

## What to know before going camping

Comedian Jim Gaffigan often jokes that camping is a tradition in his wife's family, but he's what people would consider "indoorsy." Gaffigan notes that the idea of burning a couple of vacation days sleeping on the ground outside isn't his idea of fun. But the comic may be in the minority.

Camping is one of the most popular outdoor recreational activities in North America. The statistics resource Statistica says the revenue of campgrounds and RV parks was estimated at \$5.8 billion in 2015. More than \$2.5 billion was relegated to camping equipment spending. In Canada, National Park attendance is typically indicative of camping stays. Parks Canada said there was a 4 percent increase in overall visitation between 2009 and 2014.

Camping takes many forms. Some purists equate camping to minimalist survival — eking out an existence for a few days with nothing more than a tent, a single roll of toilet paper and a fishing pole. Others enjoy the creature comforts of home and would readily consider camping something done from their climate controlled RV.

Camping ranges between sleeping under the open stars and glamping — a style of camping with amenities and potentially resort-style services. No matter how one defines camping, information is the key to becoming the proverbial "happy camper." The following list is a general starting off point for planning a camping adventure.

- Not all campsites are equal. When choosing a campsite, seek an area that offers the amenities you desire. Popular places like lake-side spots or those close to trails tend to book up early. Also, consider proximity to bathrooms, showers and ingress/egress spots. People who desire solitude will pick different campsites than those who want to be near the family action.

- Choose a tent for the weather. Supplies will differ depending on the temperatures when you plan to camp. Select a tent with a sun-protection sealant to prolong its longevity. Opt for

a location with partial afternoon shade to keep the campsite and tent cool. Face the tent door into the wind for a breeze (and also to keep mosquitoes from camping alongside you). Speak with a camping supply retailer about your camping needs.

- Bring along low-salt, high-protein snacks. Low-salt, high-protein snacks will keep you fueled for day trips along the trails without making you thirsty. Dried berries and high-fiber trail mixes also can keep energy levels up.

- Invest in an insulating pad. A good insulating pad will keep you comfortable when sleeping on the ground. Such a pad also will serve as an extra moisture barrier and will help keep you warm or cool.

- Use the moon. If this is your first time camping, schedule the night out to coincide with a full moon. There will be extra light at night to chase away any fears and make navigating a bit easier.

- Be an early bird. To see wildlife, hit the trails as early as possible. Early morning hours also are cooler for working.

Remember that camping involves getting in touch with nature. Leave the campsite how you found it, taking trash along with you.



## Stop making these 8 common grilling mistakes

Cooking food over an open fire imparts all sorts of flavor. Grilling tends to be quicker, less messy and more convenient than cooking in the kitchen - particularly during the dog days of summer.

Outdoor grills are everywhere, including nearly every backyard across the country. The Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association says \$1.47 billion in grill sales were made in 2016. That grills are so commonplace doesn't mean that everyone grilling is employing the right techniques. Becoming the ultimate grillmaster involves understanding the subtleties of grilling and avoiding common mistakes so food can look and taste that much better.

1. Not prepping the food: The French culinary term for preparing to cook is "mise en place." This is especially important when grilling, as cooks must deal with faster cooking times than they would otherwise encounter when cooking meals in the stove.

2. Dirty grill: Make sure the grill is cleaned before and after each use. Grease can quickly build up on a grill, leading to flare-ups that can cause foods to char. Frequent cleaning also helps grillmasters avoid a tiresome cleaning process at the start of the season.

3. Forgetting to preheat: Preheating the grill ensures that foods will cook quickly and as evenly as possible. Otherwise, meats can lose moisture and even stick to cooler grates. Reader's Digest suggests preheating to between 350 F and 450 F depending on the food.

4. Overreliance on lighter fluid: The chemical taste of lighter fluid can transfer to foods even when the fluid is used sparingly. Consider using a chimney starter when grilling with charcoal. And avoid repeated pyrotechnics with fluid, or worse, gasoline.

5. Too much direct heat: Food should not char on the outside before the inside has a chance to cook. A two-zone fire, according to food experts at Serious Eats, enables grillmasters to cook over high heat to sear and then move the food to a lower temperature to continue to cook evenly.

6. Playing with food: Grilling does not require much intervention. Repeatedly flipping and squeezing meat and poultry can cause flavorful juices to leak out. Then you're left with dried-out food. Resist any urges to prod and poke food. And minimize how many times you lift the grill cover to take a peek, as that can cause temperatures to fluctuate. Use a thermometer to determine when food is done. And don't forget that meat will still cook a bit after it's taken off the grill.

7. Improper seasoning: Basting food with sugar-laden sauces and marinades too early can cause flare-ups and burning. Quick rubs can help lock in flavor, and then reserve the sauce for the last few minutes of grilling, says cookbook author Dave Martin.

8. Digging in too soon: Give meats a chance to rest for between five and 10 minutes to allow the juices to redistribute through the food. This improves flavor and tenderness.

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