

Meijer Offers Five Ways to Keep Summer Cookouts Fresh

Abundance of backyard barbecues will keep families and friends close

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich., June 29, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- While July 4th is known as a day synonymous for grilling, Meijer stores expect customers to bring a fresh approach to their shopping habits as cookouts remain key to connecting with friends and family this summer.

Buyers and nutritionists at the Grand Rapids, Mich.-based retailer believe the most popular items in shopping carts over the next few months will include more than 4 million pounds of beef, chicken and fresh seafood, 10 million ears of corn and new varieties of tasteful stone fruits. They also say as gatherings on decks, in backyards and beaches increase over the next few months, it will be important for hosts to consider a few tips and ideas to maximize the experience to keep families and friends not only safe, but also healthy before firing up the grill.

"As summer gatherings are coming back this year, it's a good time to get creative when preparing to host," said Beth Eggleston, Nutrition Education Specialist at Meijer. "There are a multitude of ways to bring freshness to your backyard barbecues while keeping health and nutrition at the forefront."

According to a Statista study, 71 percent of participants said that summers don't feel as summery without barbecues, and more than half of those who barbecue in the United States consider it a social event that goes far beyond simply preparing grilled food.

Eggleston said hosts should consider the following five tips for a fresh take on this year's summer cookout:


1. **Marinate your meat with herbs:** After choosing cuts of Certified Angus Beef ® from local Meijer stores, marinating the meats before grilling not only enhances its flavor, but also makes it healthier. Fresh herbs are a tasty, heart-healthy, antioxidant rich option to use in a marinade. Herbs, such as rosemary, thyme, oregano and garlic can be bought fresh and pair well with beef, as well as chicken, pork or fish.
2. **Think outside the box - grill more than just meat:** Meat does not always need to be used to have a successful cookout. There are great alternative options for main or side dishes to try this summer. Try grilling pizzas; use an olive-oil base, as well as some fresh mozzarella and favorite toppings. Get those greens in and throw on a head of romaine lettuce for grilled salads. If fruit salad sounds more appetizing, grill up sliced peaches, pineapple, or any other sliced fruit. As the evening winds down, top it all off with some grilled dessert: short cakes, pound cakes, and cobbler are best loved for summer.
3. **Choose locally sourced produce:** Eggleston said that adding locally sourced produce to backyard cookouts is an especially good idea because nutrients are highest within a week of being picked. Thanks to partnering with more than 250 growers across six states, Meijer expects corn, asparagus, and peaches will be among the most popular produce items sourced from local farms over the next few months. During peak weeks between the Fourth of July and Labor Day, Meijer customers are expected to purchase more than 10 million ears of corn that were picked a day or two before getting delivered to the store.
4. **Keep food safety in mind:** Abiding by basic food safety rules ensure a positive cookout experience. Cleaning hands with soap and water, washing produce properly, and separating raw and cooked foods are necessary protocol. When working with frozen meat, make sure to thaw it properly, as well. Pull meats out of the freezer and place on a plate or in a shallow pan in the refrigerator 48 hours before cooking.
5. **Select the right tools:** When serving food, there are cookout tools hosts must use to ensure guests go home happy, nourished and healthy. For example:
 - Food thermometer: This tool is key to minimizing the risk of foodborne illness by ensuring that cooked foods reach a safe minimum internal temperature.
 - Serving utensils: Nobody wants to eat from the fruit salad somebody stuck their hands in. Providing serving utensils minimizes the spread of germs, as well as the chance of guests getting burned by hot foods.
 - Sealed containers: Food items, such as meat and produce, should not be left uncovered for long periods of time, especially in hot weather. Using sealed containers to safely store these items keeps them from being contaminated or spoiling. Putting these items in the refrigerator when no longer being served is also a smart idea.

About Meijer: Meijer is a Grand Rapids, Mich.-based retailer that operates 262 supercenters and grocery stores throughout Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Wisconsin. A privately-owned and family-operated company since 1934, Meijer pioneered the "one-stop shopping" concept and has evolved through the

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