



## Backyard Cookout Checklist (10–40 Guests)

### Planning (1–2 Weeks Before)

- ☐ Choose the time & date, and develop a rain plan
- ☐ Create a site plan (including parking); try not to locate the grill upwind from where most people will gather
- ☐ Inform neighbors, and invite if appropriate
- ☐ Send invitations or event texts (RSVPs help determine food quantities)
- ☐ Decide the menu (main dishes, sides, drinks, desserts)
- ☐ Assign dishes if guests are contributing (“bring your own side” option)
- ☐ Check grill(s): fuel, ignition, grates, and accessories
- ☐ Plan seating and shade (umbrellas, tents, or canopy if needed)
- ☐ Gather serving gear: tongs, platters, chafing trays, coolers, ice buckets
- ☐ Plan lighting if it goes past sunset (string lights, lanterns, etc.)
- ☐ Set up a music playlist and test outdoor speakers
- ☐ Plan for trash and recycling bins (label clearly)
- ☐ Develop a schedule for staffing the grill (you don’t want to be cooking all day!)

### Shopping (3–5 Days Before)

- ☐ Meats or main proteins (estimate ~½ lb per person for mixed proteins)
- ☐ Buns, rolls, tortillas, etc.
- ☐ Sides and condiments (ketchup, mustard, BBQ sauce, mayo, pickles)
- ☐ Produce: lettuce, tomato, onions, corn, fruit salad, etc.
- ☐ Drinks (water, soda, beer, cocktail mixers, ice)
- ☐ Charcoal, pellets, or propane
- ☐ Disposable plates, napkins, utensils, cups
- ☐ Aluminum foil, storage bags, plastic wrap
- ☐ Cleaning supplies: paper towels, disinfectant wipes, trash bags
- ☐ Firewood or fuel for fire pits, if necessary

### Prep & Timing (Day Before or Morning Of)

- ☐ Prep marinades and sides that can chill overnight
- ☐ Brine poultry at least 30 minutes prior to cooking
- ☐ Pre-cut veggies, make burger patties, skewer kabobs, etc.
- ☐ Chill drinks
- ☐ Mow lawn and tidy up the premises
- ☐ Set up tables, chairs, serving stations, and shade
- ☐ Designate zones: food prep, cooking, eating, and games
- ☐ Make a cooking timeline (stagger grilling so nothing goes cold)
- ☐ Double-check fuel levels and have a backup tank or bag of charcoal
- ☐ Confirm pool chemicals are in balance; check safety equipment

### Cooking & Execution (Event Day)

- ☐ Start grill early to preheat (15–20 minutes for gas, 30+ for charcoal)
- ☐ Cook meats in order of heat and time needed (chicken/pork before burgers/hot dogs)
- ☐ ALWAYS use a thermometer for food safety (165°F poultry, 145°F pork/beef)
- ☐ Keep cold foods in coolers until serving
- ☐ Rotate serving trays—don't leave perishable foods out for more than 2 hours
- ☐ Have a “grill captain” and a “runner” for sides/refills
- ☐ Serve desserts last; use covered containers for leftovers

### Entertainment

- ☐ Prepare music playlist and test audio system (keep volume moderate)
- ☐ Set up outdoor TV if necessary
- ☐ Plan yard games (cornhole, ladder toss, frisbee, bocce, etc.)
- ☐ Gather pool toys, sunscreen, towels if applicable
- ☐ If children are coming, plan a kids' area with safe activities (bubbles, chalk, etc.)
- ☐ Set up fire pit and/or lighting for evening ambiance
- ☐ Create a photo-worthy area (string lights, banner, simple backdrop)

### Cleanup

- ☐ Soak and scrub grill grates while warm
- ☐ Separate trash, recyclables, and compostables
- ☐ Package leftovers (offer take-home containers)
- ☐ Wipe down tables, counters, and serving stations
- ☐ Store remaining drinks and condiments
- ☐ Check yard for trash, bottle caps, or utensils
- ☐ Return furniture, lights, and extension cords to storage
- ☐ Take out garbage that night to avoid animals