

# Extension

## Seasonal Eating Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

Pack Up the Picnic Basket  
June 2013

The weather has warmed up and it's the perfect time for eating outside before it gets too terribly hot. Picnics can be grilling out in the backyard or packing a cooler and heading to the park pavilion or sacking up a lunch for your backpack on the hiking trail. No matter your style of picnicking, seasonal sandwiches, grilled foods and veggie packed salads are the foods for the summer.

If your picnic is hitting the road, make sure you pack it safely. Perishable items such as salads and meats need to be kept cold, meaning below 40 degrees F. Keep items in the refrigerator until just before leaving and pack into coolers with freezer packs or ice. When packing with ice, put it into zip topped bags so as it melts it won't get everything wet and soggy.



Packing just enough food so you don't need to worry about leftovers is best. Don't leave items out more than 2 hours or 1 hour if it is more than 90 degrees outside. Another good idea is to pack drinks in a separate cooler so that the food cooler stays closed as much as possible and keep the coolers in the shade.

Summer produce is great for picnics, from fresh fruits like melons and grapes to veggie stuffed sandwiches and fresh salads. Homemade lemonade or limeade refreshes thirsty hikers and Frisbee throwers alike. Wraps are a popular and easy way to pack sandwiches for a picnic. Use the flavored wraps, like spinach or garlic and herb, or plain flour tortillas will work as well. Spread the wrap with mustard, hummus, ranch dressing or a cream cheese based spread. Then layer with cheese and your favorite luncheon meat and pile on the veggies like shredded carrots, spinach, green onions, cherry tomato halves, radishes, lettuce, etc. Roll up, tucking in the ends and wrap in plastic in the refrigerator or cooler until ready to serve. Pasta salads loaded with cherry tomatoes or blanched little green beans, celery and other veggies are good. Vinegar based marinated vegetable salads are another good picnic choice. Slaws with a cabbage or a broccoli stem base can be served on the side or on pork sandwiches or burgers. Marinated broccoli, cauliflower, red onion and mushrooms make another good combination. Tomatoes and cucumbers marinated in an oil and vinegar dressing are refreshing on a hot day.

Below is a recipe for a Wild Rice Salad loaded with cherry tomatoes, green onions, peas, bell peppers and artichokes. The oil and vinegar based dressing is seasoned with garlic, parmesan cheese, celery seeds and dry mustard for a flavorful kick. The base is wild rice. Look for the little boxes of plain wild rice (not the wild rice

and long grain mix). It will take about an hour to cook the rice but its nutty flavor and chewy texture make a salad that is different than the usual pasta based picnic salads.

So drag out the picnic basket and cooler and head outside to enjoy the pretty weather and fresh air and the bounty of picnic produce!

For more ideas on using seasonal produce, visit the Bedford County Extension website (<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/bedford>) and click on Seasonal Eating. The Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration on A Fresh Air Picnic will be on Wednesday, June 19 at 12:00 noon at the Extension Office. Call the Office at 684-5971 to sign up and bring \$7.00 to class to cover the samples.

### Wild Rice Salad

- 1 1/3 cups olive oil
- 1/2 cup rice wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon celery seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon paprika
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 cups water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup uncooked wild rice
- 1 (6-ounce) jar marinated artichoke hearts, drained and roughly chopped
- 6 ounces frozen peas, thawed
- 1/3 cup chopped green bell peppers
- 3 green onions, chopped
- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup toasted, slivered almonds

For dressing, whisk together olive oil, vinegar, cheese, sugar, 1 teaspoon salt, celery seed, pepper, dry mustard, paprika and garlic. In a medium saucepan with lid, bring water and 1/2 teaspoon salt to boil. Add rice, cover and simmer until rice is tender and popped open, about 45-60 minutes, adding more water if needed. Drain rice and add to dressing. Add artichokes, peas, green pepper, onion and tomatoes. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Sprinkle with almonds just before serving.