



# FLORIDA 4-H TAILGATE SERIES

## Cooking Equipment

Childhood obesity is a serious public health problem in the US. Today, nearly a third of American children are overweight or obese (CDC, 2015). A contributing factor to childhood obesity is general dependency on prepared food, which is somewhat fueled by our society's dwindling cooking abilities. Many parents do not have the time, or they do not know how to cook, so they have not passed the skill on to the younger generation. The average American knows little about the safe preparation of highly palatable animal protein entrées. Additionally, nutrition research suggests that animal protein in the diet is beneficial to adolescent development (Cleghorn, 2007).

The Florida 4-H Poultry BBQ program has existed for years, and the program for red meat cookery has been a huge success in Tennessee 4-H. With sponsorship for the winners at the state level, the Florida 4-H Tailgate Contest program will be a success in Florida as well. This program will strive to promote enjoyable outdoor cooking experiences, encourage the incorporation of animal protein in the diet in order to combat childhood obesity, improve youth nutritional knowledge and cooking skills, and impart knowledge about safe handling and proper degree of doneness to produce safe and delicious meat dishes.

**Learning Activity:** Tailgate Cooking Equipment

**Learning Objective:** Youth will learn to select and use the basic equipment to safely cook using a charcoal grill.

**Life Skills:** Decision-Making and Healthy Lifestyle Choices

## Background

Grills come in many sizes and shapes. Select a grill that is sturdy and has a durable fire box. Grills with fire boxes made of thicker metals will last longer. The ideal size of the grill cooking surface depends on the need. For example, a small portable grill may be suitable for picnics, but a larger, permanent grill may be necessary for use at home. Choose a grill that allows you to control the heat either by opening or closing vents or moving the cooking surface up or down, or a grill that is large enough to create different heat zones. Keep in mind that certain grills have shields to reflect heat and prevent wind drafts, while other grills have lids that hold heat, prevent wind drafts, and help in smoking meats.

Personal clothing should be clean and neat, and it should not present a safety concern (no loose-fitting clothing or open-toed shoes).

People who are cooking should wear head coverings and use plastic gloves while serving food.

## Important Equipment

**Table:** portable table on which you can place your utensils and prepare your food

**Two plates or trays:** one each for raw and cooked protein

**Tongs:** two sets of long handled tongs—one to handle the meat and one to move charcoal

**Apron:** for personal cleanliness and protection

**Padded cooking mittens or cooking gloves:** for hot food and equipment handling

**Fork, knife, and spatula:** long handled utensils to move or turn meat while keeping a safe distance from fire

**Skewers:** for kabob cooking (long skewers with wooden handles are safer)

**Sprinkle water bottle:** to douse flare-ups (spray bottles can cause ashes to fly)

**Basting brush:** to add sauces to the meats' surfaces

**Small aluminum or metal pan:** to keep sauces warm

**Thermometer:** to check internal doneness of the meat

**Pliers:** to grasp and move cooking grid off of the grill in order to add charcoal

**Cooler:** to safely transport food items

**Fire extinguisher:** to prevent the escape of fire

**First aid kit:** to initiate burn care if an accident occurs

## Do

- Demonstrate the proper use of various grills and tools in outdoor meat cookery.
- Visit a store that sells grills and grilling supplies.
- Set up a grill accessory/equipment identification learning station.
- Identify ways to control heat.

## Reflect

- Which grills and accessories were used for outdoor meat cookery?
- Were there any accessories that were missing? Were there any that you had never seen before?
- Which accessories were available for food safety? Personal safety?
- What did you include in your grill accessory/equipment identification learning station? Why?

## Apply

- How can knowledge of the types of grills and accessories help you improve your outdoor meat cookery skills?
- How can you utilize the grill accessories and equipment to stay safe while cooking meat outdoors?

## Conclusion

Educating youth about ways to safely prepare animal protein on a grill will improve grilling safety, combat childhood obesity, improve the nutritional knowledge and cooking skills of today's youth, and impart knowledge about safe handling and proper degree of doneness in order to produce safe and palatable meat dishes.

For up-to-date information on the Florida 4-H Tailgating Contest, please visit [http://florida4h.org/programsandevents\\_/animalscience/4-h-tailgating-contest/](http://florida4h.org/programsandevents_/animalscience/4-h-tailgating-contest/).

## Additional Resources

Florida 4-H Tailgating Contest: [http://florida4h.org/programsandevents\\_/animalscience/4-h-tailgating-contest/](http://florida4h.org/programsandevents_/animalscience/4-h-tailgating-contest/)

State 4-H/FFA Meat Judging Contest: <http://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/youth/livestock/meatsJudging.shtml>

4-H Poultry Judging Event: <http://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/youth/Poultry/index.shtml>

Florida Hog & Ham Program: <http://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/youth/livestock/HogHam.shtml>

## References

CDC. (2015). Childhood obesity facts. Accessed on July 12, 2016. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/obesity/facts.htm>

Cleghorn, G. (2007). Role of red meat in the diet for children and adolescents. *Nutrition & Dietetics*, 64(4), S143–S146.