

## Barbecue Tool Essentials and Tips

Humans have come a long way since those primitive days of grilling meat over an open flame. OK, maybe we haven't come all that far; but the point is, today's modern barbecue tool essentials make it easier than ever to create a culinary masterpiece from the comfort of your own back patio.

People around the world love to cook meat and vegetables over an outdoor grill. From the simplest hot dog to the most decadent seared seafood, everything tastes better when cooked over an open flame. Seasoned grillers make it look so easy, but it's actually a tricky skill to acquire. There are recipes to master and talents to perfect, but the biggest secret to great grilling is in the tools. Without the right barbecue tool essentials, you can quickly trash a tuna filet or scorch a steak.

Visit any hardware and department store, or any specialized culinary shop, and you'll find a wide selection of barbecue tool essentials. There are a few basic tools that every griller needs, and many variations of these basics can be found. In fact, there are so many options available that choosing the right ones can be downright overwhelming. The trick is to know the tools you need for successful grilling, and leave the rest on the store shelves.

Barbecue tools should be easy, convenient and comfortable to use. After all, grilling is supposed to be fun. Here is a list of the barbecue tool essentials that can make your outdoor cooking experience a little more enjoyable:

**Grilling Tongs** This is the ticket to safely turn your meat, without the danger of losing those delicious natural juices. In fact, the grilling tongs should be made the official tool of summertime. You can use them to flip steaks, chicken pieces, sausages and even burgers. They're invaluable for turning corn on the cob for perfectly even grilling. If you're barbecuing over charcoal, you can use your tongs to mix up the coals and disperse the heat. They can grab and move a searing hot grate, and pull a rogue wiener from the fire before it's too late. Do not even think about grilling without this most essential barbecue tool.

**Barbecue Fork** Contrary to popular belief, the purpose of a barbecue fork is not to stab and turn your meat. This only results in lost juices and, ultimately, a dry piece of meat. Your barbecue fork should be used to test the meat for doneness. For example, a piece of chicken should be poked with the fork and, if the juices are clear, the chicken is fully cooked. Pink or red juices indicate that a little more time is needed. You can also use a barbecue fork to move meat that's stuck on the grill.

**Metal Spatula** Look for a long-handled metal spatula. It's ideal for lifting delicate foods that are prone to falling apart, like fish filets. It's also the griller's secret to flipping perfect, split-proof burgers. Spatulas with bent handles and wide blades offer the most versatility, and help to keep your fingers from getting too close to the fire.

**BBQ Brushes** What's better than a sweet, spicy barbecue sauce? Having a brush that doesn't lose its bristles when you're basting your food. This is one tool that you don't want to scrimp on. Spend the extra money and it will reward you with perfect basting time and time again. In fact, you may want to purchase more than one brush, so that you can use one for oils, and another for spicy sauces. That's because some flavors are hard to wash out of porous materials like the bristles of a brush. If you're basting a grilling a variety of foods, you may want to go all out and buy a different brush for each purpose.

**Fireproof Oven Mitts** Your outdoor kitchen needs its own set of oven mitts. The handles of barbecue tools can get hot when you use them for extended periods, and sometimes you need to grab onto a kebab skewer to turn it over the fire. Oven mitts are also handy for picking up awkward items, like foil packets of potatoes and grilled veggies. Make sure that the oven mitts you choose are fireproof, for obvious reasons.

So many people take great pains to stock their kitchens to the rafters with tools, yet they continue to use those primitive barbecue tools. Treat yourself to good quality, long-handled barbecue tools, and you'll taste the difference in everything you cook.