

Outdoor Grillers are Turning to Healthier Choices, Grilling More Often

According to the 19th Annual Weber GrillWatch™ Survey

PALATINE, Ill., March 24 /PRNewswire/ -- Thirty-one percent of American grill owners are grilling more than they were a year ago because they're "trying to eat healthier," according to the 19th Annual Weber GrillWatch Survey. More than one-third (39 percent) of all Survey respondents went on to say that they are grilling leaner meats, more vegetables (38 percent), more poultry (34 percent), and more fish (22 percent) than they did a year ago. Six percent are grilling more meat substitutes such as veggie burgers and tofu, and five percent are grilling more fruit. Women are significantly more likely than men to grill more vegetables (43 versus 33 percent) and more fruit (seven versus four percent).

Grilling Continues to Trend Upward in Popularity, Evidenced by Many Factors:

- More than half (57 percent) of all grill owners say they grill throughout the year. Among owners of different grill types, those who use outdoor electric grills (65 percent), gas stand-ups (61 percent) and smokers most often (60 percent) are more likely to define their "grilling season" as year-round than charcoal grill owners at 53 percent.
- Americans are grilling more times per week. Seventy-one percent report they fire up their grill "at least once a week" during their grilling season (up from 69 percent last year), and 47 percent say they fire it up "at least a few times per week" compared to 43 percent last year.
- Eighty-one percent of American grill owners assert that they prefer grilling outdoors by a wide margin (81 percent) compared to cooking inside (19 percent). This reflects an increase over last year's 78 versus 22 percent, respectively.
- While 95 percent of Survey respondents say they grill dinner "on a regular basis," 37 percent say they now grill lunch on a regular basis, and two percent grill breakfast or brunch on a regular basis.

The objective Weber GrillWatch Survey -- conducted by third-party Greenfield Online to ensure statistical integrity -- is the nation's first and most comprehensive study on what, where, when, why, and how Americans cook outdoors. All Survey respondents were over age 21 and own a gas, charcoal, or electric barbecue grill or smoker. Respondents were balanced demographically to represent households across the U.S.

For the first time, Survey researchers asked how many hours a week Americans grill during their grilling season: While the overall average of all respondents was 4.4, one-third say they spend five or more hours grilling each week. Sixty-seven percent say they spend up to four hours.

American grill owners also report that they entertain family or friends in their home an average of 10.7 times a year--slightly more than the non-grill owner average at 9.6 times(1). In addition, grill owners used their grills seven out of the 10.7 times they entertained during the year.

Grill Ownership and What's Used Most Often

Charcoal grill ownership continues to trend upward -- 53 percent of grill owners say they have one, up from 50 percent last year and 47 percent in 2005. On the flip side, gas grill ownership is on the decline with 63 percent ownership versus 70 percent ownership in 2005. Ownership of smokers and outdoor electric grills has stayed relatively constant during the past two years -- at 17 and six percent, respectively.

Whereas gas grills are still preferred over charcoal as the grill type used most often (56 versus 38 percent), the number of Americans who declare they use charcoal most often has steadily increased during the last three years (38 percent this year versus last year's 36 percent and 2005's 32 percent). Twenty-three percent of respondents say they equally use both gas and charcoal.

Once again this year, almost one-third (29 percent) of American grillers report they own multiple grills. Among owners of different grill types, those who own smokers are most likely to own multiple grills-75 percent say they own more than one, followed by outdoor electric grill owners at 57 percent.

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While Weber GrillWatch Survey respondents say that hot dogs (highest at 81 percent) and burgers (75 percent) are the easiest foods to grill, they say that fish is the most challenging (highest at 44 percent) followed by shellfish (38 percent).

When asked which foods they'd like to know how to cook better on the grill, respondents most often cited beef roasts (24 percent) and beef brisket (20 percent). These were followed by whole chicken and whole turkey at 19 percent each, ribs and pizza at 18 percent each, pork roast/tenderloin at 16 percent, and cakes at 14 percent.

Although most grilling experts say otherwise, cutting into food remains the top method that Americans use to decide when to take their food off of the grill (58 percent). Other popular methods include seeing "if it looks done" (44 percent), "poking it with a fork" (30 percent), and just plain "winging it" (21 percent). Twenty-two percent use the more advisable methods of timing their food (22 percent) and/or using a thermometer (19 percent). Those with incomes of \$100,000-plus are more apt to time their food (29 percent) and/or use a thermometer (22 percent).

Fashionable Grilling

As last year, one-third of grill owners would prefer color on their next grill. The top individual color choices are blue/dark blue at 10 percent, followed by red/dark red at nine percent. Interest in bronze/copper and green/dark green has each slightly increased to five from last year's three percent.

When it comes specifically to charcoal grills, 41 percent of Weber GrillWatch Survey respondents believe the importance of style in a charcoal grill is more important than it was five to 10 years ago. Interestingly, those who use gas stand-up models most often are significantly more likely to feel that charcoal grill styling is more important these days (51 percent) versus those who use charcoal grills most often (36 percent). Those under 35 are significantly more likely overall to believe that styling in a charcoal grill is more important now than it was five to 10 years ago (48 percent).

Accessorize, Accessorize!

American grillers have purchased a wide variety of grilling accessories during the last year. Wire brushes and tongs top the list at 35 percent each, followed by grill lighter tools (28 percent), forks (25 percent), and grilling mitts (22 percent). Younger grill owners under age 35 are the most robust purchasers of grilling accessories-over the last year they were more likely overall to purchase tongs (46 percent), grill lighter tools (36 percent), forks (33 percent), mitts (29 percent), grill covers (29 percent), and spatulas (28 percent).

Grill Gifting

Nearly one in four grill owners (22 percent) has purchased an outdoor grill for someone as a gift. Birthdays are the top occasion at 37 percent, followed by Christmas (23 percent, up from last year's 18 percent), which outpaces last year's second most popular occasion of Father's Day (20 percent). Fourteen percent of respondents say they have purchased a grill as a housewarming present.

Most Popular Grilling Holidays

Americans fire up their grills on just about every major holiday. The Fourth of July again tops the list at 86 percent, followed by Labor Day (74 percent), birthdays (73 percent), and Memorial Day (69 percent). Fifty-two percent of grill owners cook outside on Father's Day compared to 45 percent on Mother's Day.

Keep It Clean

Slightly more than one-half of grill owners (52 percent) say they thoroughly clean their grill at least once or twice a month, including 25 percent who say they clean it at least once a week. Another 38 percent say they clean it less often-from once to a few times per year. Surprisingly, six percent admit that they have never cleaned their grill, and an additional five percent say they do it every couple of years or less!

Weber-Stephen Products Co., headquartered in Palatine, Ill., is the world's leading manufacturer of charcoal and gas grills, grilling accessories and other outdoor room products. In 1952, founder George Stephen sparked a backyard revolution with his invention of the Weber® kettle. More than 50 years later, the family-owned company remains the industry leader with its Weber®, Weber® Q™, and Ducane® brands. As a leading exporter of grills, Weber brand products are sold worldwide at select home centers, hardware stores, department stores, patio stores, and other retail outlets. Weber has the strongest consumer outreach program in the industry with its Weber Grill-Line(SM) (1-800-GRILL-OUT®)* and a content-rich website with grilling tips, techniques, and original Weber recipes at <http://www.weber.com/r/>.

(1) Non-grill owner stat according to Synovate national online omnibus poll in Dec. 2007

* The Weber Grill-Line and Weber Customer Service are closed on Christmas day.

SOURCE: Weber-Stephen Products Co.

Web site: <http://www.weber.com/>