

BfR advises against beer can chicken

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Various cooking recipes are currently being circulated, for example on the Internet, for grilling a chicken on a beer can. In the opinion of the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR), this type of preparation is not advisable. For it is to be assumed that the heat during grilling and frying releases harmful substances from the printed exterior as well as the coated inside of the beer can. These substances are then transferred to the chicken meat.

Beverage cans are manufactured from aluminium or tin plate. These materials provide an effective barrier against the transfer of substances from the printed outside to the beverage contained therein. This means that if intended use is made of the cans, a transfer of the substances from the printing ink to the beverages is not to be expected.

In contrast, the printed exterior of cans comes into direct contact with the food, if beer cans are used for frying or grilling chickens. This cooking method does not conform to the type of use intended by the manufacturer.

According to the draft for a German printing ink regulation, no restrictions relating to the substances used in printing inks apply to printed products for food contact for which a transfer of substances from the print colour to the food can be safely excluded.¹ This means that when the exterior of a beverage can is printed, substances may be used in the printing ink preparations for which no assessment has been made in terms of their transfer into food, or their health implications, since the beverage in the can does not come into contact with them.

In addition, when frying or grilling chicken at high temperatures, the fat from the chicken comes into direct contact with the printed exterior of the can. These are conditions which in principle facilitate transfer of substances from materials that may come into contact with foods. Nor can formation and transfer of breakdown products from the components of printing inks and the internal coating be ruled out at high temperatures.

In summary, the BfR draws consumers' attention to the fact that the use of beer cans for frying and grilling chicken can result in the transfer of substances into food which have not been assessed and which may be harmful. For this reason, the BfR advises consumers to refrain from this type of food preparation.

¹ Cf. Article 1 No. 2, new section (9) on Article 4 of the Consumer Goods Act and official statement of reasons for the draft regulation, (http://www.bmel.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/Service/Rechtsgrundlagen/Entwurf21VerordnungBedarfsgegenstaende.pdf?__blob=publicationFile)