



PLAYING WITH FIRE?

Barbecues might be a super way to socialise, but throwing another steak on the barbie could be dangerous for your health.

Numerous animal consumption studies show that noxious chemicals are formed when barbecuing meat, which may cause cancer, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and accelerate ageing. Some of these chemicals are even more potent than those from cigarettes and car exhaust fumes.

what's wrong with BBQs?

The problem arises when muscle meats—beef, pork, chicken and fish—are cooked at high temperature, especially if they are blackened. The food may also be exposed to flames and smoke. It doesn't matter whether you buy organic, grass-fed, kosher or halal, when you BBQ meats, harmful heterocyclic amines (HCAs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and advanced glycated end products (AGEs) are formed.

minimising chemical formation

The easiest way to avoid problems is to avoid meats altogether or barbecue much less often. If you use meat:

- ▶ Marinate it well in citrus juice, olive oil and garden herbs such as rosemary, thyme or oregano.

- ▶ Flip frequently, avoid prolonged cooking times and trim charred bits.
- ▶ Use a flat plate grill rather than a grate where fat can drip onto coals.
- ▶ Wrap in foil or banana leaf.
- ▶ Eat broccoli, cabbage, rocket or watercress at the same time, as their isothiocyanates can help your detox enzymes remove carcinogens from your body.

Safer cooking methods involve moist heat and lower temperature, such as boiling, steaming, stewing and casseroling.

smarter summer foods

Instead of focusing on meat, BBQ slabs of marinated tofu, portabello or oyster mushrooms with oregano and lemon, colourful veggie skewers, soy sausages, veggie burgers, banana peppers, eggplant, asparagus, dolmades (vine leaves stuffed with rice), fresh pineapple or fruit kebabs. HCAs don't form and AGEs are found in much lower levels in vegetables, even after cooking.

See **page 38** for a delicious and safe BBQ idea.

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and co-author of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information.