

Stay safe when using your barbecue grill

These are few simple tips that can help you enjoy your food cooked on your barbecue grill, while you stay safe. Keep your grill clean. Accumulated grease can usually be removed by using spray degreasers such as (409, Fantastik and others) and scraping with a putty knife.



Ask
Dad

Harry
Jachym

Grease fires are very hot and difficult to put out. One Christmas Eve we attempted to cook a goose on our gas grill. Did you know that goose fat burns hot enough to melt cast aluminum? We do now. The Christmas pizza wasn't too bad. The use of grills on wooden decks is of course popular. Be aware of leaves, dry grass and other combustibles that may gather near the grill or under the deck boards. It's a good idea to have a multipurpose fire extinguisher handy. Keep children a safe distance from the hot grill and never leave the grill unattended (refer back to the goose).

GRILL SAFETY

Mix some dish soap with water and paint it on all gas connections. Bubbles will form if there is a leak. Any leak must be repaired (either tighten the connection or replace the part) before lighting your grill. At the same time, check the burners for rust and other damage. Check the venturi tube (see your owners manual) for insect nests or other blockage. A blocked venturi will at the least make your grill burn improperly and hard to light, at worst will cause the gas to spill away from the burner.

Long nozzle lighters are safest for lighting gas grills after the built-in electric igniter won't spark (usually within the first year). Never light a gas grill with the lid closed - gas can accumulate causing flash-back.

Always turn off the gas at the tank. Control valves are notorious for not sealing tight.

TRADITIONAL FUEL GRILLS

Never, ever, don't even think about using gasoline as a starter fluid for a charcoal grill. Gasoline is absolutely too volatile for anything other than to cook engines. In fact, only use charcoal lighter fluid for this purpose.

Stack the coals in a cone shaped pile squirting a little fluid on the layers as you build the pile. Let it set for a few moments and light the pile in several places near the bottom.

A better, and much easier way to light coals is by using an electric coal starter. Not only are these safer than starter fluid but the sometimes residual petroleum smell and taste is not transferred to the grilled food. I prefer using a chimney style lighter. These are metal tubes with a wooden handle and vent holes near the bottom.

Set the tube in the firebox. Wadded newspaper is placed in the bottom of the tube and charcoal is placed above the paper.

Light the paper. The coals light as the hot gases vent up the chimney.

Have a safe and tasty outdoor cooking season.

Harry Jachym writes Ask Dad, a column on home issues ranging from repairs and maintenance to building and remodeling projects. He is a Plymouth resident.

Send any questions or comments to Jachym at askdad@comcast.net or in care of Ken Abramczyk, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

Residents now enjoy more protection when it comes to home appliance repair, service and maintenance.

Effective June 21, 2002, the Appliance Repair Act requires a service dealer who works on a refrigerator, dehumidifier, freezer, oven, range, microwave oven, washer, dryer, dish washer, trash compactor, or window room air conditioner, to provide a detailed written estimate approved by the customer before performing any work.



Appliance
Doctor

Joe
Gagnon

approved by the customer before performing any work. The service dealer may not exceed the estimate by more than 10 percent without getting customer approval and must provide a 30-day labor warranty. Additionally, service dealers must return to the customer parts removed from an appliance.

This consumer alert provides an overview of the new protections. The following information was compiled and published by the attorney general's office. I've paraphrased it here.

■ Written estimate: A service dealer may not charge in excess of 110 percent of the amount noted in the written estimate unless verbal or written permission of the customer is obtained. A written estimate must contain the service dealer's name, mailing address, and telephone number and a description of the problem requiring repair or replacement.

Any charge for labor or parts must be stated separately along with the hourly or flat rate used to determine labor costs and any charge for transporting the appliance to and from the customer's premises. If the appliance requires dismantling, the service dealer must include that cost of dismantling and re-assembling, and any parts that would be rendered inoperable by the

process. ■ The final bill: Written estimate and final bill may be combined in the same document. In any event the final bill must state the name and address of the service dealer, service call charges, the labor charges, service dealer's labor warranty and parts charge, the warranty provided by the supplier of the part, or the fact there is no supplier's or manufacturer's warranty on the part and the sales tax. Any other charge must be stated in detail. The statement must inform the customer to notify the service dealer in writing, in person, or by telephone before expiration of the warranty to receive warranty work.

■ Warranty: A service dealer has to provide a warranty for a least 30 days on the dealer's labor. This warranty requires the service dealer to correct, at no cost to the customer, any failure of the warranted parts if the customer notified the service dealer in writing within the applicable warranty time period. The service dealer has to make the warranted correction within 10 days after receiving the written notice of the failure, unless parts have been timely ordered but not yet received. The service dealer is required to make a written record of the parts order.

■ Parts: In most circumstances service dealers must return all parts removed from the appliance unless the customer declines, in writing, to receive the removed part. The service dealer may

retain any part for an exchange and it is needed to be returned to the manufacturer as required by the manufacturer's warranty or it contains hazardous material. That part may be retained by the service dealer if the dealer provides to the customer, at the completion of the repair, service, or maintenance, a written statement on the final bill describing the reason for the retention of the part.

■ Remedy: A service dealer who persuades, or induces a customer to authorize work through false statements, or who fails to comply with disclosure requirements violates the law. That dealer is liable for damages or \$250, whichever is greater, and attorney fees. A court could award up to twice that amount for willful intent.

It took 17 years to get this law passed in our state and trust me when I tell you that it wasn't fun. It was educational though and I learned a great deal on how our government operates. Slow to the point of much frustration on my part but very sure of what they were doing by the many hours of research on their part.

I once wrote in this column that I would get this law passed before I died and sometimes I thought our government was taking me to task. It is passed now and I think they tagged my name onto it as a measure of apology for my 17 years of involvement. The reason it passed is that the state realizes that most appliance repair companies are good and worthy of consumer confidence and that only a few are the out and out ripoffs.

The state has overseen or used some form of regulation for almost all service industries except for the appliance repair industry. Those few unethical businesses took advantage of this fact for many years and tainted the image of the good guys to a great degree. The good guys have been doing what is prescribed in the Appliance Repair Act for many years and they didn't need a law to tell them to do so.

I recently learned that the Attorney General's office is still receiving complaints about improper service being performed by certain companies. I scratched and clawed for 17 years to get this law passed, not for me but for you. I don't want these types of companies in my industry and I don't want them to rip you off and if they persist, I want them to be criminally charged.

If you think you've been taken to the cleaners by an appliance repair company, then give me a call. If the service technician takes a part out of your appliance without a reasonable explanation and doesn't leave it with you, ask yourself why he or she is doing that. Remember that you can never prove the part wasn't defective if you don't have it in your possession.

You need to know that the crooks in the business are still out there and you have to be sure that the company coming into your home is a good one. Stay tuned.

Questions about the Joe Gagnon Appliance Repair Act or complaints may be directed to: Attorney General's Office, Consumer Protection Division, PO Box 30213, Lansing MI 48909 or call 1-517-373-1140 or 1-877-755-8389 (1-877-SOLVE-88).

Joe Gagnon is host of Ask The Handyman on Infinity Radio AM 1270 8 a.m.-noon Saturdays and Sundays. You can hear his tips on WJ 950 on weekdays. You can call him on his show at (248) 356-1270.

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