



Healthy BBQ

After Mid-Autumn Festival, the autumn breeze is even brisker, thus comes the great time of countryside outings and BBQ parties. However, there are health concerns about BBQ eating: too much meat, and the possible carcinogenic substances produced during the burning process. For a more healthy BBQ experience, take the following advice:

1. Include vegetables and grains

According to the Healthy Eating Food Pyramid, we should eat a variety of foods. BBQ often means a lot of meat with few vegetables; the lack of vegetables and grains results in an unbalanced diet.

Suggestion: Consider including in your BBQ some grains and vegetables, such as sweet corn, sweet potatoes, potatoes, *enoki*, shiitake mushrooms, other mushrooms, and sweet peppers of all colours. Wrap them in aluminium foil and leave them aside on the grill until they are done. They can compensate for the absence of certain nutrients, dietary fibre and antioxidants from meat, improve satiety and reduce the risk of over-consumption of meat.

2. Choose fresh meat and eat sparingly

Sausages, pork balls, beef balls and squid balls are favourite BBQ foods. Nevertheless, a lot of grease and salt are added into them during the manufacture process, and so over-consumption is harmful to health.



Suggestion: Choose lean meat such as pork fillet, sirloin, etc., and remove the skin and visible fat; or use seafood with a lower fat content. To reduce salt intake, consider the use of black pepper, garlic, ginger, spring onion, herbs for seasoning, but limit to an amount of 3-4 tael (approx. the size of 3 to 4 table-tennis ball) per person.

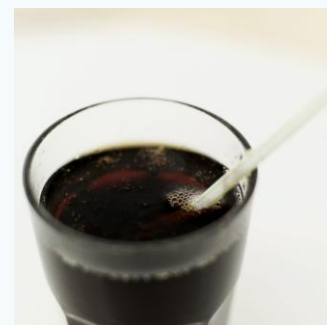
3. Avoiding burnt food

There are two major carcinogenic substances arising from BBQ: heterocyclic amines (HCAs), are mainly formed when food proteins are exposed to high temperature, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), is formed possibly when grease drips on burning charcoal and also found in burnt part of food. These two types of substances are now classified as “probably carcinogenic” to human (i.e. Group 2A agent) by International Agency for Research on Cancer.

Suggestion: Avoid eating burnt food. Before cooking, cut the food into small pieces or thin slices to shorten the time needed for cooking, and remove the fat on meat first. All these measures can help reduce the formation of the above-mentioned possible carcinogens.

4. Cut down on sugary drinks

Fizzy drinks or bottled herbal teas are popular drinks at BBQ parties. These drinks are high in sugar; one can of such at 330 ml contains about 140 kcal (equivalent to the energy content of half a bowl of white rice (1 bowl=250-300 ml)) and 35 g (7 teaspoons) of sugar. Avoid over-consumption and thus excessive intake of energy and sugar.



Suggestion: Drink water and non-sugared tea instead. Or make your own lemon soda (i.e. soda water with lemon slices). If you make herbal tea yourself, watch the amount of sugar used.

You can uphold the principles of a balanced diet even at BBQ parties, so long as you can choose your BBQ food more carefully. Enjoy BBQ!

To know more about ...

- ✧ healthy eating, please visit ‘Health Zone’ website at <http://www.cheu.gov.hk>
- ✧ ‘Health@work.hk Project’, please visit <http://www.healthatwork.gov.hk>