



Countertop Grills—A Versatile Appliance

Countertop grills are another cooking appliance that can make cooking for one or two an easier task. This appliance has been growing in popularity since it was introduced in the 1990's.

While you don't get the flame-grilled flavor of the backyard barbecue, you do get the advantage of lower-fat cooking when you use one of these grills.

The indoor grill – or countertop grill – is available in a variety of sizes and with a variety of features. Some grills are the clam-shell type, others are a single surface type. No matter what type of grill you choose, you can have grilled foods year-round.

Indoor grills are a healthy way to cook. You can virtually eliminate adding fat to meats, but don't stop with meats when using your grill for cooking. Sandwiches (like paninis), vegetables, and fruit can all be cooked on an electric grill.

Some grills have one cooking surface and a drip pan. With this type of grill, you usually put water in the drip pan and the smoke from cooking is eliminated. Contact grills are another type and are usually the clamshell type of grill. With this type of grill, the contact surfaces heat and both sides of the food are cooked at once. Often the contact surfaces have "ribs" to give the food a grilled appearance.

Grills cost from \$20 to \$200. If easy clean-up is what you want, look for a grill that has removable grid plates. Most of the clamshell grills do not have a temperature control – all you need to do to use the grill is plug it in to preheat it and when the indicator light goes off, you are ready to cook the food.

As with all meat cookery, the thickness of the meat will affect the cooking time. Since the grill does cook from the top and bottom, cooking times will be cut almost in half but you still should use a thermometer to check the temperature of the food. The following temperatures are a guide for cooking meats:

Ground beef – 160 degrees F.

Steaks – 145 degrees F for rare, 155 degrees F for medium

Boneless chicken breasts or boneless turkey – 165 degrees F

Fish – 160 degrees F

Do not limit yourself to meats and sandwiches. Your countertop grill is great for cooking other foods such as sliced potatoes. Choose either a white or sweet potato. Scrub the potato and pierce the skin. Cook the potato for 2 to 3 minutes in the microwave oven.

Remove the potato from the microwave and slice into ¼-inch slices. Spray each side lightly with cooking spray and place on the preheated grill. Grill the potato slices until tender and season to taste. It's almost like having fresh fries!

You can also cook vegetables that have been marinated in fat-free Italian dressing. Choose your favorite combination of vegetables such as peppers, cauliflower, broccoli, carrot slices, etc. Marinate them in bottled dressing overnight then thread onto pre-soaked wooden skewers and cook on the grill, turning occasionally. (These are great done on the outdoor grill, too!) The vegetables should still be crunchy when done.



Nutrition Quiz:

1. About how many cups of vegetables should you eat every day?

1 1 ½ 2 2 ½

2. How many 8-ounce glasses of milk should you drink every day?

1 2 3 4

3. How much juice is a serving of fruit?

1 cup ¾ cup ½ cup

4. Which fruit(s) are good sources of vitamin C?

Apple	Orange
Strawberry	Pear

5. Cooked dry beans are a good source of (more than one answer may be correct)

Protein	Calcium
Fiber	Carbohydrate

Grilled Chicken Salad Sandwich

½ cup cooked chicken breast, diced
 2 Tablespoons chopped pecans
 2 Tablespoons light mayonnaise
 ½ teaspoon dill weed
 ½ teaspoon Dijon mustard
 4 slices whole wheat bread
 2 teaspoons margarine, softened



Preheat countertop grill. Combine chicken, pecans, mayonnaise, dill weed, and Dijon mustard in a small bowl. Spread margarine on one side of each piece of bread. Using half of the chicken salad for each sandwich, place filling on plain side of bread. Place sandwich on grill with buttered sides toward the heating grids. Close the grill and cook until bread is toasted. Serves 2.

Nutrition information per serving: 370 calories, 17 grams fat, 25 mg. Cholesterol, 34 grams carbohydrate, 5 grams fiber, 19 grams protein, 780 milligrams sodium

Answers: 1. 2 1/2 2. 3 3. 1/2 cup
 4. Orange, Strawberry 5. protein, fiber, carbohydrate

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