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FOURTH OF JULY SIZZLES AS THE MOST POPULAR OUTDOOR COOKING HOLIDAY OF THE YEAR

The Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association Dishes Out Tips for a Safe Celebration

ARLINGTON, VA (June 16, 2009) – Consumers will fire it up for the Fourth of July: the most popular outdoor cooking holiday of the year. According to the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA), more than two-thirds of Americans (69 percent) will turn to their grill, smoker or fryer for a delicious, convenient, no-mess meal this Independence Day.

"Outdoor cooking is a popular American past time, especially on the Fourth of July," said Leslie Wheeler, HPBA Communications Director. "From appetizers to mainstay hot dogs and hamburgers, to delicious desserts, outdoor cooking is a fun, easy and appetizing way to celebrate the holiday with family and friends."

In addition to friends, family and food, two key ingredients for outdoor cooking include common sense and safety. To ensure a successful Fourth of July celebration, HPBA recommends the following food and safety tips for consumers.

Before you fire it up:

- Evaluate your grill and consider replacing it if you have rusted or wobbly legs, or if the manufacturer's safety guidelines are not being met.
- For gas grills, visually inspect hoses for abrasion, wear, and leaks before each use. A soap and water solution may be used to test for leaks. Never use a flame to check for gas leaks. Replace faulty hoses using a parts replacement kit before operating the grill.
- For charcoal grills, never use gasoline, kerosene or highly volatile fluids as a starter. As an alternative lighter fluid, use an electric, solid, metal chimney or other starter specifically made for lighting charcoal briquets or wood chunks.
- Electric grills should be connected to a ground fault interrupter (GFI) outlet in accordance with local codes. Electrical cords should always be secured during operation to protect against damage or personal injury.

When cooking outdoors:

- Position your grill, fryer or smoker in an open area away from buildings and high traffic areas.
- Never leave your grill, fryer or smoker unattended.
- Wear clothing that does not have hanging shirt tails, frills or apron strings.
- Always use long-handled utensils to avoid burns and splatters.
- Be ready to extinguish flames. Use baking soda to control a grease fire and have a fire extinguisher handy. A bucket of sand or a garden hose should be near if you don't have a commercial extinguisher.

In order to handle food safely:

- Trim any excess fat from meat and poultry to help prevent grill flare-ups.
- Turn food often with tongs to prevent charring.
- Do not press, flatten or pierce the meat – flavorful juices will be lost and may cause flare-ups. Should your meat become charred, remove those areas before eating.
- Proper temperature is critical for cooking delicious, flavorful food. Use medium heat to avoid overcooking or charring meat, poultry or seafood.
- Use a meat thermometer or an "instant read" digital thermometer inserted horizontally into the side of meat, poultry and seafood to check doneness.

Recommended Internal Temperatures:	
Poultry	165 degrees F
Ground beef	160 degrees F
Pork (chops, ground, tenderloin)	160 degrees F
Large cut pork roasts	150 degrees F
Beef roasts, steaks, seafood and lamb	145 degrees F

For easy clean-up:

- Before lighting the grill, apply non-stick spray on the grates. The protective spray cuts down clean-up time afterwards.
- For charcoal grills, line the bowl with aluminum foil. After grilling, and once the grill and coals are cool, simply discard the foil with the coals and ash, then wash and reline with foil for next time.
- Squirt grease-cutting dishwashing detergent on grill and grates (once cool). Scrub with brush or abrasive pad, then rinse. Repeat as necessary.
- Don't forget to place a grill pad or splatter mat beneath your grill before cooking. These naturally heat resistant pads will protect your deck or patio from any grease that misses the drip pan and will keep your outdoor living area clean and looking like new.

Did you know? Fun barbecue facts:

- The most popular foods for barbecuing are: burgers (82%), steak (79%), chicken (72%) and hot dogs (71%).
- The most commonly prepared side dishes are: corn (42%), potatoes (38%) and other vegetables (37%).
- The most popular flavors of barbecue sauce are hickory, followed by mesquite, honey, and then tomato-based. The most common ingredient added to barbecue sauce is garlic, followed by brown sugar.

For more outdoor cooking tips and tidbits, as well as recipes, visit www.hpba.org.

About Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA)

The Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association based in Arlington, VA, is the North American industry association for manufacturers, retailers, distributors, representatives, service firms and allied associates for all types of hearth, barbecue and patio appliances, fuels and accessories. The association provides professional member services and industry support in education, statistics, government relations, marketing, advertising and consumer education. There are more than 2,600 members in the HPBA.

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