

Sustainable **BBQ**



The ultimate eBook for
eco-friendly outdoor parties





Chapters

1. The Grill
2. Food
3. Drinks
4. Table & Decorations
5. Waste
6. Wasps & Co.
7. Outdoor picnic



Introduction

Red meat is bad for your health. Charcoal is poison for the environment. Plastic cutlery pollutes the planet and wasp repellents kill bees. That said - do we really need another sustainable barbecue guide? Absolutely! Because this one is different.

As a green event specialist, I'm not here to crash your party. I wholeheartedly agree: there is nothing more fun in summer than sitting outside on your patio with a cold drink in your hand and grilled food in your belly.

That's why this eBook won't curb your party enthusiasm. I just want to show you how to enjoy BBQs and picnics without harming the planet. **I don't preach total sacrifice, but encourage ecological decision along the way.**

Sustainability works when thousands of people try their best - not when a few people aim to be perfect.

That said: Happy BBQ Season.



Katrin Lüthy

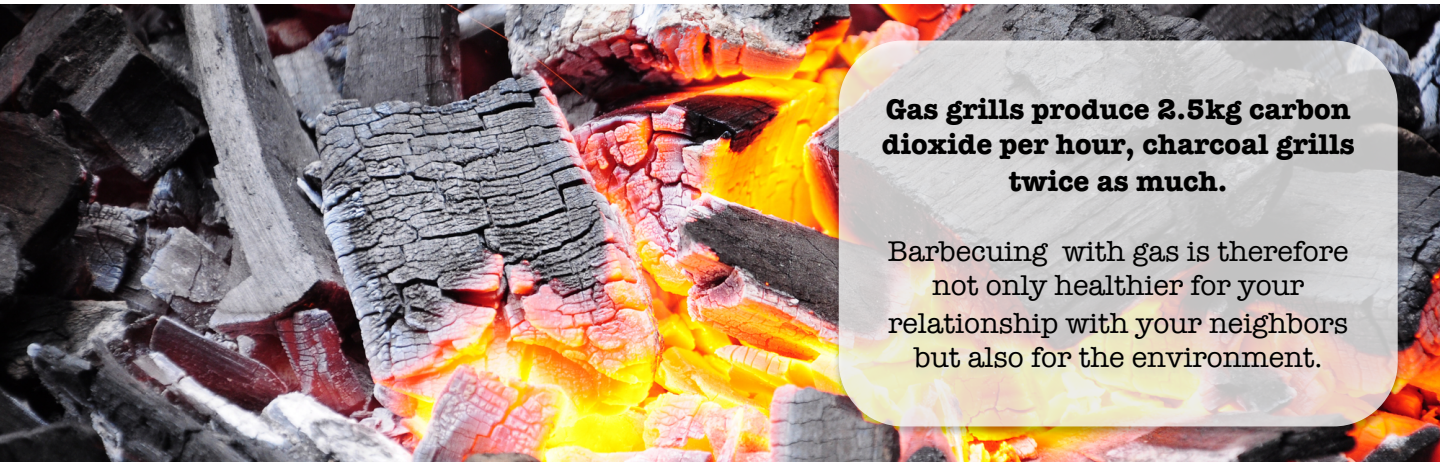
The Green Event Planner



The Grill

BBQ grills separate the boys from the men. Or the gas from the flame? Fact is, **gas grills are much better for the environment than charcoal grills**. They produce far fewer carbon emissions.

If you can't BBQ without a fire you should at least ditch ignition aids, as they often contain chemicals and synthetic materials which are bad for both, humans and nature. For those who can't help it: FSC-certified fireplace lighters are made from renewable materials and contain no artificial chemical ingredients whatsoever.



Gas grills produce 2.5kg carbon dioxide per hour, charcoal grills twice as much.

Barbecuing with gas is therefore not only healthier for your relationship with your neighbors but also for the environment.

1. Hands off tropical timber

In 2018, the World Wildlife Foundation tested various different charcoal brands available in Swiss stores. The results were heart-breaking: we BBQ with tropical wood. This is bad for numerous reasons. Hundreds of thousands of tons of precious timber, which is essential to protect the global climate, is transported to Switzerland just to be burnt on BBQ grills. Keep an eye out for charcoal that only contains forest wood from the area.

The following brands scored high:

Weber Grill Holzkohle, Fust
Oecoplan, Coop
Giardino, Migros

Read the whole story [here](#).

2. Briquettes from olive pits

If you want to play it safe, jump on the latest BBQ trend: briquettes from olive pits. You can find them at Coop Bau & Hobby.

3. <3 your grill

BBQ grills are available for little to no money these days. However, buying a new one every year is ecological nonsense and really bad for the environment. Invest a bit of money in a decent model and take good care of it.



Food

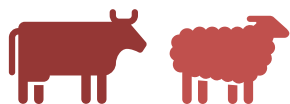
Let's cut straight to the chase: if you want to fight climate change, you have to go vegan. That said, we do not preach sacrifice, but moderate indulgence. What's definitely not in vogue anymore are grill platters overflowing with meat. If you want to help the planet (and your cholesterol level), opt for a mix between meat and greens.

Whatever you put on your eco-platter, make sure it's always **from your region, in season and organic**. Your local farmer can help with meat and greens and pasta and rice can be found at Zero Waste stores. A great alternative for time-conscious city slickers is [farmy.ch](https://www.farmy.ch), an online store that delivers food straight from the farm to your doorstep.

1. Enjoy meat without the guilt

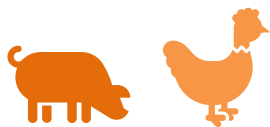
Is it possible to buy sustainable meat? Fact is, the meat industry is a huge Co2 contributor. The carbon footprint of red meat is particularly high and should always be taken into consideration.

1 kilo of pork causes the same amount of Co2 as 80 kilos of potatoes. 1 kilo of beef requires 15'415 litres of water. The cattle production is responsible for 14.5% of the world's greenhouse gases – more than the entire car industry!



By far the worst choice for the environment is beef, followed by lamb. Sustainable grill masters enjoy burgers and steaks in moderation.

What makes a huge difference is a trip to your local farmer or butcher. If you must have beef, make sure it's from an animal-friendly cattle close to home.



10x less harmful for the planet than beef is pork and chicken. The breeding requires less farmland and chickens do not produce poisonous methane gas.

If you want to BBQ climate-friendly, work on your chicken- and turkey game.



Far better for your carbon footprint is fish – as long as you stay away from farmed salmon.

Saving Co2 only works with domestic species. Not sure what fish swims in Swiss rivers?

Download the [App from WWF](#) and find out.



If you enjoy cosy BBQs in autumn, go wild! Deer and venison cause by far the least Co2.

That gives you the opportunity to end your grill season with a positive bang for the environment.



2. Easy on the Snacks

Barbecues are feasts – there's no need to stuff tummies with munchies before the main course arrives. To avoid tons of leftovers and plastic waste, offer two types of crisps max and open one bag at a time.

3. Organic and local sides

Potatoes, grilled vegetables, fruit, salads: it's never easier to shop local than in summer. Avoid large food stores whenever possible and shop in small farm houses instead. This will make a huge difference, as the quantity of food you need for BBQ parties is larger than your usual groceries.

4. Grill, don't cook

You already went the extra-mile to fire up your grill. The least you can do now is to cook the whole menu on it. Smoke from charcoal pollutes the environment, so let's make every briquette count! Prepare all side dishes on the BBQ as well. You will not only use the grill to the max, but also get a visual on that 50/50 meat-veggie recommendation.

5. Ditch the tin foil

Cooking vegetables in tin foil is easy. It's also rather problematic: the production generates toxic waste and recycling is difficult. This cooking method is also quite unhealthy. Salt and acids can dissolve the top layer of the foil, which means that certain food cooked in aluminium exceed the tolerable daily dose. Especially asparagus and salmon should never be cooked this way.

A healthy and reusable alternative are grill baskets, available at Migros.

6. Fair Trade

Ecological cultivation and fair trade distribution is also a part of sustainability. This is especially important for coffee and chocolate: if you can't spot a fair trade label choose a different product.

7. Avoid unnecessary packaging

Your household waste will increase dramatically after a BBQ party. That's why every single item of packaging counts. Take your own shopping bags with you and use reusable fruit bags.

8. Zero Waste

Pasta, rice and baking ingredients can be bought without packaging these days! Zero waste stores are popping up everywhere in Switzerland and large gatherings are the perfect time to check them out.

[Here's](#) a list of Zero Waste stores in Switzerland.



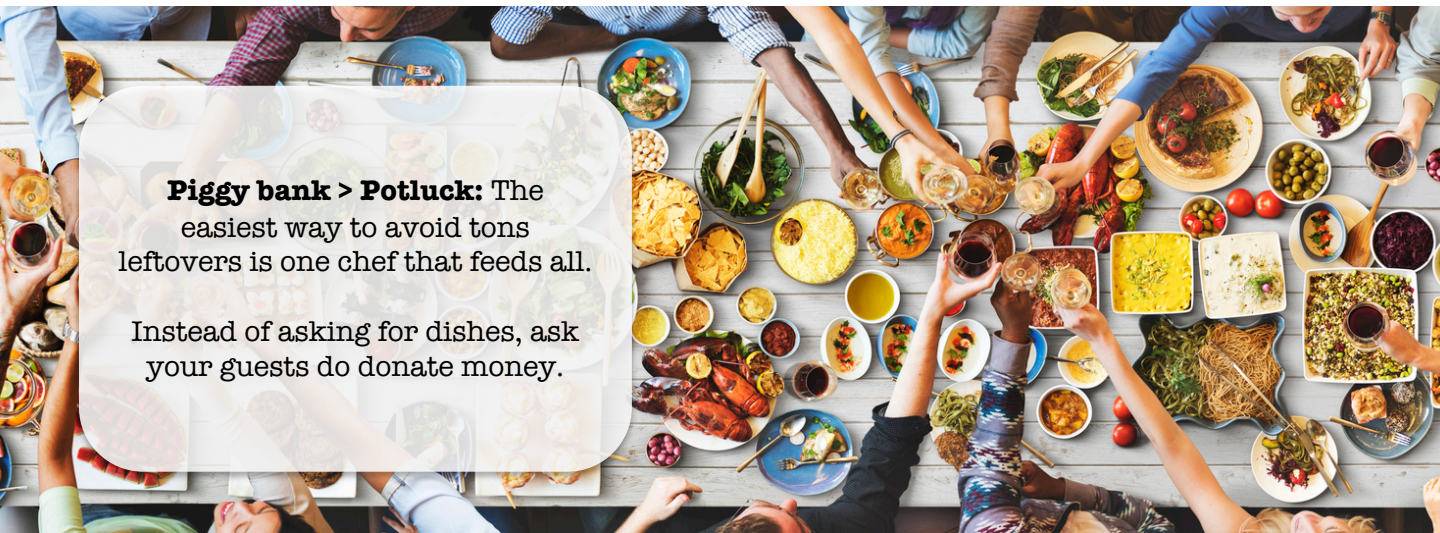
9. Avoid leftover food

I've got to be honest here, I'm not a fan of potlucks. They are a recipe for tons of leftovers. Guests are usually way too generous and the coordination of potluck menus often lack true leadership. To make sure you don't end up with tons of food, plan and delegate like a pro and educate your chefs.

Here are a couple of things to consider before you ask your guests to bring food:

1. The host chooses the menu and the quantity. Decide who should bring what and delegate accordingly. Otherwise, you will end up with 15 cakes and only one salad. The easiest way to distribute the cooking task is to share a list of dishes online and ask people to put their name to it.
2. Whether you do this via a list or personally, do not forget to inform every single cook how much food you expect in total, so that no one thinks only his or her dish has to feed the hungry.
3. It's important to share the exact amount of guests you expect. Chefs who know the final headcount can amend the quantity of their dishes accordingly.
4. Ask your guests to cook reasonable amounts. Tell them straight away that you want to avoid leftovers at all cost.
5. Request side dishes without meat and make your vegetarian and vegan guests feel welcome. This will also reduce your carbon footprint.
6. Ask your guests to bring Tupperware boxes for doggy bags.

I'm aware that this sounds like a very lavish military operation but that's how sustainable event management works. Communication is key!



Piggy bank > Potluck: The easiest way to avoid tons of leftovers is one chef that feeds all.

Instead of asking for dishes, ask your guests to donate money.



Drinks

Hot summer days equal cold drinks. We all know that **water spiked with fresh fruit** is more eco-friendly than sugary delights in plastic bottles, but what about alcohol?

Here's how you can enjoy the boozy delights without harming the environment:



Enjoy a beer without the waste?

Possible in Switzerland! Buy a reusable bottle from [Beerstation](#) and refill it in selected bars and shops.

Fresh beer straight from the tap – without aluminium or glass.

1. Syrup. Cocktail. Cocktail Syrup.

Syrup is one of my favourite weapons to fight climate change. It spices up both, water and alcohol and saves tons of plastic waste. Two organic syrups from Switzerland that make children and adults happy are:

[Mikks, Zurich](#)

[Zuckerpeitsche, Lucerne](#)

2. Light wine delight

Which wine is the most sustainable? The answer might surprise you, but: it's the one in the lightest bottle! Studies show that wine in heavy bottles have a higher carbon footprint, while the region only plays a minor part.

If you want to go one step further: sustainable vineyards are popping up everywhere, you just have to google them.

3. Canned or bottled?

What is better for the planet: glass bottles or cans? The answer is rather complex but we try to keep it short: cans are better. They are lighter to transport and do not require additional packaging, like cardboard. Another plus? Cans are typically made with 70% recycled material, glass only with 30%.

There are also arguments for bottles, though. Aluminium is not the most environmentally-friendly material to begin with. That said, if you want to follow statistics, canned beers are the sustainable way to go.



Table & Decorations

BBQs are weird. While we wouldn't dare putting plastic plates and paper cups on a dinner table inside, we do this with ease at summer parties outside. **While they do not break easier outside than inside, plastic cutlery is a staple at barbecues.** It's time to ditch this tradition, and treat outdoor shenanigans like indoor gala dinners.

1. Say no to plastic

Avoiding plastic on the table is a good start. But it's just that: a start. If you want to host a sustainable BBQ, it's time to ditch plastic for good. Balloons, garlands and other cheap decoration have to make room for natural alternatives. Garden flowers and table runners made of real fabric (Ikea is a solid partner here!) turn every garden or balcony into a magical mystery summer ride.

2. Fairy lights

Fairy lights and BBQs: a match made in deco heaven. Make sure you buy LED bulbs, they last longer, need less energy and are much better for the environment. Instead of buying new ones, reuse neutral ones from Christmas! No one will notice it. Don't shower your garden with lights, though. Insects will get confused and might die – and we have already lost too many of them.

3. Borrow, don't buy

One of the reasons why we go for plastic cutlery at BBQs is because outdoor parties give us the opportunity to invite more guests than usual. Plates and glasses don't magically appear in the cupboard and if you don't have enough knives and spoons, try something new: ask guests to bring their own! Sounds wild but works like a charm.

4. Second-hand stores

Thrift stores are a barbecues best friend! They are the perfect place to upgrade your kitchen. Cutlery, decoration and furniture: they all deserve a second life.

Biodegradable cutlery is a good alternative to plastic. However, reusable plates and cups are still much better!

While it's true that you can compost biodegradable plates, they take a long time to decompose. This will disrupt the natural compost process of fruit and vegetables.



Waste and Recycling

There's no way to escape recycling at sustainable barbecues. However, what sounds like a lot of work is actually fairly easy. There are numerous ways to step up your recycling game one garbage bag at a time. And guess what? Waste management is not only good for the environment, it also saves money. Trash bags are expensive in Switzerland and the fewer you need, the better. Here's how it works:

1. The party starts with recycling bins

At most parties, garbage bags enter the stage at the very end of the night. This is wrong. Trash cans should be ready and visible when your guests arrive. That way, guests can actively help recycle throughout the party.

2. The more the merrier

Recycling is teamwork: it takes more than one trash bag to get the job done. A Recycling Station is an excellent way to separate trash on site. Cans, glass, food scraps, napkins: a dedicated trash bin for each material.

3. A work of art

Recycling stations don't have to ruin your decoration concept. There are lots of funky ideas online, but for those who like it simple: buy cheap buckets or cans, splash a bit of colour on them and let them shine at your party like Cinderella at the ball. The sky is the limit here. Flower pots and old wheelbarrows make excellent garbage bins, for example.

3. Signage

Recycling is a story full of misunderstandings! That's why waste stations need clear instructions. Don't label trash cans with names of raw materials, opt for the actual thing: „Glass“ becomes Bottles, „Aluminium“ Cans, „PET“ Plastic Bottles and „Compost“ Napkins, Cutlery and Food Scraps. The last one depends on your purchasing behaviour. That way, guests don't have to guess whether your straws are biodegradable or not. Also a fantastic way to green up your children's parties. Bring pictures, put them on the bins and let kids recycle.

4. Become a pro

If you host a large BBQ, special trash cans might be an easier (albeit costly) option. Here's where you can order them:

[PET](#) · [Aluminium](#) · [Plastic](#)



Wasps & Co.

Wasps are a pain in the butt at barbecues. These professional party crashers always turn up without an invite and are incredibly eager to make a scene. Nevertheless, **killing them with poison is the wrong approach.** Firstly, insect repellents are harmful for humans too. Secondly, the entire ecosystem in your garden will suffer greatly, including bees.

Here's how you can keep wasps off your plates without going on a killing spree:



Wasps seem aggressive but the truth is: they are neither nervous nor pissed off. **They just don't see well at short distance** and compensate this with speed.

That's why they seem all over the place.

1. Wasps don't mean any harm

Agreed, this is not a useful piece of information, but hear me out: wasps don't look for trouble. They're hungry. If you can, stay calm. Wasps only act aggressive when they feel threatened. To defend themselves, they release an odour that attracts more wasps. Puffing air at them is a bad idea as well. The carbon dioxide in your breath makes them grumpy as hell.

2. Choose the right time

One of the best wasp repellent is your calendar. The earlier in summer you BBQ, the better. Wasps become exhausting party guests in late summer, mainly August and September. That's when they run out of food, and that's what makes them moody. If possible, host BBQs in June and July.

3. Red herring

The best way to get rid of wasps is to distract them. Put overripe grapes a couple of metres away from the party and wait until they lose interest in your plate and chase down the fruit.

4. Gross them out

Wasps can be grossed out by certain smells. Lemon slices and citrus candles make them run for the hills. They also don't like peppermint, lemon balm and lavender.



Picnics

Recycling stations, reusable water jugs and porcelain plates: hosting a sustainable BBQ is easy – as long as it takes place in your backyard or on your balcony. Picnics in the middle of nowhere? An entirely different story. **Where there's no infrastructure, there's tons of schlepping involved and plastic weighs less than glass.** That's an easy slip right there, but that said, picnics can be sustainable, too – and here's how:

1. Leave the trash at home

The ultimate picnic trick? Leave your trash at home. If you're lucky enough you might find trash bins at your picnic area – but there's definitely no recycling station nearby. That means, everything you don't need on site should stay behind: Plastic foil, packaging of all sorts, beer cardboard boxes, price tags, bags and everything else you'd have to chuck away on site should not make it into your backpack.

2. Use Tupperware. Lots of Tupperware.

Crisps, ready-made salads and fruit should be carried in reusable Tupperware boxes to avoid any plastic wrappers that have to be tossed away on site.

3. Quality all the way

Here's something you should bring: garbage bags. Good ones. Empty wine bottles and beer cans can leak so make sure your trash bags are sturdy enough to hold some liquid. Quality makes your life easier here.

4. Stay away from disposable grills

If you go to a picnic area without a fire pit, bring your own grill – but invest in a reusable one. Disposable grills are handy but wrapped in plastic and aluminium. Both materials that are harmful for the environment.

5. Ashtrays

Cigarette butts are poisonous for the environment and smokers should always bring an ashtray to picnics. Quality rules again: opt for a sturdy one with a lid, otherwise, cigarettes will be gone with the wind sooner rather than later.

6. Cutlery and cups

Humans happily turn into pack mules for picnics and it makes total sense to choose light cutlery made out of plastic instead of real ones. That said, always choose reusable ones, for example, children's plates make a great reusable alternative to paper or disposable plastic plates.

7. Leave no trace

Above all these rules stands the will to clean up after yourself. Leave the picnic site as you found it – or better. If the people before you have left some trash, would you mind taking care of it? Animals, birds and other critters would be very grateful.

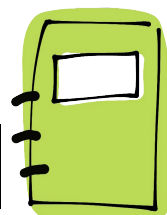




Disclaimer

This eBook was written by Katrin Lüthy, founder and CEO of the Green Event Planner. Whole passages and individual sections may not be copied without written consent.

THE GREEN EVENT PLANNER



The Green Event Planner is your specialist for sustainable event management in Switzerland. We host social- and corporate events, meetings and conferences all around Switzerland and are keen to deliver top notch parties with a green twist. We also host workshops on how to host sustainable gatherings.

Founder and CEO Katrin Lüthy studied event management in Zurich and is a certified sustainable event professional. She obtained this certificate from the International Events Industry Council in Monaco.

If you're looking for sustainable event solutions or if you want to learn how to host green parties we're always happy to help. Write us on **info@thegreeneventplanner.com**