

delectable delights

Picnic Perfect

By Holly Herrick

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Photo by Christopher Brown

CHEESES [available at Avondale Wine & Cheese, 813-B Savannah Hwy.] Comte
Wensleydale Garrotxa WINE [available at Avondale Wine & Cheese, 813-B Savannah
Hwy.] Domaine Houchart Cotes de Provence Rose, 2006 MEATS [available at Whole
Foods Market, 923 Houston Northcutt, Mount Pleasant] Applegate Natural Genoa Salami
Primo Natural Hot Chorizo Soppressata SIDE ITEMS [available at Whole Foods Market,
923 Houston Northcutt, Mount Pleasant] Red grapes Fresh oranges Marcona almonds
Mixed olives Bowtie pasta salad Wraps for easy sandwiches ACCOUTREMENTS
[available at Charleston Cooks!, 194 East Bay St.] Rapid Ice Wine Cooler Portable cutting
board Serving utensils Paring knife Wine opener

Lovely locales and cool fall climates paint a pretty picnic canvas

A good-old fashioned picnic needn't be a faraway, frazzled affair. Today's state-of-the-art picnic totes, easily acquired (or prepared) gourmet eats and the Lowcountry's myriad picturesque outdoor settings render picnics a simple, yet indulgent delight – the kind that will land you in the merry realm of picnic bliss, far, far beyond the tainted world of gritty PB & J's, sweaty brows and blah bean salads.

Getting there is simple, but it does require three ounces of advance planning for the ultimate potentially problematic picnic cure – pick your destination, pick what you're going to pack, and pick what you're going to pack it in. Budget both time and money and you're off and picnicking with panache.

PICNIC GOODS

Assembling an impressive picnic in today's runaway, gourmet take-away world can take just minutes. Not surprisingly, these kinds of items (along with high-quality cheeses and wines) top local picnic packers' lists, according to Avondale Wine & Cheese owner Manoli Davoni and Pam Fischette, director of marketing for Whole Foods Market.

For outdoor dining, Davoni recommends “firmer” cheeses that are pre-cut into small slices. Comte, Wensleydale (an English clothbound cheddar) and Garrotxa (an aged Basque goat cheese) are all fine choices and well-suited to a less temperature-sensitive rose wine.

“It's always pretty convenient to have little pieces of the harder cheeses and just serve it with the rose, which is still good if it warms up as it sits out,” says Davoni. “This way you don't need a plate or a plastic knife, which literally doesn't cut it. It's a simple meal in one.”



Photo by Christopher Brown

Turkey Fresco Wrap

In addition to cheese, wine and fruit, popular picnic requests at Whole Foods Market include Spanish Marcona almonds, olive mixes, assorted teas, prepared salads (including Smoked Mozzarella and Pasta Salad and more from the store's 40-item-strong cold case), charcuterie, olive crisp bread (sweet and savory), and wraps.

“Wraps are nice because they don't require utensils and they don't fall apart, leak or spill during transport the way a traditional sandwich might,” Fischette says. To make transportation easy and eco-friendly, Whole Foods Market provides recyclable cardboard containers and sealed, stackable plastic containers for their specialty goods.

GET PACKING

When I was a kid, Mom had a cavernous forest-green and tan wicker basket that seemed like it could hold a universe of Kool-Aid and egg salad sandwiches and probably did. However, it was heavier than the dead and difficult to maneuver.

Baskets are still around today, but they're much better designed (in some cases containing separate cooling and heating compartments), hold more and are smaller, to boot.

“You can get just about anything in a basket now from disposable china to silverware,” says Danielle Weckler, general manager at Charleston Cooks in downtown Charleston. “I've seen some really fun stuff with insulated compartments for food, wine and water that self-insulates and keeps hot stuff hot and cold stuff cold.”

Other popular picnic paraphernalia available at Charleston Cooks includes portable cutting boards, plastic covered paring knives, and the basket's newest competitor – the backpack. “They're in all different sizes and shapes,” Weckler adds. “People are looking for things that are easier to handle and carry more than the traditional picnic basket.”

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