

# Thrill of the Grill

Your Guide to **SUMMER LIVING**

## Think food safety this summer

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The frequency of foodborne illnesses actually increases during the summer months.

(NC)—For many Canadians, summer means not having to wear a parka under your barbecue apron. While many people now grill all year long, most will agree that barbecuing is far more enjoyable in the summer. This is the season when Canadians move outdoors for most of our cooking and entertaining. But the relaxing, casual atmosphere of backyard cooking can be misleading. The frequency of foodborne illnesses actually increases during the summer months. The heat and humidity of the summer enables bacteria to grow faster than usual, and with the relaxing ambience of outdoor cooking, our food handling techniques become less stringent. "It's a seasonal variation that people in the food industry see every year," said Ken Cross, Vice President of Master Brand at Maple Leaf Foods. "Food safety is a top priority at our facilities all the time. We want to help Canadians step up their food safety precautions at home."

This keeps meat in store refrigerators longer and gets them home and in the refrigerator faster.

**Choose proper meat**

2. Choose packages of meat and poultry that are cold and tightly wrapped, without tears or holes. Check labels for a "packaged on" or "best before date". Quality and food safety decreases after these dates.

3. Some newer types of fresh meat packaging allow for longer storage times in the refrigerator and contain a "best before date". Once these vacuum packs are opened, the meat should be used within the number of days recommended in this storage chart, even though the "best before" date may be longer.

4. Take the time to plan. Choose your entrée well in advance and ensure it's properly thawed before cooking. Never defrost meat or poultry at room temperature. The safest way to thaw meat or poultry is in the refrigerator. Leave the food you want to defrost in its freezer wrapping and place it on a tray or plate on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator. Allow 6-9 hours/lb (14-20 hours/kg) to completely defrost.

5. For those last-minute meals, you can defrost meat and poultry in the microwave. If you must defrost in the microwave, remove the outside

Here is an easy-to-follow list that will keep you vigilant about food safety without chaining you to the kitchen:

**Proper refrigeration**

1. Make grocery shopping your last errand of the day and make meat selection the last thing you do at the store.

See BBQ, page 17

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