



How to Plan the Perfect Picnic

By Bridget Shirvell - June 7, 2013



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And don't forget the sides! Go with dishes that taste great at room temperature and will only get better the longer they sit and marinate. Miami-based chef Oscar del Rivero suggests including a [quinoa salad](#) in your picnic spread. For the main event, load up on wraps or sandwiches cut into small pieces. You don't need silverware and they're easy to individualize. Try a variety like a [roasted veggie sandwich](#), [Chivitos](#), and [Chacareros](#).

To freshen up, del Rivero suggests [agua frescas](#) stored in a thermos and Ramos suggests [sangria](#). "Packages of frozen fruit like peaches or strawberries in the picnic basket double as ice packs to help keep food cold," Ramos said. "When you arrive, empty the packets into a pitcher and add a bottle of wine and some chilled citrus soda for an easy and delicious fruity sangria!"

For a sweet finish, stick with desserts that are easy to make ahead and carry around in a park, try these [Avocado-Chile Brownies](#), [Almond Alfajores](#), or [Mexican Wedding Cookies](#).

Next up, where to put your food once the cooking is done and recipes to help you get started...

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Ahh, the sweet and tranquil word: **picnic**. Alone, it conjures up images of wicker baskets packed with food, red and white checkered tablecloths, and trying to tie the dog up far enough away from the food. It sounds a little Norman Rockwell, but a picnic is still a wonderful way to get outdoors and connect with friends over a delicious afternoon of food and drink. The secret to the perfect picnic is all in the planning and to help with that, chefs [Alejandra Ramos](#), [Oscar del Rivero](#) and [Adalis Velez](#) offered TLK some tips. So pack your bag and get hungry, we're about to hit the great outdoors.

Planning Your Menu

The key to a delicious picnic is planning your menu well in advance. Keep in mind that you want food that can be made ahead of time, travels well, can be served at the outdoor temperature and is easy to eat.

"Think of dishes that work well at room temperature," personal chef Alejandra Ramos said. "Skip the cream or mayo-based recipes, for one." Start your picnic with small bites that can be dressed up but can also feed a crowd, like [chips and salsa](#). Ramos suggests a fruit based salsa like a cucumber pineapple salsa to help keep picnic goers cool in the sun.



Ceviche Stuffed Avocado

Alight and fresh appetizer or lunch.



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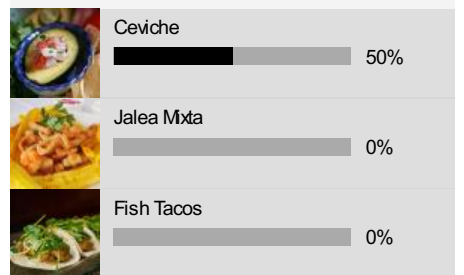
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Packing Up Your Picnic

Once your food is ready to go, you'll need to do some smart packing. Adalis Velez, co-owner of Brooklyn's **La Gringa Taqueria**, which has a large outdoor seating area as well as a busy take-out business, suggests placing foods in stackable airtight containers such as GladWare. It will help give you more space while keeping your food organized. From there pack your food in insulated carriers.

"One of the most essential components of outdoor eating is an insulated carrier to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold," Velez said. Pack hot foods in one carrier and cold foods in another. To really keep foods cold he says freeze water bottles to act as ice packs and to serve as drinks.

As for utensils, if you're at home there's no reason to no pack reusable items since you can just put anything in a dishwasher later. However, if that's not ideal, there are plenty of options of one-time use items including compostable, bamboo, and sugar cane options for a greener picnic. Other things to include are tablecloth or blanket, some antibacterial gel, insect repellent, sunscreens, paper towels, and the all important trash bags.



Alight and fresh appetizer or lunch.



TLK wraps up a weekend of food and fun at the Aspen Food & Wine Classic.



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Ready to head outdoors? Here, two recipes to help you kickstart your picnic prep.

Peruvian Golden Herb Quinoa Salad

- 4 cups low-sodium chicken broth
- 2 cups quinoa
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh chives
- 1/2 cup minced fresh cilantro
- 1 garlic clove, finely grated
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon aji amarillo
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- juice and zest of two limes

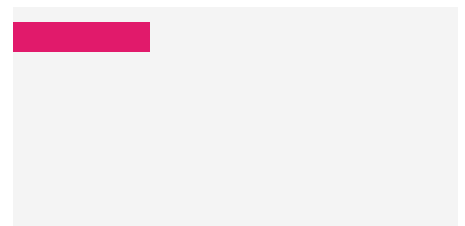
[Get the full recipe.](#)



Mexican Chocolate Brownies

- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cayenne pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ancho chile powder (optional)
- 1 1/4 sticks unsalted butter
- 1 1/2 cups granulated white sugar
- 1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 2 large eggs

[Get the full recipe.](#)



	Ceviche	50%
	Jalea Mita	0%
	Fish Tacos	0%
	Paella	50%
	Grilled Fish	0%





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