



# How to Use a Charcoal Grill for Cooking

Dependable gear and a proper fire are the fundamental requirements for effective barbecuing. The guidelines provided in the following article are applicable to charcoal or gas grills, and both directions are included.

**Getting the Fire Started** If you have a gas or electric grill, read the owner's manual to learn how to light and heat it.

When starting a charcoal fire, put enough coals on the bottom grate to cover an area that is three inches bigger on all sides than the food you want to cook. If the weather is windy or humid, add a few more briquettes. Hill the briquettes or put them in a stack starter (see photograph 1, underneath) and light them, leaving the barbecue's cover off. After lighting the coals, spread them out on the grate in a single layer and leave them in a pile or in the starter until they turn red (about 20 minutes). Before placing the food on the grill, allow the coals to burn for an additional 5 to 10 minutes, or until they are covered in gray ash.

## **Briquettes of light charcoal:**

Briquettes should be arranged in a mound in the middle of the bottom grate. They help the fire get started by being close together. Instant-lighting briquettes are saturated with a petroleum product that easily ignites with a match and turn to ash in about 20 minutes. In addition to electric starters and liquid lighter fluids, eco-friendly fire-starter gels and paraffin fire starters make starting a charcoal fire easier. Before igniting the briquettes, wait approximately one minute after adding a liquid, gel, or wax starter. Never start a fire with gasoline or kerosene.

**Whether to Grill Directly or Indirectly** Prior to arranging the coals, Decide Whether to Grill Directly or Indirectly. [Direct grilling](#) can be done on any grill, including hibachis and braziers, which are basically shallow fireboxes on legs. A cover-equipped grill is needed for indirect grilling. These grills can be kettle- or wagon-shaped and use charcoal, gas, or electric heat.



When using direct grilling, the food is placed directly on the grill rack above the heat. Steaks, burgers, kabobs, hot dogs, boneless poultry, most vegetables, and other foods that can be cooked in less than 30 minutes are ideal for direct grilling. To evenly distribute the hot coals in a single layer on a charcoal grill, use long-handled tongs (see photo 2 below). Preheat a gas grill before adjusting the gas flow settings to the desired temperature for direct grilling.

### **Grilling directly with charcoal:**

Distribute the glowing coals evenly under the portion of the grill rack that will be used for food. Follow the steps on page 306 to count to determine the temperature. When using indirect grilling, the food is placed over an area of the grill that does not have a direct source of heat and the grill is covered while it is cooking.

When cooking whole fish, large roasts, whole birds, and ribs, indirect grilling is the method of choice. Using long-handled tongs, arrange the hot coals around a drip pan (see photo 3 below) that collects the food's fat drippings and minimizes flare-ups to set up a charcoal grill for indirect cooking. Make a heavy-duty foil roasting pan or use a disposable one.

### **Charcoal indirect grilling:**

Adjust the coals to fit a drip pan; revamp the coals on a case by case basis. Follow the steps on page 306 to count to determine the temperature.

For roundabout barbecuing on a gas barbecue, light the barbecue as per your proprietor's manual. Turn the setting to high and let preheat for 10 to 15 minutes. Reduce the heat on one burner to the desired temperature and turn off the other if your grill has two burners. Turn off the center burner on a gas grill with three burners. Over the unlit burner, place food. To keep the desired temperature, adjust the gas flow to the on burner. There is usually no need for a drip pan because most gas grills come equipped with one underneath the fire box. Roasts and whole birds should be placed on a rack in a roasting pan, and the pan should be placed directly on the grill, over the unlit burner.

Controlling Flare-Ups Fat and juices from the meat that drip onto hot coals can cause sudden, small blazes known as flare-ups, which can make your meat taste charred. Just raise the [grill rack](#), cover the grill, move the hot coals further apart, or remove a few coals to control flare-ups. If all else fails, eliminate the food from the barbecue and fog the fire with water from a shower bottle. At the point when the fire dies down, return the food to the barbecue.

## **What is the ideal temperature for cooking?**

The timing of when the charcoal or gas grill reaches the ideal cooking temperature is one key to successful grilling. You can use the same method to determine the temperature of any grill. Measure how long you can comfortably hold your hand at cooking level with the palm facing down (see photos 2 and 3, page 305). Hand counting can take two seconds in a hot fire. A three-second hand count is set for a fire that is moderately hot. A hand count of four seconds corresponds to a medium fire. Additionally, a low fire counts for five seconds. Hot coals will produce medium heat when grilling indirectly, whereas medium-hot coals will produce medium heat.

## **Cleaning Your Barbecue**

Drench the barbecue rack of your charcoal barbecue in hot, frothy water after each utilization to release cooked-on grime. If the rack is too big for your sink, wrap it in newspaper or wet paper towels for about an hour before cleaning it. Use a stiff brush if necessary to remove stubborn food that has been burned on.

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