

House *proud*

with
Anthea Turner



Why settle for soggy sandwiches and stale tea when you can enjoy a picnic with style. Anthea Turner explains how

What could be nicer than relaxing with friends or family enjoying a stylish but simple meal at a favourite country location, or local park, a concert, or a day at the races? Yes picnics do need a little planning, but with a bit of effort they can become special occasions.

Presentation is key

Make it special and use china plates and cups, 'real' glasses and proper cutlery. They're so much nicer than throw-away paper plates. When you pack them, place napkins in between each one. This will protect the plates and mean that everyone has a napkin when you hand them out. Use baskets for bread, crisps, savoury nibbles and fruit. Take a white table cloth and napkins. I love using Kilner jars for picnics. They come in a variety of sizes and are perfect for everything from the pickles to the biscuits and sweets. But they are weighty, so you'll need to use your car as a 'larder' or

use lighter alternatives if you have to carry your picnic.

Setting the scene

If you plan to have your picnic on the grass, take along a blanket to put under the table cloth and provide a firmer and cleaner base. Remember blankets to sit on and chairs if you have any elderly guests. You don't need expensive wickers hampers to carry your picnic equipment – a sturdy cardboard box will do. But a cooler box or a sturdy cooler bag is essential to keep food cold, fresh and uncrushed.

Food for thought

Whether you are serving an array of savoury and sweet goodies or simply some crusty bread, a selection of cheeses and fruit – every picnic can be special. For less mess and easier preparation - make salads with items that can be eaten individually

– leaves of little gem lettuces, sprigs of lamb's lettuce, radishes, cherry tomatoes pepper strips, chicory, cucumber batons and trimmed sugar-snap peas. Provide a mayonnaise for dipping and a classic French dressing separately. Potato salads and rice salads travel well, as does homemade coleslaw. Make sandwiches more interesting by wrapping them in greaseproof paper. Then tie with string and attach a parcel label to them saying what they are or who they are for.

Child-friendly

Children love a sense of occasion, so let children help with the preparation or give children their own picnic by packing the food into a gift bag or box. For drinks – serve a kids cooler, by combining a carton of orange juice with a carton of raspberry juice and top up with water. Serve with a few grapes or orange and cucumber slices over the rim of the glasses.

Anthea's top Surrey sites for a summer picnic



Winkworth Arboretum

“I find this place very calming and it has numerous spots for lovely picnics, either in the woods or beside one of the lakes. It has a fascinating history behind it with over 1000 trees and shrubs, some of them very rare. Plus if you run out of supplies there is a lovely tea shop onsite where you could grab a slice of lovely homemade lemon drizzle cake. A perfect place for all the family. nationaltrust.org.uk/winkworth-arboretum

The Green in Richmond

You don't have to venture into the countryside for a good picnic. Your local green can also provide a superb base for a summer get-together. I live in Richmond where we are lucky to have a fabulous green that is well used by the

local residents. What better way to while away an afternoon than watching the cricket and eating cucumber sandwiches? There is also fabulous Italian ice-cream shop, Gelateria Danieli nearby to keep the children among you happy. gelateriadanieli.com

Esher Common

There is a wonderful network of bridle paths and footpaths around Esher Commons, where I have spent many enjoyable days riding my horse Caramelo. Esher Common itself is a nature reserve with lots of lovely lakes and ponds to sit by the side of in summer. My favourite spot is Black Pond which used to supply water to the nearby Claremont Landscape Garden or you could climb to Round Hill. elmbridge.gov.uk/countryside”