

Barbecues are a great way to socialise and enjoy the warmer weather, and can promote healthy eating too.



Use these steps to make your barbecue a healthy success!

Steps to a healthy barbecue

Step 1 Choose a location and a date

Think about where you will hold the barbecue, how you will cook and serve the food and where staff will eat. For example, will you have a serving table, or serve food straight from the barbecue? Will people sit or stand to eat?

If you need to book a space or barbecue equipment, do this early to avoid disappointment. Choose a day that suits most people, and avoid days where there are many meetings or other events on.

Step 2 Covering costs

It is a good idea to investigate potential funds that may be available to help cover the cost of the barbecue. Some workplaces or communities have a budget for health and wellbeing activities or a social club.

Sometimes it may be necessary to ask staff to cover some or all of the cost of the barbecue.

Step 3 Check your equipment

Make sure all the equipment required to prepare, serve food and eat is available. Doing this in the weeks leading up to the event will allow plenty of time to buy or borrow any equipment necessary. The fact sheet *Hosting a healthy barbecue: sample menu and event plan*¹ includes an equipment checklist to help you make sure that you have everything you need.

Step 4 Promote your event

Promoting your event well in advance gives guests plenty of time to RSVP, allowing you time to plan and budget accordingly.

An initial email providing event details and requesting RSVPs and any special dietary requirements, followed by a calendar invitation is an easy and convenient way to do this. Remember to send a follow-up email closer to the date, reminding guests of the time, date and location of the event and any special instructions such as 'bring a plate' or 'gold coin donation'.

Here are some additional ideas to help you promote the event:

- posters in staff rooms or kitchens
- adding it to the agenda of meetings
- notes in internal newsletters, intranet or attached to pay slips.

If barbecue costs are to be covered by staff contributions, include this on all promotional materials in advance, to avoid any surprises on the day.

See *Hosting a healthy barbecue: email invitation templates*² for sample email templates you can use.



Step 5 Plan your menu

Once you have a good idea of the number of attendees and any special dietary requirements, you can plan your menu. Planning in advance will save you time and money, as you can shop according to a set budget and ingredients list.

Planning your menu also gives you the opportunity to think about healthier foods and drinks and avoid items that are higher in saturated fat, added sugar and/or added salt. The fact sheets *Hosting a healthy barbecue: planning the menu*³ and *Simple tips for a healthier barbecue*⁴ provide some ideas of healthier barbecue foods. Visit www.heas.health.vic.gov.au for healthy barbecue recipes.

Step 6 Shop

Prepare a shopping list which includes all the ingredients you will need, as well as equipment like plates, serviettes or tongs. Cross check your list with your current pantry stock to make sure you don't double up on any items. Make sure you have room to store and/or refrigerate food and equipment until you are ready to use them.



Step 7 Prepare and serve

It's a good idea to ask some of your colleagues to help you on the day to ensure that the barbecue runs smoothly. Extra help might be needed for setting up, cooking and serving the food.

It is important for anyone involved with storing, preparing and cooking food to have a good understanding of how to handle food safely. Refer to the following Victorian Department of Health websites for information about food safety:

- *Food safety* <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/foodsafety/>
- *Your guide to food safety* <http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/Your-Guide-to-Food-Safety->
- *Do Food Safely*, online learning module <http://dofoodsafely.health.vic.gov.au/welcome.php>.

Top tips for preparing food safely

- Wash hands thoroughly before and after handling food.
- Avoid cross contamination between raw foods and ready to eat foods.
- Cook high risk foods, such as meat and poultry, thoroughly.
- Avoid the temperature danger zone; keep cold foods cold at 5 degrees C or colder and hot foods hot at 160 degrees C or hotter.
- Throw out high risk foods, such as meats, that have been left in the 'Temperature Danger Zone' between 5 degrees C and 60 degrees C) for more than four hours. Remember, when in doubt, throw it out

¹⁻⁴ Healthy Eating Advisory Service, Department of Health and Human Services, State Government of Victoria, 2014, www.heas.health.vic.gov.au

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