

Child Care Picnics – Eating Outdoors with Children



Eating outdoors is one of the most pleasurable activities to do in the summertime with children. Kids get to combine outside games and play with eating a meal on a table cloth on the grass or at a picnic table. Being outside on a warm day simply feels like summer and is a perfect way to celebrate the bounty of fresh foods that ripen during the summer season, such as watermelon, strawberries, cucumbers, snap peas and cherry tomatoes. It is also an opportunity to offer some of children's favorite finger foods. Try sandwich quarters, tortilla roll-ups, cold slices of melon and crunchy veggie sticks served in cups.



Food Safety and Picnics:

Eating outdoors can be easy and safe if meals are planned and the timing for picnics is intentional. Children still need to wash hands before eating, so planning the meal before outdoor play time will eliminate the need to come back inside before the picnic to wash hands. Avoid experiences with animals (such as petting farms) before meals. Better to eat first and then pet the animals. Always wash hands afterwards.

When off site for the picnic, choose a location with running water. Bring soap, paper towels, and a garbage bag for clean up if these are not provided on the site. Make sure children and adults wash hands prior to preparing food and eating. If no running water is available, make a temporary hand washing station using a cooler with a spigot and a bucket to catch the waste water. It is easiest to bring snack foods that are not potentially hazardous. Consider bags of trail mix that contain seeds, dried fruit and sesame sticks, containers of cut up fruit and vegetables; sunflower butter sandwiches, crackers and corn chips with salsa. When picnicking on the child care site, store items containing meat, cheese, bean dips, cut melons, dairy, and other potentially hazardous foods in the fridge before bringing them out to the picnic. If heading to a



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Potentially Hazardous Foods include:

- animal products such as meat, fish, poultry, seafood, eggs, and dairy products including yogurt and cream cheese
- cooked starches such as cooked rice, beans, pasta, and potatoes
- cooked fruits and vegetables,
- tofu
- cut melons,
- cut tomatoes, leafy greens, Bean dips and spreads

[Food Safety is Everybody's Business](#), WA State Department of Health, Food Worker Manual

park or on a field trip, it's easier to keep cold foods cold so avoid bringing foods that require hot holding. Pack the potentially hazardous foods in a cooler surrounded by ice or ice packs to keep them at to 40° F and keep the cooler in the shade and covered. Be careful not to leave these foods out of the fridge or cooler for more than 2 hours or one hour if the outdoor temperature is more than 90 F.

Picnic Ideas and Recipes

Think color when considering picnic foods. Summer time offers all the foods of the rainbow, and often times from local sources. Fruits and vegetables are also naturally high in water. Watermelon is 90% water...which explains why they are so heavy! Picnics are opportune times to serve up a wide variety of fruits and vegetables in various ways. Here are a few ideas that can easily be put into a large plastic container and served and safely served to children.



- Tortilla roll-ups – spread whipped, green cream cheese (mix cream cheese with pesto or chopped spinach in a food processor) on a large flour tortilla. Top with leaf lettuce and thinly sliced tomato or red, orange or yellow bell peppers. Roll tightly and slice into 1-2 inch pinwheels or serve as a wrap. [Check out other ways to make a tortilla wrap](#). These require cold storage.
- Berry cones - Slightly thin vanilla yogurt with small amounts of orange juice. Mix blueberries, cut up strawberries and raspberries together and spoon into ice cream cones. Top with the yogurt dressing. Need a recipe? [Berries and yogurt in a cone](#). Yogurt requires cold storage.
- Veggie sticks in a cup – Include any of the following: carrot, cucumber and jicama sticks, snow peas, green beans and broccoli flowerets. Place a few of these items into paper cups and provide a dipping sauce or add the dip to the bottom of the cup. Modify for toddlers by steaming thinly sliced carrots, green beans and snow peas first. (Keep cooked veggies in cold storage.)

Children always need to be sitting down when eating. Place a clean table cloth on the grass or picnic table. They will need extra eyes on them when eating out of their normal situation. Sit down and enjoy the picnic too!