

Put MyPlate on the Grill

Nothing quite says “it’s dinnertime” like a meal on the grill. Tantalizing smells, savory flavors, and gatherings with family and friends - it all adds up to a tasty way to eat on a weekday evening or as a weekend treat. The new USDA healthy eating icon, ChooseMyPlate.gov, can also be a delicious guide to grilled meals.

PLAN

Whether you cook on charcoal or gas - on a simple hibachi or an elaborate built-in grill, planning ahead will help you serve up the tastiest, safest grilled foods possible. Having the right food and equipment makes preparation and clean up easier for everyone.

Stock up on summer produce: While meat, poultry, and fish are traditionally the center of grilled meals, you can grill everything from salads (grilled Caesar salad is trendy) to dessert (grilled fruits are refreshingly sweet treats). Farmer’s markets, backyard gardens, and supermarkets are all great places to hunt for grilling options.

Get the right grillin’ stuff: Savvy grill masters know that it is helpful to minimize the burning and charring of foods during cooking. Smart grilling strategies include: trimming fat from meat, fish, and poultry; using wood planks, aluminum foil, or grill woks to keep food away from flames; and spraying water on any direct flames.

EAT

Go fresh and local with grilled veggies: Be adventurous - almost any veggie can be grilled. Some super options for $\frac{1}{4}$ of MyPlate are: beets or sweet potatoes (cut in 1-inch rounds, rub with olive oil); corn (peel husk, remove silk, add a dab of butter, wrap with husk and foil); and mushrooms (use your favorite marinade, grill on foil).

Pair lean proteins with whole grains: MyPlate suggests about $\frac{1}{4}$ each for lean proteins and grains (whole when possible) - which makes the perfect pairing on the grill, like lean burgers with whole grain buns or grilled Texas toast (thick slices of whole grain bread brushed with olive oil and garlic) with BBQ chicken or ribs.

Grill up some sweet dessert too: Grilling fruit caramelizes the natural sugars creating a simple, delicious, nutritious treat. MyPlate’s guide to make $\frac{1}{4}$ of your intake fruit is easy on a grill. Cut fruit, soak in cold water, and cook over medium heat, using non-stick spread if necessary. Firm fruits work best, like pineapple, pears, and apples.

ENJOY

Make grilling a group activity. Have older children turn items on the grill, while younger kids set the table or arrange the food on platters. Bon appétit to all!