

Burnt Chicken

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Peterborough Fire/Rescue

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Have you taken notice yet, of certain aromas filling the air in the late afternoon, wafting through your neighborhood perhaps, reviving a few of your taste buds that have been bored throughout the winter? Someone is grilling a T-bone steak, or an oriental pork loin, or a to-die-for barbeque chicken, and it's one of the many times you will savor a neighbor's dinner without ever consuming a bite. You're probably having visions of grilling this coming week-end, inviting friends to partake in the first of many meals prepared al fresco. At this point it would be fun to share some marinade ideas, but instead, I'll whip up the perfect recipe to insure a safe grilling experience.

Whether you are using a gas or charcoal grill, it's important to position the grill at least 15 feet away from siding, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches. It should also be a safe distance from lawn games, play areas and foot traffic. While some individuals, like my friend Brian M., believe that having a grill on a porch or in a garage is a practical solution for rainy day grilling, such placement could result in his house being one of the 6,300 structure fires in the U.S. that are ignited every year by a poorly stationed grill.

Because grills are usually stored outside for the winter months, a certain amount of maintenance needs to occur before igniting them for the first time. For starters, unless you're planning on a circus act to entertain your friends, be sure that mice haven't made a little nest in the belly of the grill. My sister in Massachusetts will never live that one down and her friends now hesitate before accepting a dinner invitation.

Gas grills also need to have their cylinder hoses checked for leaks by using a dish soap and water solution and applying it to the hose. Escaping propane will be revealed by the appearance of soap bubbles on the line. Replace the hose if need be. Then apply the aforementioned solution at all the connection points. If you see bubbles, confirm that the connections are tight and try the solution again. No bubbles...no problem.

I should inform you that when you transport a filled propane cylinder in your vehicle, always place it in an upright position on the floor. Never place it in the trunk of your car nor leave it in a parked vehicle for an extended period of time. Propane cylinders manufactured after April 2002 are required to have overfill protection devices (OPD) recognized by their triangular shaped hand-wheels which serve to shut off the flow of propane before capacity is reached. This safety feature reduces the potential for release of propane gas if the cylinder heats up.

Some diehard barbeque kings still maintain that charcoal grilling is the way to go. It does call for special precautions, however. If you choose to use a combustible fluid to ignite your charcoals, be sure to use starter fluid only and apply it to the coals prior to ignition.

Using any other volatile fuel or applying any combustible to an already ignited fire could result in an explosion and scattering of flaming liquid.

When you're finished cooking, keep an eye on the grill until it has completely cooled. Charcoal can be soaked with water to speed up the cooling process but use caution to avoid steam and splatters which can result in burns. When disposing of ashes, be certain there are no live coals in the mix.

By now you must be wondering why I titled this column as 'Burnt Chicken'. Legend has it that several years ago, a woman called the Peterborough Fire/Rescue reporting a gas grill fire at her residence. The fiery grill was adjacent to her shingled house and completely out of control. Though she had successfully turned off the gas, the flames were still overwhelming, licking the exterior of her grill and poised to ignite the shingled siding. Two fire trucks arrived at her house just as the fire was dying down. The fire chief at the time gave her some safety pointers that she, from that moment on, has always used. Luckily for her, the house was spared. But, her barbeque chicken...um... MY barbeque chicken... was burnt to a crisp.

Peterborough Fire/Rescue Association welcomes the public to call 924-8090 with regards to any safety related concerns. All Emergencies, call 911.