



Tailgating Tips: Score Big with Beef



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Football season is here and that means loyal fans are firing up the grill for another season of mouth-watering tailgating. There's no better way to show your team spirit and share your grilling skills at the same time. Here are some tips to make sure you have a tasty tailgate!



Prep at home. Tender beef cuts can be marinated for 15 minutes to 2 hours for flavor. Less tender beef cuts should be marinated at least 6 hours, but no more than 24 hours, in a mixture containing an acidic ingredient, such as vinegar or wine, or a natural tenderizing enzyme, such as ginger or pineapple. Pat beef dry after removing from marinade to promote even browning and prevent steaming. If a marinade has been in contact with uncooked beef, it must be brought to a full rolling boil before it can be used as a sauce.

Don't let a flare-up sideline you. Remove visible fat before grilling to help prevent flare-ups, charring and excess smoke formation.

Pace yourself. Grilling over medium heat ensures even cooking and flavorful, juicy meat. If beef is grilled over too high heat, the exterior can become overcooked or charred before the interior reaches the desired doneness.

Touchdowns not press-downs. Use long-handled tongs for turning steaks; spatulas for burgers. A fork will pierce the beef causing loss of flavorful juices. And don't be tempted to press down on burgers – it only releases the juices and creates flare-ups.

The right way to keep score. The best way to determine doneness of burgers and steaks is to use an instant-read meat thermometer, inserted horizontally from the side to penetrate the center of the meat. Allow 10 to 15 seconds for the thermometer to register the internal temperature.

Plan your end zone dance. Cook burgers to at least 160°F. The color of cooked ground beef is not a reliable indicator of doneness. Cook steaks to at least 145°F (medium rare doneness). The color will be very pink in the center and slightly brown toward the exterior.

Practice safety first. Keep raw beef separate from other foods both in the refrigerator and during preparation. Wash hands, all utensils and surfaces in hot soapy water after contact with raw beef. Never place cooked beef on platters that held raw product. Use clean serving platters and utensils. Serve cooked food promptly.

