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Copley News Service

Flip Burgers with Mother Nature ... Grill Green This Summer

Each spring, millions of grilling enthusiasts dust off the grill in anticipation of another fun-filled summer of backyard barbecues. But at what cost to the environment? According to Sierra magazine, the estimated 60 million barbecues held on the Fourth of July alone in the U.S. consume enough energy -- in the forms of charcoal, lighter fluid, gas and electricity -- to power 20,000 households for a year.

If this statistic has your grilling outlook going from sunny to overcast, don't panic. It's quite easy to minimize your environmental impact while grilling by taking a few simple steps that won't diminish your grilling experience. Yes, you too can grill green, and these simple tips will help you get your grill on while keeping Mother Earth on your good side. After all, charcoal has been in use since the days of Henry Ford, but you're not still driving a Model T, are you?

One of the biggest factors in grilling green is the fuel source used to grill. All grilling fuels use natural resources and emit pollutants into the environment, but some do so at a much greater cost than others. Charcoal grills and lighter fluid contribute more to ground-level ozone, which is produced when nitrogen oxides and volatile organic chemicals combine in hot weather conditions. In addition, charcoal produces more carbon monoxide and particulates than other grilling options.

Though gas grills offer one of the quickest ways to barbecue, the grills can be expensive to purchase, liquid propane gas is a non-renewable fossil fuel and many a barbecue have been put on hold due to empty propane tank syndrome. But charcoal and gas aren't the only fuel sources to consider when grilling. Recent innovations in the industry have opened the door to a greener grilling experience. One such innovation is the FlameDisk -- a charcoal alternative made from solid ethanol, a renewable biofuel. Food grilled on the FlameDisk tastes just like it was grilled over charcoal, but using this eco-friendly grill fuel emits 99 percent less carbon monoxide and

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