

Keeping Life Simple

BY SIMONE STEPANCIC

In August I like to invite friends to join me on a picnic, at the beach, on a farm or in my own garden. A summer picnic is all about playing outdoors, laughing, relaxing and eating delicious food. As a host and nutritionist, I feel a responsibility to provide the most nutritious food that will also satisfy every taste bud. I create special recipes so that when my friends come, they can't wait to try my picnic-perfect ideas.

PICNIC IDEAS MADE HEALTHY



HEALTHY PICNIC-PERFECT IDEAS

1. USE COLORFUL SUMMER HARVEST

Take advantage of the fruits and vegetables that come into season gradually from June to August, such as apricots, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, cherries and plums. They are delicious in fruit salads or sliced and topped with seed sauces. Asparagus, celery, carrots, red and yellow peppers, cucumbers, radishes and tomatoes are excellent summer vegetables to give color and texture to your dish.

2. QUICK AND EASY VEGAN APPETIZERS

Create an easy, healthy food by using fresh, crisp vegetables, such as carrot sticks, celery sticks, peppers, chopped fennel, cucumbers, radishes, cherry tomatoes, cauliflower and broccoli florets. Arrange sliced vegetables on a platter, and add home-made spreads or dips in the center such as parsley dip, hummus, white bean dip or spinach dip.

Raw almond butter is yummy and delicious with celery sticks. Baked tortilla chips are healthier versions of high fat corn chips and excellent with my home-made salsa. Try brown rice crackers - they go with everything.

I always serve nori vegetable rolls stuffed with sunflower or almond pate and veggies. They are filling and a perfect bite size appetizer.

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3. PERFECT SALADS

Cool and crisp salads are always fabulous to eat during the hot summer days. Make your own salad with English cucumber, tomatoes, red onion, black olives, oregano, olive oil, lemon juice and salt and pepper. This salad is a perfect summer meal and one of my favourites.

For building your own salad, use vegetables that you can prepare the day before, such as broccoli, celery, carrots, green cabbage, red cabbage, green onions, radishes, zucchini, cucumbers and olives. You can sprinkle them with walnuts, sunflower or pumpkin seeds or almonds.

4. DELICIOUS FRUIT SALADS

I use fruits as a sweet dessert. I like to mix strawberries, apples, bananas, peaches, grapefruits and oranges in the bowl. Watermelon is also very cooling on a hot summer day.

Prepare the fruit salad the evening before your picnic. Sprinkle fruit with lemon to prevent browning and cover the bowl with a clear plastic wrap. Store it over night in the refrigerator. Serve the fruit salad as is or sprinkle it with cinnamon or coconut flakes. So good and refreshing!



5. PERFECT BEVERAGES

Pure water is, of course, the best for our body in the hot summer days. Drink at least 2 liters of water a day, especially if you are playing outdoors in a hot sun. You can add some freshly squeezed lemon to your water for flavour or you can make your own smoothie recipe with strawberries, banana and blueberries. Pour the smoothies into icy cold bottles and take to the picnic in a cooler with lots of ice-cubes.

Enjoying summer picnics does not have to be a challenge for healthy eating. Try these suggestions and appreciate the gifts that nature provides for us.



NORI VEGETABLE ROLLS

2 nori sheets
4 radishes, red, thinly sliced
1/2 avocado, peeled and sliced
3 tbsp. parsley pate
1/4 to 1/2 English cucumber, thinly sliced
5 scallions, sliced
1/2 cup sunflower sprouts
Spread parsley pate over nori sheets and add all ingredients.
Roll them up.

AVOCADO GUACAMOLE

1 avocado, peeled, pitted and cut into small chunks
1 garlic clove, minced
2 tomatoes, chopped
1/2 lemon, freshly squeezed
Pinch of ground cumin
1/2 red onion, finely chopped
Mix all ingredients in a small bowl. Mash avocado slightly, but not too much.



SEA VEGETABLE SALAD

1/2 cabbage, small head, shredded
1/2 avocado, peeled, pitted
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
Dulse seaweed flakes
Celtic sea salt to taste
Lemon, freshly squeezed
Garlic clove, minced
Cayenne pepper, pinch
Soften the cabbage with salt and set aside for 10 minutes.
Add Dulse, avocado, olive oil, garlic, lemon and pinch of cayenne.
Mix all ingredients together in a salad bowl.