

Staying Warm While Tailgating

Remember just a few short weeks ago we were tailgating in the warm sunshine wearing shorts and flip-flops? Well folks, unless you plan on tailgating in Miami, San Diego or Phoenix, those days are long gone. They've been replaced by the cold, blustery winter wind that swirls its way through the Meadowlands this time of year. If you've never tailgated at Giants Stadium this time of year, you're in for a rude awakening. Even on the brightest of sunny days, that wind will blow the warmth right off of your body, and can make your tailgating experience one you'd rather forget. Over the past seven years, we've come up with some tricks to help survive even the coldest days. Some are quite simple and very inexpensive; others may cost you a few bucks. But if you want to avoid a bone-chilling December tailgate, think smart and plan ahead:

1. **Keep warm & don't allow yourself to become chilled.** It sounds stupid and simple enough, but you'd be amazed how many people we see in the parking lot and in the stadium wearing thin, tight jeans and a short jacket. Once your body is chilled, it is very difficult to warm up again.
 - a. **Dress in layers & Just like mommy told you.** We've experimented with this quite a bit and have found this to be an effective way to maintain body heat with as little bulk as possible. If you're looking for the best in high-tech wicking clothing, we suggest you check out winter-sports gear like hiking, skiing and running clothing:
 - a. **Upper Body:** The best base layer is a synthetic, preferably brush or fleece lined, form-fitted top. It's best if the material has some "wicking" qualities, which means it pulls moisture away from your skin to help keep you dry and warm. Nike, Under Armour and Reebok are some popular manufacturers. Follow this layer with a moderately thick wool or cotton blend long-sleeve shirt, or better, turtleneck. I suggest DuoFold! I tend to follow this layer with another, slightly heavier running shirt, then a nice wool sweater or hooded sweatshirt. If the wind is really bad, a jacket with some wind blocking properties, like Windstopper by Gore., will help keep the wind off of your body.
 - b. **Head:** I'm sure you heard your mother say "wear your hat" as a kid. Well, mom was smart. More than 50% of body heat is lost through the top of your head, so anything going to protect it will help immensely! In addition, you want to protect your ears. Keeping your ears warm will keep you warm, and will protect their fragile tissues from frostbite. If it's really cold, you can consider covering your face and neck with a balaclava or other hood type hat.
 - c. **Hands:** Gloves are key & unless you're barbequing. If you're lucky enough to have someone cooking for you, we suggest a light synthetic liner under heavy, windstopping mittens or gloves. If you must handle cooking utensils, and don't want to see your gloves on fire, check out your local bike shop and peruse the cold weather gear section. Many bike shops have gloves made of very thin and flexible materials which will help keep your hands warm, but won't be so bulky that you can't cook. We also suggest that you invest in a can or bottle coozie. If you enjoy cold beer (um, who doesn't!), you want to keep your cold bottle of beer off of your hands! I'm not sure where the coozie fits in man-law, but that can be discussed by your individual tailgating crew!
 - d. **Lower Body:** Much like the upper body & think in layers. DuoFold also makes a terrific pair of tights. And, all of their clothes are graded based upon the intended temperature. You can slip these tights on under any other pants. What has worked for Kathy is putting warm fleecy tights on under fleece-lined khakis. This provided insulation and protection from the wind. Other folks will wear ski pants or even a unionsuit to prevent as much heat loss as possible. Sounds great; until you have to use the bathroom!
 - e. **Feet:** As a general rule, I'm comfortable until my feet get cold. Once my feet are cold, that's it. So I begin my day with a light, thin pair of synthetic running socks. They will wick the sweat away from my feet & keep the dry. Next, and don't laugh; grab a plastic sandwich bag & the old school ones, not the ones with the zipper closure & stick your foot in it. It may only cover your toes & the first part of your foot, but that's ok. Next, get a warm sock, like a wool blend and put it on over the bag. Then stick your foot in your shoe and tie loose enough to allow your toes to wiggle. You want good circulation down there. The bag will hold heat in and help to insulate your foot. I wouldn't recommend doing this with one of those foot warmers because the bag prevents the sweat from your feet from escaping. If you're going to use the warmers, skip the bag.
 3. **Pack an insulated thermos filled with a hot liquid.** If you feel yourself getting chilled, drink the warm beverage. It will help warm you inside. Another suggestion is to put a metal teapot onto your grill & boil water. You can then make hot coffee, tea or hot chocolate.
 4. **When the Meadowlands winds start howling, it would be really easy to**
 - in the car. But that's the sissy way of tailgating. Instant portable tents like EZ Up with sidewalls will help to cut the wind and provide you and your tailgating brethren an escape from the cold. Just remember, the more walls, the more surface area for the wind. Make sure the tent is well secured. We use 3-25 lb weights on 3 of the legs, and secure the last leg to the cooler. You could also tether one leg to you car, just make sure you secure the other legs as well.
 5. **In**
 - in a portable heater. We use Mr. Buddy, a small, portable heater that runs on camping gas. Mr. Buddy is not sufficient on his own; he needs to be in a reasonable enclosed area, like a tent or the back of an SUV. Always remember to read the instructions on your particular heater and be aware of fire and other safety hazards. Never put a charcoal grill into an enclosed space for heat! And, don't get too close to Mr. Buddy & he tends to burn jerseys! ;-)
 6. **Go Old**
 - Skool and build a fire! Bring or make a fire pit, fill it with wood & there ya go. We've seen folks just pile the wood in the middle of the lot & huddle around it. In any event, be safe & don't build your fire too close to your car, or anyone else's & make sure the fire is out before leaving it. The key to a successful tailgate is to keep oneself comfortable, and staying warm is the number one concern this time of year. By following some of these tips, hopefully your next cold weather tailgate will be an enjoyable and memorable one.