Choose MyPlate... at Picnics

MyPlate is the new USDA guide to healthy meals. You can use it to plan meals quickly. You can learn more at Choosemyplate.gov. MyPlate is perfect for picnics. Many picnic plates are already divided into sections!

Plan

Picnics can be easy to plan. They are popular with people of all ages. Choose a limited number of foods (no more than four or five items) that can all be served at the same time. Make the meal fun with a simple theme like red, white and blue foods for the Fourth of July. Try an all kebob meal on small skewers.

- **Plan picnics for the yard, park or lake.** A picnic can make any meal special. Use beach towels for lunch in the backyard or pack a week night dinner for the park.
- **Plan to keep picnic food safe.** Always keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Frozen water bottles and juice boxes can do double duty as drinks and chill packs.
- **Plan active fun with your picnic.** Plan to play before and/or after you eat. Bring along a Frisbee® or two. Pack some balls (or water balloons when it is really hot).

Eat

- **Go fresh with fruits and vegetables.** Spring and summer are great times to follow this MyPlate tip. Fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables. Farmers’ markets and supermarkets have local produce at great prices. It is easy to make a simple fruit salad at home. Take a bag of baby carrots and a watermelon that you can slice once you get to your picnic.
- **Go hearty with whole grains.** Sandwiches, wraps and pita pockets are perfect for picnics. MyPlate says to make half your grains whole, like whole-wheat bread for sandwiches. Whole grains also include cracked wheat, barley and brown rice. Use these whole grains to make delicious cold salads, with chopped vegetables and light dressings.
- **Go smart with protein and dairy.** MyPlate suggests protein and dairy foods at every meal. Tuna, peanut butter and beans are great protein sources. Make a sandwich or toss beans in a cold salad. Serve cold plain or flavored milk (skim or 1%). Try refreshing drinkable yogurts. String cheese is always popular with kids and is easy to carry along.

Enjoy

- Treat your family to regular picnic times when the weather is nice. Everyone can take time to eat in a relaxed and casual setting. Just remember to keep fun on the menu!