

The NYC Fuel Gas Code §623 and the NYC Fire Code §307.5 strictly regulate barbecue grills — propane, electric, charcoal and natural gas. These laws set safety standards to protect people and property.

Propane Gas Barbecues

For apartment buildings or other residential buildings (called “multiple dwellings” in the Multiple Dwelling Law), it’s illegal to store a standard backyard propane barbecue on a balcony, roof deck, roof, rear yard or courtyard. Standard propane barbecues use 20-pound liquefied petroleum gas — or LPG — containers. While propane tanks cannot be stored on roofs, you may use a propane tank that’s smaller than 16.4 ounces for a short period of time on a roof.

For a one- or two-family home, a propane barbecue grill is permitted — with no more than two 20-pound LPG tanks. See NYC Fire Code §307.5.3.

Natural Gas Barbecues

Grills that run on natural gas must be installed by a New York City LMP according to the NYC Fuel Gas Code. In addition, the piping must be inspected and tested according to that Code, and an LMP will understand these requirements. Also be aware that Fuel Gas Code §623.2 makes it illegal to use a grill produced for commercial use in a residence.

Charcoal Barbecues

Cooking with a charcoal barbecue is legal on a terrace or in a backyard — but not on a balcony or roof. There must be a 10-foot clearance between the grill and the building. You must also have immediate access to a fire extinguisher or a water supply, such as a garden hose. See the NYC Fire Code §307.5.1.

Electric Barbecues

Electric barbecue grills are legal to install, use and maintain at residential properties. This includes balconies, terraces, roofs or yards.

Barbecue-sized electric grills use a substantial amount of electricity. An electrician licensed by the Department of Buildings can determine if your outlet has an electric current sufficient to safely operate the grill. Also, if you use an extension cord, be sure it’s safe to use with the current required to run the grill, or it can start a fire. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions on how to use the grill properly, and be sure to keep the grill at least 10 feet from anything that could catch fire. See Article 422 of the NYC Electrical Code for general safety information on electrical cooking appliances.

Tips for Safe Grilling

- Never grill indoors.
- It’s illegal — and dangerous — to store or use any kind of grill on a fire escape.
- Have immediate access to a fire extinguisher, hose, water barrel or sand when grilling.
- Keep all barbecues at least 10 feet from anything that can easily catch fire, including building walls, deck surfaces, furniture or other items.
- Be careful when using an electric grill, since grease can drip into the heating coils and ignite.
- Hire a New York City licensed master plumber (LMP) to install a natural gas grill.