes, bacon and leeks. Salty, tangy and so good, you won't be able to keep yourself from eating your fill. Pasta salads like this are a staple food at a cookout and have to be included in your sides. Want something different? Why not grill romaine lettuce until you get that perfect smokiness,

then wrap it around the meat?

Meet Meat. The staple of any cookout is the meat. It's the champion of the meal and, as there are so many options, you're never going to be stuck for choices. Grilled chicken in white sauce, slow-grilled pork chops with a mustard and bourbon glaze and steaks covered in peppercorns are all just some of the examples of the sizzling options. You can ask the guests to bring their preferences for meat. A pot luck can make a community cookout so much better. Pork chops brushed with hoisin sauce and grilled pineapple rings always make for a good meaty meal, so get online and grab some recipes!

Seafood, Eat It. Have you ever had spicy grilled clams? How about smoky grilled salmon? If you haven't, you're missing out. Meat isn't the only option for a BBQ – seafood has just as much value on a grill outside as a juicy piece of fillet steak. Some seafood recipes for the grill are just to die for and you give people an option that feels healthier than red meat. Like the Grilled Hazelnut encrusted ahi, or whole clams tossed on the grill until they open –



Dessert. No cookout party outdoors would be complete without the sweet stuff after. Now, most desserts in the summer surround cold fruits and yogurt dishes, but doing something

sweet with a twist by having an open fire pit and s'mores would be perfection in the summer evening. Grilling fruit on skewers and slathering them in chocolate sauce is a great dessert for the kids in attendance (and the grown-up kids). And those who are just too stuffed to manage something sweet can still enjoy the scents in the air.



Planning a barbecue that involves everyone you love is one of the highlights of the summer. Warm weather always brings people together. When you involve food, fruity cocktails and party games you can really make it an event to be proud of.

If you get everyone involved, you can have a much more relaxed time of it. You won't be the only one in charge of an entire event. Pack in as much of the summer as you can into one evening so choose flavorful foods and enjoy the party!



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