

How to throw a great BBQ

Written by (StatePoint)

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Warmer weather means it's time to take the party outdoors. But don't settle for simply doling out burgers and dogs on a paper plate. Unique party themes and dishes can help you wow your guests from the comfort of your back porch. Here are some ideas to consider before your next barbeque:

Pick a Theme

A party without a theme is like a song without a rhythm. It provides the beat of the party and informs all creative decision making, from food to music to decoration.

No matter where you live, consider a summer beach theme, encouraging guests to wear bikinis and board shorts. Other great themes include a Hawaiian luau, a Texas BBQ or a southern hoedown. These grill-friendly party options are a perfect way to celebrate the season.

Go Beyond Burgers

All too often, hosts confine their barbeque to burgers with little flavor on a tasteless bun.

"Grilling is not simply a matter of tossing food over fire," says Andrew Schloss, co-author with David Joachim of "Fire It Up: More Than 400 Recipes for Grilling Everything." Schloss and Joachim say you can go beyond the burger by grilling just about anything, from duck to dessert.

They also say you should be flexible with flavor and advocate innovative recipes for sprucing up your brisket with espresso or turkey with a smoky coconut rub. It's all about trying new flavors and dishes to create a unique barbeque experience.

Entertain

You've got the food and decorations covered, but you're not done yet.

Be sure to set up speakers in your backyard so guests aren't straining to hear tinny beats from

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your laptop. And if your friends are the type to engage in a loud dance party, always warn the neighbors.

Lawn games are also a fun addition to a summer shindig. Badminton, whiffle ball and bocce ball are easy to set up and sure to be crowd pleasers. For those less athletically minded, a card game is a fun follow up to dinner.

Keep It Safe

Grilling can be dangerous if you aren't careful. Keep it safe by grilling outdoors, away from children and pets. Use clean, undamaged equipment. And while nothing goes better with a BBQ than beer, the grill master should avoid impairing his or her reflexes and judgment.

"If your grill catches fire, turn off your grill and gas supply," says Joachim. "If the fire is anywhere near the fuel source (propane or natural gas), evacuate the area and call the fire department."

For more grilling tips and recipes, check out the new "Fire It Up" cookbook or visit www.davejoachim.com.

With a little creativity, you can turn a good party great in your own backyard.