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How Do I Prevent Outdoor Grilling From Becoming A Sticky Situation?

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A weekly question/answer column

**How Do I Prevent Outdoor Grilling From
Becoming A Sticky Situation?**

Mary Ann Page answers:*

- Before grilling, spray the grate with a non-stick coating or brush it with vegetable oil. This not only prevents sticking but also makes grill cleaning easier. Another way to prevent sticking is to put the meat on a cold grill and let the meat and the grill heat together.
- For best results, start with top grade meat. Meat that is at least inch thick grills better than thinner cuts. Excessive amounts of fat should be trimmed to prevent flare-ups, although some flaring is normal. Keep a spray bottle of water nearby for flare-ups.
- Sugar-based sauces used excessively can caramelize on the grill grates and below. Marinated meats generally work well on the grill, but be careful not to apply excessive amounts when basting. Apply sauces during the last 15-20 minutes of cooking unless a recipe specifies otherwise. Certain foods, such as poultry and non-oily fish may need some extra fat. Brush with oil or melted butter occasionally while grilling.
- Use tongs with long handles or spatulas for turning meat. Do not use forks, since they pierce the meat and allow juices to be lost. Lost juices can dry meat and cause sticking. Use non-metallic spatulas or utensils to prevent damage to the non-stick grill grate finish.
- Do not cover grates completely with meat. Leave air space between each piece of meat to allow proper ventilation and prevent flare-ups. Turn steaks and hamburgers only once. Frequent turning of food can cause loss of juices as well as drying and sticking. Salt the meat either after turning or when cooking is completed to help retain juices.
- Check your appliance user's guide for suggested cooking times and control settings for gas grills. Experience will also be your guide.

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