



Perfecting the Picnic

MAKE THE MOST OF SPLENDID SURROUNDINGS
AND ENJOY AN ALFRESCO MEAL.

| BY THERESA BOEHL |

Perhaps it was forged from a newfound appreciation for the outdoors. Perhaps it was an inevitable next step to the cheese and charcuterie board craze. Whatever the cause, the time-honored tradition of picnicking is experiencing a resurgence.

The first known use of the French word “pique-nique” dates back to 1692, when the word was used to describe a group of people dining out who brought their own wine. It later became a term to describe what is often referred to today as a potluck, or a meal where everyone is expected to contribute something. When hunting became a popular sport for the nobility in the Medieval ages, a mid-day meal was brought to the hunters in the countryside so they would not have to return the long distance to their castle or home.

During Victorian times, the idea of having a meal outside became more common, and Victorian garden parties launched the tradition that we know today as the picnic. English literature, including books by Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, used the picnic as a setting and numerous painters including Monet, Cezanne and Renoir featured outdoor banquets in their works. The original picnics were formal

events but transitioned to mean “an informal meal taken outdoors” and by the 19th century, the word picnic appeared in the Oxford English Dictionary with that meaning.

THE MENU

While those early feasts were elaborate affairs with extensive menus, today’s picnics tend to be much simpler. Baskets or coolers are often filled with pre-made sandwiches, deli items, assorted nuts, cheeses and cookies. It’s the spirit of the gathering, not the food, that makes the event special.

AM OR PM

“With your morning feast in tow, head to enjoy sunrise views along the stretch of beach near the Sea Island Beach Club,” suggests Gavin Earl, manager of water sports at Sea Island. Loungers set up along the grass early in the morning provide a comfortable place to fuel up with your breakfast and socialize within earshot of the ocean’s rhythmic waves.



There are also plenty of good reasons to have your picnic later in the day. "We consistently have a nice sea breeze in the afternoon, which picks up around 11 a.m. to noon and continues to get a little bit stronger throughout the day," notes Earl. These cool breezes make a wide variety of active pursuits possible. He suggests grabbing a boxed lunch from The Market at Sea Island and heading out on bicycles.

PICKING A SPOT

Once you've settled on your menu, wander over to Rainbow Island, where picnic benches provide the perfect place to view migrating birds and resident bottlenose dolphins.

For large groups, Earl recommends the Kayak Shore Lunch trip, a well-organized excursion that blends outdoor adventure with delicious bites. On this two-hour adventure, you'll kayak down to the secluded southern tip of the island, where an umbrella, cooler and beach blanket await your arrival. Before you chow down on a meal of fresh sandwiches, snacks and cold drinks, you'll embark on a nature walk to see tide pools, sand dollars, an array of shells and unique bird species such as the American oystercatcher.

The Hobie Cat Shelling Tour also puts nature front and center — you'll sail to an undisturbed sandbar on the north side of the island to scour the beachfront for glistening shells. Once you've worked up an appetite, take cover in the shade of the catamaran's sail.

Later in the day, the ethereal glow of dusk is the perfect excuse to have dinner under the sky. "The best spot for watching the sunset is right at The Cloister Dock," muses Earl. Pack a picnic or arrange to have in-room dining serve your meal on the dock or along the waterfront where chairs and tables are set up just for that purpose.

STYLE UP YOUR PICNIC GAME



This European-style insulated **CORSICA WINE AND CHEESE BASKET** from Williams Sonoma boasts everything you need for a day of dining under the sun, including a waiter-style corkscrew, cheese knife, cutting board and room for two wine glasses; \$119.95. (williams-sonoma.com)

There's no better base for your picnic setup than Frontgate's **ALTA PICNIC BLANKET**, a hand-woven, waterproof blanket featuring an intricate chevron print and twisted fringe edging, as well as a black faux leather carrier; \$211.65. (frontgate.com)



Come well-prepared for your alfresco meal with **THE PERFECT PICNIC KNIFE** from Uncommon Goods, made from water-resistant hardwood, brass and stainless steel and featuring a serrated knife, a fold-out corkscrew and a bottle opener; \$35. (uncommongoods.com)



Sip wine, mixed drinks, soda or iced coffee from W&P's stylish and durable **PORTER GLASS**, made with an easy-to-grip silicone sleeve and a splash-resistant lid that make for mess-free drinking on the go; \$25. (wandpdesign.com)