Cooking on an outdoor grill is the most common form of outdoor cooking and enjoyed by many through the spring and summer months. Most people have some experience with grill cooking and even own a grill which is sitting out and rusting in their backyard. So here are some of the advantages to barbecue cooking. I’m pretty sure you’ll be convinced it’s a pretty special and fun way to prepare food. So get that grill out of storage, dust it off, give it a good cleaning and start grillin’!

1. **The flavors!** - Food cooked on a grill or barbecue is delicious! Why? The intense heat of the fire and the grill grate helps to caramelize the surface of your food. This brown, golden color your food gets accents and brings out the flavors of your raw ingredients.

2. **Convenience**—Charcoal and gas grills are readily available and easy to use.

3. **Versatility of fuels** – There are several types of grills. Charcoal grills use wood charcoal for heat while gas grills use a gas source to supply the fire and heat. Charcoal is available in a variety of types, from processed charcoal to lump wood charcoal. Flavors can also be enhanced by the addition of smoking woods like mesquite and hickory.

4. **Versatility of styles of barbecue cooking** - Cooking on an outdoor grill doesn’t just mean throwing a burger on the grill anymore. From direct heat searing to indirect heat roast, from rotisserie cooking to smoker cooking, cooking on an outdoor grill is versatile.

5. **Versatility of recipes** - Every cuisine around the world, every country, every style of cooking has recipes that can be, or should be, cooked on a grill or barbecue. From the simple to the elaborate and gourmet, there is an endless list of recipes for grill cooking.

**Tips to make your cooking on a grill easier:**

- **Appropriate utensils** - a barbecue fork, spatula, basting brush and tongs. You can get away with less but it is nice to have them all.

- **Marinating and Basting** - Marinating meats before cooking on a grill helps to add flavor and juices to your meat. It can take a bland piece of meat and turn it into a rich, flavorful meal. Generally, foods that are leaner and have less inherent fat in the meat will require marinating. Lean cuts can dry out because they don’t have the fat, built-in flavor and juice machine.

  *Basting* - While cooking on a grill, whether you marinated or not, basting helps to keep your food moist and adds flavor to the surface. Basting can be done with simple olive oil but also benefits from other sauces and marinades.

**Food Safety Tips**

When shopping, buy cold food like meat and poultry last, right before checkout. Separate raw meat and poultry from other foods in your shopping cart. To guard against cross-contaminations—which can happen when raw meat or poultry juices drip on other food—put packages of raw meat and poultry into plastic bags. Plan to drive directly home from the grocery store. You may want to take a cooler with ice for perishables. Place meat and poultry in the refrigerator immediately when you arrive at home.

**Thaw Safely:** Completely thaw meat and poultry before grilling so it cooks more evenly. Use the refrigerator for slow, safe thawing or thaw sealed packages in cold water. You can microwave defrost if the food will be placed immediately on the grill.

Always keep cold food cold and hot food hot. Be sure there are plenty of clean utensils and platters. Don’t use the same platters for raw and cooked meat.