

How we eat now

Have the best BBQ ever



Most barbecues lead to volcanic temper tantrums and fiery rows. But it doesn't have to be like this, says our columnist **Emma Freud**

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No culinary genre is as controversial as the barbecue. It should be the most relaxed of gatherings, but as a nation it seems we don't have the temperament, weather, skillset or cultural history to do it without controversy. Not to mention the way it brings out the worst aspects of the patriarchy. Actually, let's mention it: it brings out the worst aspects of the patriarchy. I asked Twitter how they felt about this controversial subject, and received a BARRAGE of complaints...

'It's in the DNA of men to need to start fires even in an era of gas hobs. Every barbecue I've been to, the man insists on holding the tongs even if he hasn't cooked a meal all year.'

'Trying to cook while small children and dogs take an unhealthy interest in fire is not conducive to a relaxed meal.'

'You move everything from your kitchen 10 metres outside, with multiple trips later for forgotten utensils, only to have to bring it all back in again after AND then scrub down your cooker. Also: flies.'

'Even for good cooks, the balance of the meal is often wrong. Imagine going into a restaurant and ordering four sausages, a burger, a chicken thigh, a prawn skewer and a halloumi kebab for your dinner. It doesn't work as a menu.'

'Because there are such long gaps between the food arriving, you end up eating three times more than you would ever normally put on your plate. I ricochet between boredom and wanting to stab people with cooking implements.'

'Ants in the salad, having to be nice to the neighbours, cheap sausages, burnt food, pink chicken, not enough seats, overexcited dogs, warm wine... that enough? Forgot wasps.'

'I'm veggie and the majority of the time, end up with just bread and salad. I could achieve that without smoking my house out.'

'So much food. Too much meat. Other people's shorts.'

There's not much to be done about the shorts – but in an attempt to be helpful, here are three tips, three things to avoid, and my three best recipes for a successful barbecue, none of which involve going anywhere near the coals.

3 EXCELLENT BBQ IDEAS

GO BIG ON VEG Heat a small cupful of olive oil in a pan with 1 tsp dried chilli flakes, 2 grated garlic cloves and a handful of chopped rosemary or thyme. Heat just until it starts to bubble, then turn the cooker off and let the oil infuse. Keep it by the

barbie and use to slather vegetables before grilling them – try thick slices of aubergine or fennel, a halved Little Gem lettuce, a bunch of spring onions, or some corn that you've pre-boiled for 3 minutes. Once cooked, season, drizzle with a little more oil, squeeze with some fresh lime, and sprinkle with coriander. **SHELLFISH** Scrub some fresh mussels or clams, then lay them on the barbecue and watch them slowly open (if they don't open, chuck them away – it means they're dodgy). As soon as they've opened wide, they're cooked. Melt some butter, stir in some chopped parsley, drizzle over, and pull a smug face. **DIY TWISTER** First, get a bit drunk. Then take four cans of coloured paint and spray a series of circles onto your lawn to make your own instant grassy Twister board. Get one person to stand with their back to the board and shout out 'left foot, blue' or 'right hand, yellow' without looking at the players. Get tangled up and fall over. Drink more. Repeat.

“**Make your own instant grassy Twister board**”

3 VERY BAD BBQ IDEAS

DON'T deep-fry your turkey. I did this once for larks – it involved my biggest saucepan, half-filled with vegetable oil, sitting on top of a camping gas stove at full-blast, into which a large turkey tied to a wire coat hanger was lowered. It bubbled frantically for 24 minutes before emerging golden and gorgeous. The reason I say don't do it is because the scene needs to be accompanied by a family member armed with a fire extinguisher, flame retardant blankets, and a fully-stocked first aid kit. The moistness of the meat sadly doesn't justify the jeopardy. **DON'T** be the chef for barbecue pizzas. The outdoor pizza oven costs from £100 and is an

instrument of joy. But... and this is a massive but... it's impossible to work the oven without emerging beetroot red, covered in flour, and the only person who doesn't get a slice as the job involves constant monitoring. The first time I used ours, my cheeks went a shade of heat-induced vermillion and the levels of moisture on my face had only previously been achieved in the latter stages of a power shower. Not a good look. **DON'T** get despondent that your coals aren't hot enough and try to remedy with the teeniest splash of petrol, unless you are particularly fond of your local firemen, as I indeed now am.

4 Good Food contributing editor Emma Freud is a journalist and broadcaster, director of Red Nose Day and a co-presenter of Radio Four's *Loose Ends*.

Photograph ROB STREETER | Shoot director and stylist RACHEL BAYLY
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Watermelon pizza

SERVES 4-6 PREP 10 mins plus marinating
NO COOK EASY V

250g your favourite summer fruit (raspberries, strawberries, cherries etc) 250ml double cream
200ml your favourite fruit liqueur (cherry brandy, raspberry liqueur or peach schnapps) 1 tbsp agave syrup
1 large watermelon, or 2 medium ones handful fresh mint leaves, finely chopped

1 Put the summer fruit in a bowl and drizzle 125ml of the liqueur on top. Give it a little shake and let them absorb the alcohol for at least 15 mins. Whip the cream until floppy with 75ml liqueur and the agave syrup. **2** Cut a 1-inch slice from the middle of a large watermelon (or 2 slices, if using medium-sized fruit), keeping the rind on. Lay the slice of watermelon on a board and cover the flesh (but not the rind) with a thick layer of the alcoholic cream. **3** Drain the summer fruit and scatter them on top with the mint. Cut into triangular slices and serve.

GOOD TO KNOW gluten free
PER SERVING 570 kcal • fat 24g • saturates 14g • carbs 70g • sugars 62g • fibre 4g • protein 6g • salt 0.1g

Watermelon Margarita ice lollies

MAKES 8 PREP 10 mins
plus 2½ hrs soaking and freezing **NO COOK EASY V ***

8 triangles watermelon, cut into slices about 2cm thick
250ml tequila
75ml agave syrup
75ml fresh lime juice (about 4-5 limes)
YOU WILL NEED
8 lollipop sticks
ice, crushed

1 Arrange the watermelon on a baking tray. Whisk the tequila, agave syrup and lime juice and pour over. Leave to soak for 30 mins. **2** Make a little cut in the middle of the rind-side of each triangle, and push a lollipop stick into the cut. Transfer the triangles to a foil-lined baking sheet, sprinkle with a little flaky salt and freeze for at least 2 hrs. Serve on a bed of crushed ice so that they don't defrost too quickly.

GOOD TO KNOW vegan • gluten free
PER LOLLY 166 kcal • fat none • saturates none • carbs 22g • sugars 19g • fibre 1g • protein 1g • salt 0.5g

BBQ RECIPES

If all else fails, if your meat is black, your salads are limp, and your lager is lukewarm... these three watermelon recipes will rescue your barbecue, or at least dull the pain of the fiasco.



Watermelon piña colada boat

SERVES 4-6 PREP 5 mins NO COOK EASY V *

1 small watermelon, deseeded 100ml rum
2 limes, juiced 1 tbsp agave syrup
100ml light coconut milk handful ice cubes

1 Cut the watermelon in half straight down the middle, and scoop out the flesh from both halves. Trim the base a little (be careful not to cut a hole in the bottom) so they sit upright. **2** Put half the flesh in a small blender (saving the rest to eat, or for a second batch of punch) with all the other ingredients. When blended, pour the cocktail back into the watermelon halves, and add four straws. Pass them around.

GOOD TO KNOW vegan • gluten free
PER SERVING (6) 163 kcal • fat 2g • saturates 1g • carbs 24g • sugars 21g • fibre 1g • protein 2g • salt none