

# Braai Maintenance

Your braai has been a great success and you didn't even have to order pizza. The issue is now that you need to clean everything so that you're ready for your next braai. Here are some must-have tools and tips to ease things along.

Before the Braai:

It's often said that the best way to solve problems is to prevent them in the first place. That is as true for braaing as anything else, so:

- Before you braai, give your grid a good spray of non-stick-spray – as used on dishes that go into the oven. You might well find that grease and other leftovers from the braaing process will be easier to remove.
- If you're using a skottel, line it with kitchen foil before use. This will contain most, if not all, of the leftovers from the braaing process, saving you a bit of cleaning – provided you handled the tongs carefully and didn't tear or puncture the foil.
- If you have one of those large braais with a drip tray, line the drip tray with kitchen foil as well. Make sure you make a hole over the drain hole, and then lining the cup that slides in under the drip hole, so you don't need to clean that either.

After the Braai:

Cleaning the grill is usually the most onerous and you can make this a little easier like this:

- Place the dirty grill in a black rubbish bag – an unused one, naturally – and apply a liberal spray of oven cleaner. Seal the bag and if you have been braaing away from home, pop the bag into a second and it shouldn't cause any problems in the boot of your car.
- Leave the grill in the bag for a few minutes to allow time for the oven cleaner to do its work, and then soak the grill in a basin of hot water with dishwashing liquid added. That will loosen the harder, carbonised deposits.
- Clean off the softer debris with a kitchen scourer, and then finish off with a brass-bristled or steel-bristled wire brush to remove the rest. It's probably best to use the brass version as the bristles are less likely to harm any chrome plating on your grill.
- Give a quick rinse-off with a high-pressure hose and hang it up to dry before storing it away.

The Kit:

The essential braai cleaning kit is not hugely extensive and the items pictured in this feature will allow you to complete most braai clean-ups without too much swearing. You can find all these at Mica.

- Scoop:

A coal scoop will be a great help in removing ash and unburned charcoal from your braai, but don't use a scoop on a kettle-type braai as it could mar the surface and chip the enamel, leading to rusting.

- Kettle Braai Cleaning Blades:

If you have a kettle braai, manufacturers make bespoke cleaning blades designed to conform to the curve of the braai's surface.

- Grill Scraper/Brush:

A grill scrape and brush combination is great for cleaning the bars on a grid and for brushing them clean.

- Wire Brush:

A handy brush to have on hand is a wire brush, with either steel or brass bristles – brass is perhaps the best choice to reduce the risk of damaging any chrome plating. Once the grill has been cleaned of the less-resistant debris, a wire brush will make short work even the hardest deposits.

#### Safety First:

- If you have a gas braai, make a point of regularly checking its hoses and connectors. If anything is faulty, do not try to fix it yourself, but rather bring it into your local Mica for a new part to replace the faulty one, or perhaps to be returned to the manufacturer for the necessary repairs.
- Do not use your bare hands to empty out the braai unless you know 100% that the coals are dead; sometimes, the top layer of ash hides the hell below – and you could be seriously injured.
- If you are braaiing in a public picnic area, campsite or similar, do not simply dig a hole and deposit the coals into it after the braai. The coals can still be burning and might continue to do so for some time. An unwary foot might penetrate the soil covering the coals and get injured. Rather water the coals down and keep doing so until no steam is present. Pay particular attention to larger lumps of charcoal and wood. Though the surface might look like it is out, even after a long soaking, the interior might still be glowing and could reignite.
- Beware of flying sparks, they will find a place to start a fire in dry tinder unless you are very careful.
- Never use liquid with a high flash point, such as petrol, methylated spirits, acetone, thinners or similar to start your braai fire. A carelessly lighted match can result in a very sudden and very large flare-up – and injury. Rather use firelighters, paper, or fire lighting fluid – purpose-made for starting braai fires.
- Never try to help the fire along by squirting any fire-light fluid on it after you have got it burning. You could end up with a flash-back to the container, and injury.
- Keep children and pets away from braai fires and make sure there's proper supervision of the braai and fire from the very start to the very end.