

Calorie Saving Tips at the Grill

For most Latinos, Independence Day and Labor Day means parades, fireworks and of course parrilladas. Traditional fare, such as hamburgers, hot dogs, carnitas, beer, strawberry shortcake and pies can quickly derail a diet. But on this July 4th and Labor weekend, this doesn't have to be the case!

These celebrations bring wonderful memories of outside eating, warm temperatures, great company and the wonderful aromas of BBQ, potato salad, grilled corn and much more. However, these fun celebrations can also bring hundreds of extra calories. For example, one large hot dog equals 480 calories, one piece of pork back ribs can amount to 810 calories, 1 cup of home made potato salad can add up to 358 calories and the list goes on and on. Before we know it we have eaten over 1,000 calories in a matter of minutes. I'd love to share with you how to throw the ultimate barbecue while keeping calories in check - and celebrating in style with foods and beverages that can help you enjoy the celebrations without packing the calories. Let me share a few recipes that will provide traditional outdoor dishes, but without the excess calories:

- **Main Dish:** To avoid excess fat, try a lean savory fish such as salmon pockets or tilapia in foil packets with vegetables.
- **Side Dish:** No BBQ can be without salads. Try a Summer salad with low-fat plain yogurt/reduced fat mayo, apples, walnuts, red grapes and chicken.
- **Dessert:** Nothing gets better than a warm, fresh blueberry pie with a graham cracker crust, topped with more fresh blueberries!
- **Thirst Quenchers:** Instead of using large tumblers for drinks, have an ice chest filled with the mini cans or mix it up with non-alcoholic sangria made with Zero Sprite, chopped fruit and add light fruit punch! I really like how this meal has calorie saving dishes while incorporating some of my hero foods: seafood; rich in omega-3s and each serving is an excellent source of Iron, zinc, vitamin A, B and D. Blueberries, rich in antioxidants and salads with fiber and essential vitamins and minerals. Another plus? The whole family will enjoy eating these nutritious foods!
- **Tips for healthier BBQ:** Use fresh lemon juice or other citrus juices with a teaspoon of vegetable oil and a dash of salt as a marinade for fish, beef and poultry.
- Try vegetables with low fat sauces or salad dressings for a heart-healthy option.
- Try grilled vegetables and fruits. Brush vegetable oil lightly onto vegetables like cebollitas or squash – or fruits like pineapple – and grill.

These options are sure to keep you enjoying your celebrations without adding extra weight. To get you started try these delicious fish recipes:

Grilled Tilapia and Vegetable Pockets

Ingredients

4 medium tilapia fish fillets
1 large bell pepper, seeded and sliced
1 medium zucchini, sliced
1 medium onion, sliced
1 (14.5 oz) canned Italian-seasoned diced tomatoes, undrained
12 pimento-stuffed green olives, sliced

Directions

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Cut four 18 x 12-inch pieces of aluminum foil.
3. Divide bell pepper, zucchini and onions among the center of each piece of foil. Spoon $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of canned tomatoes over arranged vegetables; top with 1 tilapia fish filet.
4. Divide remaining diced tomatoes and sliced olives over each filet. Fold foil over fish and vegetables; double fold edges to seal, leaving room for steam inside each packet.
5. Place packets over cookie sheet or on the middle oven rack, if desired. Bake at 350 degrees for about 40 minutes or until fish flakes easily with fork. Open packets carefully to allow steam to escape. Slide packet contents into plate and serve immediately. Serve with cooked rice or pasta.

Makes: 4 servings

Grilled Smokey Tilapia

Ingredients

1/2 cup plain low fat yogurt or reduced-fat sour cream
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
1/4 cup fresh lime juice
2 to 3 tablespoons prepared chipotle sauce (or more if you like it spicy)
1 1/2 teaspoons paprika
1 1/2 teaspoons brown sugar
1 teaspoon dried oregano
3/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 tablespoon canola oil
1 cup thinly sliced white onion
4 medium tilapia fish fillets
4 corn tortillas
1 medium avocado, sliced

Preparation

1. Combine first 4 ingredients in a food processor; process until smooth. In a small bowl, set aside.
2. Combine paprika and next 6 ingredients (through ground red pepper); sprinkle evenly over fish. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onions and fish to pan; cook for 5 to 8 minutes on each side or until fully cooked.
3. Warm tortillas in a warm oven for a few minutes, if desired. Divide chipotle mixture, prepared tilapia and avocado evenly among tortillas. Serve with lime wedges, if desired.

Makes: 4 servings

NOTE: May substitute paprika, brown sugar, oregano, garlic powder, salt, cumin and red pepper flakes for a prepared fish rub.