

Picnic Pointers

Planning The "Perfect" Picnic

(NAPSA)—Ah, the signs of summer: leisurely afternoons, melting ice cream and the scent of freshly mown grass. For many people, it's time to enjoy the splendors of the outdoors—and one great way to do so is with a festive picnic.

Whether planning a romantic twosome at dusk or a family reunion for 30, the following tips can help make such a gathering a success:

Picnic Packing

They're trendy, they're fun and they're easy to find: Picnic baskets come in many different styles and sizes, from traditional wicker to insulated backpacks with separate compartments for silverware, stemware and plates. Wine and cheese totes come in handy for a romantic walk on the beach or an evening concert in the park. Splurge on a generous-sized ice chest for longer trips, but for shorter hauls, store-bought Styrofoam coolers work just as well.

Summer Specialties

Eating outdoors opens up a wonderful world of good taste and great memories. For an elegant outdoor concert or a day of waves, sun and sand, consider grilling center-cut, bone-in ham steaks paired with fresh summer produce. Cook's ham steaks—premium-cut steaks taken from the leanest center of the ham—are a convenient choice for picnic-goers who want to add a spark to any picnic dish.

The versatility and convenience of Cook's ham steaks also make them easy to dice and toss into pasta salads or shred into strips for ham and havarti cheese tortilla wraps. On each tortilla, arrange layers of ham strips topped with cheese, honey Dijon mustard and tomatoes and roll up



Summertime picnics provide plenty of atmosphere—and opportunity for creative cuisine.

for a light and easy summer meal that can be made ahead of time and frozen until needed.

Safety Tips

Don't forget to keep food safety in mind when planning and packing for picnics. Foods cooked ahead should be chilled thoroughly in the refrigerator and transferred directly into the cooler. To keep foods cooler longer, use icepacks rather than ice cubes, or freeze individually packaged drinks to keep foods cold during travel. Remember, storing coolers in the shade and away from direct sunlight will also help keep foods as cool as possible. And don't forget to replenish the ice once it melts.

Just about any meal seems to taste better when enjoyed outdoors, but planning the perfect picnic shouldn't be a burden. Make life easier by jotting down a quick checklist of all the picnic essentials, including sunscreen and bug spray. Once everything's checked off, don't forget the most important item for the picnic: fun!

For assorted ham steak and picnic recipes, you can order a free, limited edition *Cook's Recipe Book* by calling 312-616-2622.