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**Don't Cook The Trees – Barbecue Safety**

**By Les Brand**

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My first experience of a barbecue was as a seventeen year old at a friend's house. His father, Douglas, was an expert at barbecuing, with many years experience, we thought! It was a hot summer's day but with a light breeze, so Douglas, with all that experience, decided to erect a cardboard frame about one foot high around three sides of the barbecue. The barbecue grill itself, which was fuelled with charcoal, was positioned next to, and underneath, some trees in the back garden. Not having seen a barbecue being lit before I was keen to watch, and moved in closer. Douglas placed the firelighters in the grate, set fire to them and arranged the charcoal in a pyramid over them. A number of years later I found out that this was the classic way to light a barbecue. Now, Douglas, in an attempt to speed up the process uncovered his secret weapon and enthusiastically said "Lighter fuel, this will have the barbecue going in seconds!" With the poise of a highly trained swordsman, Douglas sent a jet of lighter fuel through the air and across the whole length of the barbecue. Douglas was right! The barbecue erupted into flame. I was very impressed. Unfortunately, seconds later so did the cardboard frame and then the surrounding trees! Luckily there were enough of us there to safely put out the flames and to carry on with the barbecue.

A few years later I began barbecuing for myself and always remembered Douglas and his flaming trees. Apart from not erecting a cardboard frame around your barbecue and keeping it well away from trees, there are some simple rules to follow to ensure that you start your charcoal barbecue in safety.

If you're setting up a barbecue for the first time, read the instructions carefully first.

Carefully choose where to set-up your barbecue. Make sure that it's on level ground and don't try to move it once it's lit.

Don't attempt to start your barbecue in very high winds. Not even with a cardboard frame!

Don't try to barbecue indoors. I know people that have tried to barbecue in a shed and in a garage! Extremely dangerous.

## Don't Cook The Trees – Barbecue Safety

Use proper firelighters to start your barbecue. They're better than rolled up paper and won't fly away in the wind.

Only ever use purpose-made firelighters and fuel on your barbecue. Never use petrol, white spirit, or paraffin. Not only is it extremely dangerous but it also taints the flavour of the food.

Everyone loves a barbecue but don't forget that the grill gets extremely hot. Follow the rules above and keep safety in mind. You'll experience a great barbecue, your guests will have lots fun and you'll enjoy yourself.

Les runs The Barbecue Hut website that provides useful information about barbecue grills and smokers, and also includes a wide selection of recipes. He is also author of The Char Grill Chat newsletter. Website: <http://www.barbecuehut.com> Newsletter: [http://www.barbecuehut.com/chargrill\\_chat](http://www.barbecuehut.com/chargrill_chat)

### **Using Barbecue Smokers For Added Flavor And Tenderness**

**By Derek Marsh**

Barbecue smokers add a delectable smokey flavor that at the same time makes food moist and tender every time. The slow cooking process of using barbecue smokers is perfect for fish, meat, vegetable or sausages. However most barbecue smokers are intended for small barbecues only.

#### 1. Basics Of Barbecue Smokers

The construction of a barbecue smoker is basically the same as a standard barbecue grill. However with a barbecue smoker the closeable lid is designed to trap in smoke to cook the food. Barbecue smokers are either direct or indirect. The direct barbecue smoker is basically a unit with a closeable lid and aromatic wood chips are combined with the charcoal. The smoke produced by the chips and charcoal cooks the food placed within the smoker. This gives the unique flavor to the food. In indirect barbecue smokers is similar to the direct barbecue smoker with a single unit and closeable lid, this is the grill unit. However the indirect barbecue smoker has another container, the smoker unit, that holds the woodchips and charcoal. The smoke passes into the grill unit and gives flavor to the barbecue.

Barbecue smokers may either be electric or gas and may use real wood or charcoal for smoking. Both types of barbecue smokers can be used for private and commercial settings. At the same time there are table top barbecue smokers that are transportable. Depending on the skill level of the user there are several types of barbecue smokers to choose from.

#### 2. Water Barbecue Smokers for Beginners

– Ideal for beginners – Vertical type barbecue smoker – Has a bowl of water located between the base and cooking racks – Generates moisture throughout the cooking process – Relatively inexpensive – Great way to get started in barbecue smoking – Very hard to regulate heat

### 3. Electric Barbecue Smokers

Next to the water barbecue smokers are the electric type smokers. These models are more expensive compared to the water smokers thereby producing better–smoked food. One of the perks of using an electric smoker is that there is no need to light a fire.

However many traditionalist smokers would dislike this feature of the electric smoker. The electric barbecue smoker make for hassle–free cooking, allowing the cook to spend more time with the guests rather than tend the fire. It also involves less care and upkeep compared to traditional barbecue smokers.

### 4. The Charcoal or Log Barbecue Smoker

The charcoal or log burning barbecue smokers is the next step to the electric barbecue smokers. This type of barbecue smokers is reserved for the truly skilled smoker that appreciates the fine taste of quality–smoked food. The taste of food smoked in charcoal or log burning barbecue smokers is truly savored with every bite. Charcoal or log burning barbecue smokers are larger in size and heavier compared to water or electric barbecue smokers. These type of smokers are outfitted with handle–bars

and wheels making transport reasonably easy. At the same time charcoal or log burning barbecue smokers have controls for thermal regulation and smoke generation providing more choices for cooking.

### 5. Maintenance Tips

Maintaining a barbecue smoker doesn't require a great deal of effort. For most brands of barbecue smokers sold in the market today, it is essential to fire up the unit and let it burn on the highest heat for about one hour. This process known as the burning–in method will kill any possible contamination that is already present in the unit even before it is used for cooking. The initial smoking process will in effect provide a protective covering for the barbecue smoker.

### 6. Safety Tips

When using a barbecue smoker be sure that there is sufficient ventilation in the area where the unit is located. This will prevent the fumes from choking family and friends. It will also limit the chances of a build–up of dangerous toxins brought about by excessive smoke.

For more great barbecue smoker related articles and resources check out



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