



NUTRI-BYTES

Picnic Tidbits

With summer approaching soon, you will probably be packing the picnic basket and heading out to a park, beach, or friend's backyard. Picnics are a summer tradition that can be fun for the entire family...that is, unless an uninvited guest such as salmonella or shigella spoils your picnic! Here are some tips for a healthy and safe picnic.

The first step is to plan a healthy menu. Pack a variety of nutritious appetizers and snacks such as vegetables with low-fat salad dressing, fresh fruit kabobs, baked chips and salsa, or hummus and whole wheat pita bread. Include easy-to-pack, low-fat deli sandwiches or grilled entrees such as chicken breasts or portabella mushrooms. Roasted vegetables and tossed salad are healthy side dishes. Finish the meal with a simple dessert such as watermelon, angel food cake, or oatmeal cookies.

Always remember these food safety rules when packing and preparing picnic foods.

1. **KEEP IT CLEAN!** Wash your hands before and after handling food for about 20 seconds (which is equal to singing the "Happy Birthday" song twice). Use hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available. Also, use disposable plates and utensils to decrease the chances of contaminating food with harmful bacteria and viruses.
2. **KEEP IT COLD!** Don't let the summer heat spoil your picnic. The longer food is at warm temperatures, the more likely bacteria will grow and cause food-borne illness.
 - Use plenty of ice or ice packs in well-insulated coolers. The temperature inside the cooler should be less than 40 degrees.
 - Transport coolers in the air-conditioned backseat of your car, not in the hot trunk.
 - Put cold foods in water-proof containers or in aluminum foil/plastic wrap and completely immersed in the ice or between frozen gel packs.
 - Pack uncooked foods in tightly sealed containers separate from cooked, ready-to-eat foods.
 - When you arrive at the picnic site, put a blanket over the cooler and place it in the shade to maintain cold temperatures.
 - **Remember the one-hour rule:** in temperatures of 90 degrees Fahrenheit or above, perishable food items should not be out of the cooler for more than one hour. At room temperature, food should not be left out for more than 2 hours. Any leftovers should be placed in the cooler soon after they are served.
3. **COOK IT COMPLETELY!** Whether cooking indoors or grilling outside, meat and poultry should be cooked thoroughly to ensure that harmful bacteria are destroyed. Grill raw poultry until the juices run clear and there is no pink close to the bone. Hamburgers should not be pink in the center. Hamburgers should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160 degrees and chicken to 170 degrees (using a meat thermometer to check temperatures).

Practice these safety tips and enjoy your summer picnics!