

**SOURCE:** Kentucky Post (Covington,KY)  
**AUDIENCE:** 69,705 [provided by Nielsen//NetRatings]  
**DATE:** 06-21-2010  
**HEADLINE:** Grillout gadgetry

### Source Website

Start summer off with the latest stuff that helps make your backyard parties a hit

By Amy Howell Hirt . ahowell@enquirer.com . June 21, 2010

Today's the first day of summer and among other things this season brings backyards filled with family and friends and the smell of burgers and veggies on the grill. While hosts will always worry over the kids, bugs, fire and clean-up, some handy new grill and outdoor gizmos can help cut down the concerns and cook up the fun.

#### Thermometer remote

Almost as easy as being paged when your table is ready, backyard chefs can clip on the Weber Style Digital Thermometer's wireless remote and it will beep them when the food reaches the desired temperature, from rare to well-done. \$39.99 at [www.weber.com](http://www.weber.com), \$34.99 at [www.homedepot.com](http://www.homedepot.com) and [www.target.com](http://www.target.com); also available at some Ace Hardware stores.

#### Handy bowl

No more lost salad tongs. This creatively industrious design from Joseph Joseph, a contemporary kitchenware line from the UK, features two hand-like salad servers that fit into notches on either side of the bowl. The set is dishwasher-safe and made from drop-friendly melamine. \$45 at the Contemporary Arts Center, Downtown.

#### Flexible skewer

Another winner of the Good Housekeeping Research Institute VIP awards, the Fire Wire Flexible Grilling Skewer from Inno-Labs takes the hassle out of grilling up kabobs. The 27-inch stainless steel cable is non-abrasive and coils up as tightly as needed to fit into a bowl or bag for marinating, and can snake around other foods on the grill. A smooth metal tip at one end and a loop at the other make it easy to load the skewer and place it over the fire. \$15 for two at Bed Bath and Beyond, Williams Sonoma, Ace Hardware and [www.target.com](http://www.target.com).

#### Forkula

The Forkula, created by Lee Drannan Smithson of Dayton, is designed to single-handedly flip anything you can cook on a grill – combining the functions of a spatula, tongs and meat fork. Four tines at the tip of each "tong" can slide under meat and between the grates of a wire grill. The 16-inch-long stainless steel tool is dishwasher-safe. \$15 plus \$2.21 postage; at [www.forkula.com](http://www.forkula.com) or by calling 800-227-7066.

#### Tabletop firepit

Ground-level firepits are a safety concern if children are around, but a new breed of tabletop firepit from the Outdoor GreatRoom Company function like a candle with the spirit of an open fire.

The decorative pieces, which aren't meant as heat sources, are fueled by non-toxic, clean-burning gel biofuel, and are safe to use indoors when the seasons change. The 16 1/2-inch-tall "Allure" tabletop firepit (pictured) weighs 7 pounds and was a finalist in *Hearth & Home* magazine's 2010 Vesta Awards. \$249; available

through Evans Landscape, Reading Rock Inc., Mowery Construction and at [www.outdoorrooms.com](http://www.outdoorrooms.com).

#### Plastic silverware

The new Brilliance flatware from Diamond offers the convenient clean-up of plastic utensils with the sparkle of polished silver in an art deco-style design. Dishwasher-safe and reusable. \$4.49 for a 30-pack (10 spoons, 10 knives and 10 forks) at Target, Walmart and some grocery stores.

#### Grill kit

In a box resembling a frozen meal, the EZ Grill presents a convenient tabletop cooking method for the backyard or picnic ground. The disposable grill comes assembled with an aluminum pan on a stand, filled with natural charcoal and starter paper, and covered with a grate. The EPA-approved grill is 100 percent recyclable and the charcoal, which cooks for up to an hour and a half, uses mineral oil instead of chemicals or lighter fluid.

\$4.99 for a 9.8-by-12.2-inch grill, \$9.99 for a 18.9-by-12.2-inch "party size" grill; at Walmart, [biggs.com](http://biggs.com) and [www.ezgrill.com](http://www.ezgrill.com).

#### ***Insect Shield***

Outdoor fun usually involves covering up with bug spray or smearing on the anti-itch cream afterward. But ***Insect Shield***, which designs EPA-registered ***fabrics*** treated with permethrin, an odorless bug repellent, has introduced a third option: protection you sit on. The TravelChair and Cocoon Bunk Sack landed on the Good Housekeeping Research Institute's VIP (Very Innovative Product) list for 2010 – which recognizes 10 products from the 1,650 tested yearly.

The foldable, camp-style ***Insect Shield*** Chair (model 579VISBK) is \$60 at [www.travelchair.com](http://www.travelchair.com).

The washable polyester and cotton bunk sack can be used by itself or as a sleeping bag cover and has a side opening that secures with Velcro. \$30 at [www.insectshield.com/work](http://www.insectshield.com/work).

#### A 'green' grill-out

Here are a few tips for throwing an "eco-barbecue," from April Milliken Trigg, an Atlanta-based "green" event planner who arranges parties for celebrities and corporations.

Create a simple menu based on local and organic ingredients.

Use the same ingredients in various ways.

Use food as an edible centerpiece.

Instead of buying bottled water, set up a drink station, using mason jars instead of plastic cups.

Set up a recycling station.

If you aren't using your regular dishes, look for biodegradable or compostable paper products and reusable plasticware.

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***Highlights: Insect Shield, fabrics, insectshield***