

Plan the Perfect Picnic

There's no better way to spend a sunny day than taking a spread to a patch of grass and feasting and cloud watching for hours. Just read our primer on awesome alfresco dining.

the best picnic potato salad

This delightfully easy Alsatian version is ideal for outdoor devouring since it's mayo-free (mayo can spoil in the sun):

Place four medium russet potatoes in a pan and cover with cold water; add 1 teaspoon salt and bring to a boil. Cook the potatoes for about 15 minutes (they should still be slightly firm). Drain the potatoes and cover with cold water. Once cool, drain and peel the potatoes; split

them lengthwise and slice into $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch-thick pieces. Dice four thick strips of bacon, and sauté until slightly crisp. Pour the hot bacon, grease and all, onto the potatoes. Add a palmful of minced onions, 10 minced chives, $\frac{1}{2}$ minced garlic clove, two large dollops of Dijon mustard, and $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of a basic vinaigrette, and toss gently. Salt and pepper to taste.

SOURCE: JACQUES HAERINGER, CHEF AT L'AUBERGE CHEZ FRANÇOIS IN GREAT FALLS, VIRGINIA

boozy afternoon beverages

Whiskey tea smash: Brew 12 ounces of tea and let cool (or use a cold-brew tea like Lipton Cold Brew). Cut a peach and a lemon into six slices each, and mash them with 3 ounces tea and 4 tablespoons sugar. When the sugar dissolves, combine with the rest of the tea and 6 ounces bourbon in a container with a screw top. Shake well, then strain into a thermos with ice.

Vodka lemonade crush: Bring 4 cups water to a boil and add $3\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons sugar and a pinch of salt. Boil for two minutes, then let cool and add $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons fresh lemon juice, 6 ounces vodka, and crushed ice. Pour the mixture into a thermos, and pack lemon slices and mint leaves for garnish when you serve.

SOURCE: DALE DEGROFF, CONSULTANT TO THE DISTILLED SPIRITS COUNCIL

side dishes and desserts

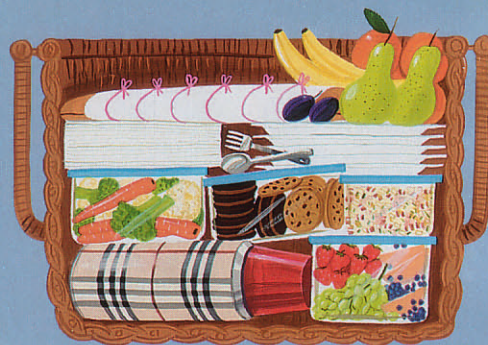
Bring an extra baguette or two along with a selection of cheeses and salami, a salad of seasonal fruit cut into bite-size

cubes and spritzed with lemon, and easy-to-eat desserts like brownies, cookies, and marshmallow treats.



● SCRUMPTIOUS, TOTALLY TOTABLE SANDWICHES

The secret to sandwiches that will stay intact and look great when you divvy them up: Slice a medium baguette lengthwise, then hollow out the middle, leaving a few inches on both ends to keep the insides from oozing out. Fill the crust with your fixings of choice, then put the baguette back together. Wrap it in wax paper, and tie it up every 2 inches with string. When you get to your picnic spot, slice the baguette between each string through the paper, and pass out perfectly wrapped individual sandwiches. Some mouth-watering fillings that are way more gourmet than PB&J: grilled chicken and shredded red cabbage with vinaigrette or brie with tomatoes and arugula, both recommended by Juventino Avila, chef at NYC's hip Cuban restaurant Isla.



● PICNIC-BASKET PACKING TIPS

Place the heaviest items, like the thermos and Tupperware containers, on the bottom so they don't crush anything and they create a second shelf. Sandwiches, fruit, and any fragile items should be at the top. Rectangular containers fit better in a rectangular basket, and round ones in a rounded basket. Wrap rolled-up napkins around fragile items to buffer them and around knives so they don't poke anybody.