



## Sharing what we know...

### Sheet 4 : Sustainable BBQ



Research shows that a typical summer BBQ for four people releases more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than an 80-mile car journey, due to the food and fuel. BBQs are a summer staple, but have you ever thought about how you can make yours more sustainable? Here are things to consider around choosing fuel, how to burn, reducing waste, food options and fire safety.

#### **Fuel**

Most charcoal is imported from tropical forests, where it may have been harvested unsustainably, contributed to biodiversity loss and had to be transported long distances. To reduce the environmental impact buy charcoal and wood from a trusted local, sustainable and managed source. If you want to burn wood straightaway without seasoning, look for the 'Ready to Burn' logo, which indicates good quality dry wood.

Firelighters are usually made of petroleum/oil products, which are fossil fuels and can be toxic, but you can find firelighters made from waste wood and recycled vegetable oil, or you could use plain paper or cardboard from your recycling bin.

As an alternative to charcoal you can buy gas, electric and solar BBQs which can produce less or no smoke, however gas is fossil fuel and electricity can be produced by burning fossil fuels, which cause carbon emissions and air pollution.

#### **How to burn**

Before you start your BBQ make sure you have cleaned the grill to prevent it smoking, and why not use "eco" cleaning products to reduce impact and indoor air pollution? Reduce air pollution by burning fuel hot and fast and keeping the lid down (if you have one). Use fuel efficiently by making the most of all of the heat with what food you put on the BBQ, from the intense flames at the beginning to the cooler embers at the end. Secondary or double burning fires and stoves are another option for reducing smoke, by increasing air flow to the fuel and allowing fuel to burn fully, and could be retrofitted to an existing fire pit to use as a BBQ.

#### **Waste**

BBQs can be wasteful, but with a bit of thought and planning you can avoid food and plastic waste. Avoid using single use foil BBQs and disposable cutlery, utensils and napkins etc. When shopping and preparing, choose food and drink with less or no packaging. Try to only cook what you will eat and make sure to use any leftovers by safely cooling and storing, and maybe you could provide Tupperware for guests to take leftovers home?

## Food

Shop for food locally and seasonally wherever you can, and could you pick up shopping on your bike or get it delivered to reduce cars on the road? If you are having meat and fish on your BBQ make sure it is sustainably and ethically sourced, or you could consider trying some new veggie or vegan options? The research that showed a typical summer BBQ releases more greenhouse gases than an 80-mile car journey, (this is based on 2 burgers per person - more than 5.8 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e, but if you switched the burgers to 2 small chicken breasts this went down to 3.2 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e per person and if you replaced the burgers with 2 large veggie sausages and no dairy in the sides you could lower emissions to 2 kgCO<sub>2</sub>e per person.

If you are planning a partially or fully plant-based BBQ, there are so many options, and we've included some links below for recipes and inspiration. You might want to try making your own veggie burgers or you can buy pre-prepped meat alternative burgers and sausages in nearly all food shops. Vegetable skewers are a BBQ classic but you can put vegetables on whole and most vegetables taste great barbequed, in particular: corn on the cob, flat mushrooms, aubergine, courgette, long peppers, pea pods, cauliflower...

The finishing touches to a BBQ are those drinks, sides and sauces. You can make drinks up in jugs and avoid plastic bottles – and you might want to consider making sides and sauces yourself to cut down on packaging. Don't forget desserts, from the classic grilled banana with chocolate or roasted marshmallows (choose gelatine free options if you don't eat meat), to grilled pineapple or peaches, these can often go on at the end of the BBQ to use up the remaining heat.

## Fire Safety

Follow Hampshire and IOW Fire and Rescue Service fire safety advice for having a BBQ. Protect your family, community and wildlife by keeping smoke to a minimum, never leaving a BBQ unattended, keeping water nearby and setting it up away from bushes, trees, fences and other structures.

If you are considering a BBQ away from home, please play your part in preventing devastating wildfires. Protect the surrounding community, nature sites and wildlife by taking a picnic instead or only lighting BBQs in designated areas using facilities provided.

A year on from the devastating Wareham Forest fire that was started by a disposable BBQ, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service and partners have launched a #BringAPicnicNotABBBQ campaign.

This post was inspired by Riverford, please check out their blog for more advice on how to host a sustainable BBQ.