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PACKING A PICNIC

If I were to ask you to tell me the first five thoughts that come to mind when you hear the words *eating out* what would they be? I bet I'd get a wide array of answers, but I'm not sure how many of them would interpret the words literally – to mean eating out as in “outside” or in the fresh air...

Summer means indoor activities can be taken outdoors. What's great about picnicking is it can be as formal or informal as any dining experience you enjoy indoors. From sunlight to moonlight, it adds the dimension of fresh air and a “natural ambience”. One of the best things about picnics is they can be anything you want them to be. They can be simple or elaborate, impromptu or planned. Since dining space is not a problem you can include as many people as you want -- it doesn't matter. Nature has no walls or boundaries. What does matter is that picnics can be delicious, healthy and fulfilling whenever, wherever and however they take place.

The word *picnic* comes from the French verb “*piquer*” which means to pick or peck at food. Picnics are defined as social gatherings where people bring food and share it in the open air. The *open air* can be anywhere – at the beach or park, in the woods, by a lake or even in our own backyard! We can have picnics under an umbrella or tree, inside a tent, under the stars or in the heat of the day's sun.

Getting ready for a picnic can be almost as much fun as going on one. If you're a foodie like me, you'll enjoy all the planning and preparing, especially when it's related to the food you're going to bring! Once again, this can be as simplistic or complicated as you want or need it to be. Easy options include stopping at the deli to buy lean cold cuts. You can sometimes barbeque at your picnic site and in that case you will want to bring already seasoned, ready-to-cook foods to grill. You can also choose to grill chicken, burgers or fish at home and bring them along. These can be made a day or two before and kept refrigerated or frozen so there's no fuss on the actual picnic day!

If you're looking for a fast and fuss free option I highly recommend “foiling food”. It's like a “one pot meal” without the pot! *Frap*s (as I call them) can be made with any combination of meat, poultry, fish and/or vegetables you want. Since each *frap* will be individually made you'll need multiple pieces of heavy duty aluminum foil. They should be about eight inches longer than than the food you are preparing so you can seal them well. Place your protein or main item in the center of the foil and top it with

your choice of veggies and seasonings, dry rubs and/or sauces. Bring the ends of the foil together and pinch them tight. Carefully seal each of the other sides by folding these pieces of foil tightly too. *Frap*s can be cooked in the oven or on a barbeque grill and served hot, cold or at room temperature. Their versatility makes them a great pack-and-go food! Think about trying some of the recipe ideas for *fraps* at the end of this article or create your own!

Fresh vegetables are always great as appetizers or side dishes. Try using salsa as a dip so it won't spoil from the sun. Fresh fruits can be refreshing desserts on hot summer. You might want to try putting fruit cubes on skewers and make fruit kebabs on the grill. What about a fruit *frap*? The variety of colors, tastes and textures are inviting and they can be skewered at home in advance. You can also consider buying frozen fruit. Supermarkets carry an assortment of fresh, frozen fruits with no sugar added. You can toss a few bags in your cooler and let them defrost at the picnic or consider eating them frozen. If you haven't tried it before, make a smoothie with these frozen fruits and you'll have a great, refreshing summer drink!

Do you see how easy picnics can be? Anything goes... and that alone can be a great incentive. Holidays are great reasons to picnic and so are birthdays and anniversaries, BUT you really don't need an occasion to bring out the blankets and baskets!! You don't *need* the baskets either – you can pack your goodies in ice coolers, backpacks or even grocery bags. The most important part about packing picnic food is making sure you observe health and safety rules. Use ice or ice packs to keep food cold and fresh to avoid spoilage and bacteria.

We all know picnics aren't just about food (even if that's a big part of it)! They're about the socialization with our friends and families, the conversations we have, the games and activities we play and participate in and most of all, the memories we make while we're together! You can always pack board games or a frisbee, play volleyball or even, jump rope. You can have a scavenger hunt, go hiking, bike riding or just walk around searching for treasures you might find on the ground. Depending on your location, there might be boats to rent or a pool to swim in. The possibilities, once again are limitless...

When you think about it, it seems like picnics almost plan themselves! All you have to do is be willing to think outside the box because then, you can eat outside it too!

JUNE, 2010

FRAP FAVORITES

GRILLED TOMATO FRAP

Ingredients:

1 pint grape and cherry tomatoes
2 T Olive Oil
7 fresh basil leaves
2 T brushetta
Salt and pepper to taste

**You can add other vegetables if desired -- zucchini, eggplant, onions, carrots, red peppers, etc.*

Directions:

Put all ingredients in a bowl and toss. Put in foil and wrap well. (Instructions in article *Packing a Picnic*) Grill and enjoy!

SEAFOOD AND SAUSAGE FRAP

Ingredients:

½ lb each - Shrimp, scallops, turkey sausage
1 T Olive Oil
2 Roasted red peppers, chopped
1 Green pepper, chopped
1 Celery stalk, chopped
1/2 c Mushrooms, sliced
½ chopped onion
1 t Old Bay Spice
1 t Cajun spice
1 t garlic
½ chopped onion
1 t chopped fresh basil
2 bay leaves
1 T fresh black pepper

Directions:

Put all ingredients in a bowl and mix well. Put in foil and wrap well. (Instructions in article *Packing a Picnic*) Grill and enjoy!

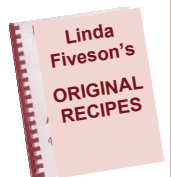
POACHED SALMON FRAP

Ingredients:

1 salmon filet
1 T light mayo
1 T chopped fresh dill
Juice from one lemon
1 celery stalk cut into fourths
½ c carrot slices
¼ sliced onion
5 cherry tomatoes

Directions:

Mix mayo, dill and lemon juice to make a rub for and spoon rub on top of salmon. Layer vegetables on bottom of foil, put salmon on top and wrap well. (Instructions in article *Packing a Picnic*) Grill and enjoy!



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PICNIC WORD SCRAMBLE



Unscramble the letters below to find words that are related to picnics! Answers are below.

1. BRUQEAEB _____

2. LTBEAEVEGS _____

3. CEHAB _____

4. AKPR _____

5. KASBET _____

6. MMEUSR _____

7. LTKNABE _____

8. OTDOUROS _____

9. PKAC _____

10. UFITR _____

Linda Says...

If you pick food wisely when
you pack,
You'll be sure to have a
healthy snack!

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Fiveson's Food

Tastes absolutely fabulous!
FREE of gluten, sugar, flour and preservatives!
Formulated from Linda's "own" personal recipes since 1989

CHOOSE FROM:

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1. BARBEQUE 2. VEGETABLES 3. BEACH 4. PARK 5. BASKET
6. SUMMER 7. BLANKET 8. OUTDOORS 9. PACK 10. FRUIT

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Do you have a question or suggestion?
A personal strategy that you use?
Please let us know—we'll consider it for a future edition!
You may send an email to:
lindafiveson@yahoo.com

PLEASE VISIT MY WEBSITE:
<http://www.lindafiveson.com>