

ORGANIZED GRILLING



BY JENNIFER NEEB

As we bid farewell to winter in Michigan, one of the signs of spring we look for is firing up the grill! Yes, the diehards have been grilling all winter long, but if you are like most people, you prefer to grill in somewhat warmer temps. Now is the time to take note of what you have and gather what you will soon need to make 2012 memories in your outdoor kitchen — whatever size it may be.

With new gadgets continually hitting the market, it is easy to turn to this way of cooking throughout the year. Pizza, fish, vegetables and lobster tails, for example, show the flexibility of this outdoor appliance and entice us all to get more creative in our backyards. As cooking shows embrace the grilling craze as well, grills are used for every course of meal including desserts. The Web hosts a plethora of recipes, tips and techniques.

If you find you are ready to take your grilling skills to the next level, perhaps a new grill is in order too. Take your time, invest wisely and really understand what you need in order to make sure that a new grill purchase will fit your criteria.

The fun of grilling becomes disheartening though when you find you do not have the proper tools and gadgets or that you have no idea what happened to them since last fall. Here are some tips to keep grilling enjoyable and organized throughout the entire year.

- In the kitchen prep area: Keep a basket or container of the spices, rubs and marinades often used. Having this go-to spot will make it easy to keep an eye on levels so you know when to stock up again.
- Keep a basket or container with the grilling tools and gadgets ready to go so you don't forget something when your food is half done. Normally these things do not fit in your standard kitchen drawers, so dedicating the appropriate space will enhance your grilling experience. This will also minimize the running in and out to retrieve the forgotten things. Make sure the basket is long enough to handle the tongs, spatula, mitts/gloves, meat thermometer and other gadgets so they all go out in the same trip.
- In the grilling area, dedicate a flat surface or table to set your basket of tools and gadgets on, trays of food to be grilled and trays of cooked food for immediate enjoyment. Having this table will make before and after grilling easy for preparing and serving, as well as clean up.
- If the grill itself offers storage, keep it well stocked with items like the grill brush, grill wipes, oil, aluminum foil and paper towel along with extra mitts. Depending on space, there may be room for storing the pizza stone, vertical chicken roaster and wood planks.

Other tips for enhancing the grilling experience:

- Keep a spare, filled propane tank on hand.
- Dedicate BBQ gloves/mitts specifically for the grill.
- Keep beverages and paper products in another area so guests do not invade your grilling space.
- Keep your area clean and organized at all times so the cleanup is quick and simple. □


Jennifer Neeb is the owner of a Grand Rapids design firm that specializes in functional kitchen design. She is a Certified Aging in Place Specialist (CAPS) and a member of the National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA).



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