

Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View

Dear Listener:

Thank you for stopping by for a visit at Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View podcast! To make it easy, you will find a transcript of each episode. I hope you enjoy the visit!

Episode 14- Have a Picnic!

Welcome to Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. Thanks for stopping by! Grab a glass of Lemonade, pull up a rocker and join me for conversations about living the Simple Life. Go ahead. Get comfortable and settle in for a good visit. It's time to relax and enjoy!

Summer is in full force, and the last thing we want to do is turn on the oven. It just makes the kitchen too hot to handle. Instead, it's time to pull out the picnic basket and an ice chest, load them down with cool food and drinks, then head outside, or to the lake or the park.

Having a picnic isn't a new thing, but originally it had a much different connotation. In the 16th Century, the French had a pique-nique – which mainly meant that folks took their own wine to a restaurant. The 18th Century meaning moved us closer when a picnic was considered dining outside on a blanket.

If you were having a picnic in the 19th Century, you would probably be dining on things like Roast Duck, a meat pie, and Plum Pudding. The Picnic was considered an elaborate and formal affair usually held by aristocracy.

But at the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th Century, the German frankfurter was introduced to the United States, and the current version of a picnic was born.

In the 1930s, picnics were a way of 'spreading the wealth' so to speak. This was in the heart of the Depression era when money and food were scarce. This type of picnic was the forerunner of the potluck, where everyone brought a dish. This helped to feed more people without spending a ton of money or using up all their precious ingredients.

For today's picnic, we usually think of going to the park with a basket filled with anything from hamburgers and hot dogs, to fried chicken and barbecue. This is usually served with potato salad, pasta salad, pickles, chips and more.

But a picnic doesn't just mean you have to visit a park. Picnics are handy meals for almost any occasion. You can have a picnic right outside your back door. Instead of packing up the car, just carry it to a table or blanket.

When I was young, my aunts, Dot and Emily, would take all of their nieces, nephews and their friends on trips. Since it would be too expensive to treat all of us to a restaurant meal, Dot would pack a picnic basket and ice chest full of food to serve the hoard.

She usually had ingredients to fix sandwiches – from sandwich meat to homemade Pimento Cheese. If we were lucky, she would fix a jar of Peanut Butter and Raisins. Yeah, I know – it doesn't sound too appetizing, but it was delicious and a favorite with all the kids.

For dessert she would have a container of Peanut Rolls, which was a cake cut into squares. Each piece was dipped in a thin icing and then rolled in finely chopped peanuts. Occasionally she would have Pecan Pie Tarts or packages of cookies. It didn't matter what she packed, we all looked forward to feasting on her picnics.

And picnics aren't just for large gatherings. Move your afternoon tea break up to lunch time and fix yourself a salad or sandwich. You can have a picnic for two. This is a great way to have an inexpensive date or have some quality time with a spouse or child.

You can also host a picnic for a small group of friends. This can either be held in your own backyard, a park, or any gathering place that is suitable for a picnic.

Here's another thought. If you love the idea of starting a social club, think of having a Picnic Society. In the early 1800s, a group in France started the original Pique-Nique Society. This was also a forerunner of the potluck where each participant brought a dish and six bottles of wine. It makes you think this was an excuse to get drunk, or the food was so bad the taste needed to be hidden by alcohol. But in reality, most of the wine was for after dinner events, such as music, a play, or even gambling activities.

You may not require your Picnic Society members to bring wine. Instead, you can just have an ice chest filled with jugs of iced tea, lemonade, or bottles of soft drinks and water. Or you can ask each member to bring a dish and their own drink.

You can structure your Picnic Society in many ways. It can be a simple potluck, where almost anything goes. Or, you can have a monthly theme. These can be anywhere from ethnic to traditional to simple.

Another consideration is the Neighborhood Picnic. Growing up, every neighbor on the block looked forward to this annual gathering. It was always held in our backyard. Daddy cooked hamburgers and hot dogs on the grill, and everyone else brought the sides, condiments, and paper goods.

Although the food was delicious, it was unanimous that the homemade ice cream was the best. Throughout the entire meal we could hear the background noise of the ice cream maker churning away to create that frozen delicacy. We were even more excited when we figured out Mom had put away some fresh peaches in the freezer to make Peach Ice Cream.

Speaking of the food, you may be wondering what you can serve at your picnic. That's the beauty of a picnic. You can serve almost anything. The key to picnic food is that it is easily carried. This can mean in bags, covered plates and bowls, or in a pan – like brownies.

A simple picnic can consist of a loaf of French Bread, some assorted cheeses, and maybe some fruit. Or you can just make sandwiches and serve them with chips and pickles.

When thinking of a picnic, many people think of Fried Chicken, pasta salad, and deviled eggs. Another popular food is almost anything barbecued. The sides for this meal are usually potato salad, baked beans, and maybe even some corn on the cob.

But picnic food can be just about anything. When your homegrown tomatoes are ripe, slice them and serve with a little salt and pepper. Consider bowls of marinated vegetables, such as cucumbers and mushrooms. Cold salads, such as Broccoli, Corn, and one made with an assortment of fruit is not only delicious, but also cool and refreshing.

And don't forget the desserts. These can be anything from brownies and cookies to a chilled Watermelon, chocolate cake and more. And the best picnics offer more than one!

Picnics aren't just about the food. In almost all cases, these outdoor meals go hand-in-hand with games. From volleyball to baseball, games are almost a given for before and after the meal.

Outdoor games come in all sizes and shapes and can be geared towards any age group. Some games don't take any special equipment, such as Red Rover, Freeze Tag and Hide-and-Go-Seek.

Others may take minimal equipment, such as horseshoes, volleyball, and Dodgeball. You may even want to get a card game going, or play Mexican Train Dominoes, Backgammon, or other board game. These are all perfect games if you are taking your picnic on the road or to a park.

For our at home picnics, the Country Boy built us a Bean Bag toss board. Ours has three holes, but you can also play Cornhole, which only has one. You can also set up a badminton court, or even play Croquet.

I saw where someone had painted large circles in different colors on the lawn to create a Twister board. Or you can go all out and paint or create a life-size Checker or Chess board and use people as the markers.

If you need to keep a large group of kids busy, consider having a Treasure or Scavenger hunt. The prizes can be a simple bag of candy or homemade cookies hidden in a box or leftover plastic Easter eggs. You'll just have to prepare ahead of time for this and create the clues.

Although you don't need any better excuse to have a picnic other than you are hungry and prefer to eat a simple meal outside, there are plenty of reasons you can. A fourth of July celebration is probably the top reason we have a picnic. But you can also have one for a celebration, such as a birthday or milestone event. If you just want a very simple outdoor wedding, have a picnic.

Picnics can be one of the 'stops' on a Staycation. Family reunions are a notorious occasion for a picnic. If you just want to spend a day alone, pack a picnic lunch and go fishing, or find a shady spot in the park and read a good book.

Being stuck in an office all day can be stagnating. Instead of going to a restaurant or eating at your desk, pack a picnic lunch and enjoy it outside. Or if you are running errands all day, instead of eating out, pack your lunch and take a break from all the in and out at the stores.

Want a few other fun facts about picnics? Try these on for size:

Picnics are considered fun events. So, if you hear someone tell you that something is 'no picnic', then whatever it is, it wasn't fun, easy to undertake, or even enjoyable.

Picnics are hosted an average of 3 times per year per family. For each one, they may spend \$32 each or less. That averages out to over \$3 Billion dollars spent on picnicking each year.

We have a National Picnic week that runs from June 15th to June 23rd. There is even a worldwide day set aside for picnics, which is June 18th.

You almost can't have a picnic without ants. The reason why is when one ant visits your picnic, it leaves a scent trail that can be picked up by his friends.

In the year 2000, France celebrated the first Bastille Day of the millennium with a 600-mile-long picnic. Now that is a true Neighborhood Picnic!

Even Teddy Bears have a day for picnics. In 1907, John Walter Bratton wrote the score for this famous two-step, but it wasn't until almost 30 years later lyrics were added by Jimmy Kennedy, an Irish songwriter.

Are you getting hungry yet? Then you may just want to pack up your basket and have a picnic. These are fun events for the whole family and can be a relatively inexpensive way to feed them all. Go ahead and spend the day outdoors. Eat, play, and use the time to catch up with each other.

And if you host your picnic close to the woods, you may want to go and check out how the bears enjoy their special day. Just be sure to bring your stuffed Teddy Bear, as he or she will surely enjoy the fun!

If you want to learn more about the topic at hand or get a transcript for this episode, just visit my website at www.thefarmwife.com/podcast. That is the Resource page for this podcast and I have it set up by episodes to make things easier to find. To help you out, this is Episode 14.

And while you're there, you can now leave your comments at the end of the page. Be sure to tell me what you think and share your own thoughts and ideas. I would love to hear from you!

If you have questions or want to tell me about your own picnic experiences, you can stop by for an email visit at thevirtualporch@gmail.com. And be sure to subscribe – you don't want to miss a single conversation. I'll be sitting on the porch every Monday morning waiting for your visit!

Thanks again for stopping in. I will see you next week on Living a Simple Life with a Back Porch View. And while you are waiting on the next episode, grab that glass of refreshment, pull up a rocker, and sit back for a while. It's time to

Relax and Enjoy!

julie