



# It's Tailgate Time!

Fall means football and a return to America's No. 1 parking-lot pastime  
by Jaymi Curley

## 3 Tailgating TIPS

**1) Big, Colorful Cup-** Lots of people means lots of cups, so bring a big one that you can spot easily.

**2) Freeze your Water-** Get bottled water and freeze it. Your water will stay cold longer and they make good ice packs.

**3) Prep Your Burgers -** Messing with raw meat in the hot sun is no fun. Make hamburgers in advance and freeze between sheets of wax paper.

Source: [www.tailgating.com](http://www.tailgating.com)

The Labor Day cookout may be summer's official last hurrah, but you don't have to silence the sizzle of the grill just yet.

Tailgating, once a simple parking-lot party for die-hard football fans, has exploded in recent years to become an all-out social event. In 2008 alone, more than 50 million people parked around stadiums across the country to eat, drink and root for their favorite teams, according to Scott O'Malley, managing partner of the American Tailgaters Association.

Tailgates started out as low-key affairs involving a cooler of beer and some burgers from the back of a pickup truck, but the pregame party has become a decidedly more elaborate event. Tailgaters now are grilling up cedar-planked salmon, filets of beef and other gourmet grub outside swanky recreational vehicles.

Depending on the time of day, you might see tailgaters setting out a breakfast spread of filet mignon with eggs and fluffy pancakes, or a full sit-down dinner of turkey with all the trimmings.

Tailgating is the last great American neighborhood," says Joe Cahn, the self-proclaimed Commissioner of Tailgating. Cahn has traveled more than 500,000 miles and attended more than 500 tailgate parties. "In this day and age—where we hunch over computers and don't pick up the phone before we've checked the caller ID—the tailgate is where we can all get together," Cahn says.

In the early warm months of the football season, most tailgaters chill with a brew. Bob Townsend, beer columnist for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

and editor of *Southern Brew News*, says beer's long-standing popularity can be traced to its image as an easy-drinking, sociable beverage. "Beer has traditionally been an everyman drink," says Townsend, "the drink of the working man, the drink of the sports fan."

"Beer is a communal thing," says Steve Farace, spokesman for Atlanta's Sweetwater Brewing Company. "It's cold. It's lower in alcohol than wine or liquor, so you can drink more before feeling the effects. It's simple—no glass or mixing required."

The friendly everyman image of beer is acquiring some polish with the recent explosion of microbrews and seasonal beers. According to the Brewers Association in Boulder, Colo., sales by craft brewers increased 9 percent by volume in the first half of 2010; Craft brewers sold an estimated 9,115,635 barrels of beer in 2009, up from 8,501,713 in 2008.

As the swank factor goes up in food, so it goes in drink, and for good reason: Many wines make an excellent complement to the basic four food groups of tailgating—spicy, cheesy, grilled and sweet.

Websites devoted to tailgating abound on the Internet. If you really want to do it up, check out the Gator Tailgating site at [www.gatortailgating.com](http://www.gatortailgating.com) for more ideas, advice and know-how than you thought possible for a party in parking lot.

The most important element? A good crew. Somebody's gotta remember the bottle opener.

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