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Serving Safe Barbeques for a Crowd

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At many gatherings—such as athletic or church events, summer festivals, county fairs, and family reunions—large amounts of ground beef barbeque (BBQ) are prepared. For many volunteers, “cooking for a crowd” is not a com-

mon practice and their kitchens are not equipped to cook large amounts of food. If you are called upon to be in charge of the BBQ for a large group or concession, consider the following safe food-handling techniques.

Table 1. Safe Food-handling Techniques.

STEP	FOOD-SAFETY STANDARD
Purchasing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Purchase from USDA-approved source (e.g., locker or grocery store). – Transport immediately from store to home and place in freezer or refrigerator.
Thawing (if frozen)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Thaw in refrigerator at 40°F or below. – Provide adequate space for air circulation (do NOT stack packages). – Allow 1 day for each 5-pound package. – Avoid cross contamination: Place meat on lowest shelf of refrigerator to prevent juices from dripping on ready-to-eat foods.
Cooking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cook to 160°F or higher. Check cooked temperature with meat thermometer. – NEVER partially cook for finishing later.
Personal hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wash hands both before and after handling raw meat. – Use separate spoon and dish for tasting (don't use mixing spoon).
Cross contamination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Keep raw ground beef separate from cooked. – Use clean and sanitized equipment, utensils, and cooking surfaces.
Additional cooking tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Add water to ground beef at the beginning of cooking process. This aids in separating meat into smaller pieces and helps the meat cook more evenly and thoroughly. Remove lid partway through cooking process so water boils off, and continue to brown. Use approximately 1 cup water for 3 pounds ground beef. – Rinse cooked meat with water to remove excess fat.

Table 1. Safe Food-handling Techniques.

STEP	FOOD-SAFETY STANDARD
Cooling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cool rapidly with 2-step method: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce temperature from 140°F to 70°F within 2 hours. 2. Reduce temperature from 70°F to 40°F within additional 4 hours.
Rapid-cooling tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Divide and place in shallow metal pans with depth of 2 inches or less. – Use food-grade containers that transfer heat quickly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aluminum – excellent (may have “off” flavors) • stainless steel – good • plastic and glass – poor – Stir every 10–15 minutes. – Use ice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add directly to meat, then drain or boil off when reheating. • Use in place of water (if called for in recipe). • Make ice/water bath (50% ice) in large container in which to place metal container of BBQ (stir frequently). – Cover after cooling.
Cross contamination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do not store in refrigerator or cooler below raw meats or poultry.
Reheating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Reheat BBQ rapidly to 165°F within 1 hour. – Reheat in small batches. – Stir often to quicken process. – Do NOT use chaffing dishes, crock-pots or steam tables to reheat foods. – Reheat BBQ only one time.
Serving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Maintain temperature of BBQ at 140°F or higher in hot holding equipment (e.g., electric roaster, stove top, or steam table). – If holding in crock-pot to keep hot, do not hold for serving beyond 2 hours. Crock-pots are not effective at maintaining a specific temperature. – Do not add a fresh batch of BBQ into existing batch.
Preparation ahead of time <i>NOTE: If these criteria cannot be met, the safety of the BBQ is in question and the BBQ should not be served.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Cook ground beef completely to a minimum of 160°F. – Cool cooked ground beef quickly using a 2-step method. – Store cold at 40°F or lower. – Reheat to 165°F within 1 hour. – Serving temperature of BBQ is 140°F or higher (the equipment should be set as a slightly higher temperature to maintain 140°F). – Use a meat thermometer to check and maintain safe temperatures of BBQ!

Keep foods out of the Temperature Danger Zone (40°F to 140°F). Hot foods hot, cold foods cold.

County Fair Barbeque

Yield: 50 sandwiches

Portion size: 3 oz.

Ingredients	Amount
Ground beef	10 lbs
Chopped onion	1 lb
Water	3 cups
Tomato puree	3 cups
Catsup	3 cups
Water (in addition to above)	1 cup
Salt	1 Tbsp
Dry mustard	2 tsp
Worcestershire sauce	1 Tbsp
Chili powder	1 Tbsp
Hamburger buns	50 buns
Ice (if cooling for use later)	10 lbs

Procedure:

- Combine ground beef, onions, and water.
- Brown until water boils off and internal temperature reaches 160°F.
- Drain off fat.
- Add remaining ingredients to meat.
- Simmer 15–20 minutes.

Serving BBQ

1. Hold at a temperature of 140°F.
2. Use an electric roaster, chaffing dish, steam table, or stove top.
3. If BBQ becomes dry, add a small amount of hot water.
4. Never mix a new batch of BBQ with a batch that is being served.

Planning Ahead

If preparing before the event, consider the following recommendations:

- If using within 2 days, place in the refrigerator. If storing for more than 2 days, freeze it.
- Do not double the batch—if the batch is too big, it will be difficult to cook or cool to correct temperatures in the right amount of time.
- Cool BBQ using the 2-step method:
 1. Cool quickly to 70°F within 2 hours. Place cooked BBQ in clean stainless steel containers (1–2 gallons) and immerse in a mixture of ice and water. Use at least 50% ice to water. Stir BBQ every 5 minutes.
 2. After BBQ reaches 70°F, transfer BBQ to shallow stainless steel pans and place in cooler until temperature reaches 40°F. Transfer to food-storage containers and cover. Store in cooler on a shelf above raw meat, poultry, or fish, or store in freezer. Label container with contents, date of preparation, and the name of the person who prepared the batch.
- Reheating BBQ:
 1. Take container out of freezer 2 days before it is to be reheated and place in refrigerator above raw meat, poultry, and fish.
 2. Reheat to 165°F within 1 hour. Use an electric roaster, stove top, or oven (325°F).
 3. Stir often to quicken process.
 4. Reheat in small batches (no larger than 1 gallon).



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