



What to Eat at a Labor Day Picnic

Luci Gabel
MA, MBA, ACSM, ACE

Labor Day weekend is here and it's outdoor picnic and party time! I thought I'd give everyone some ideas about how they could eat healthily during this time of outdoor indulging. One thing that's helpful is knowing how to swap common picnic foods that aren't so healthy, for foods that are both healthy and tasty.

For example, the hot dog and hamburger are the most common entrée at a good old American style picnic. How do you make the hot dog and hamburger healthy? For hamburgers, make them with 90% lean meat. It's very tasty, there's more meat to the bite, and there's less saturated fat. You can find pure beef hot dogs that are much lower in fat than the other kinds. Turkey and chicken hot dogs are also very tasty. Going with a whole wheat bun can add a few grams of fiber, and reduce the simple sugar level of your meal. *(4oz of a 90% lean burger is only 240 Calories, 50% from fat. 4oz of an 80% lean burger is 300 Calories, 6 % from fat.)*

Another thing you can do is add veggies to your burger! Of course we're all familiar with tomato, onion and lettuce - but have you tried mixed greens on your burger like herb salad or spinach? They pack a punch of vitamins, and a load of extra fiber. Or, try fresh cucumbers, or grilled peppers. When you eat vegetables with a meal, it really helps you to feel full, so you don't have to eat as much! (Therefore you don't ingest as many Calories). It also increases the number of phytochemicals and antioxidants in your meal.

Corn on the cob is an excellent side dish. A really good piece of corn is sweet enough that you don't even need to put anything on it. If you haven't had a piece of corn with nothing on it yet, I challenge you to get gutsy this weekend and give it a try! *(One cob of corn is only about 80 Cal, with no fat to speak of. Compare that to 14 potato chips which have 2x the calories and much more fat.)*

Instead of regular potato chips, there is a wonderful selection of baked potato chips available in stores, which have much less fat and calories. An even healthier choice to cure those munchies would be vegetable slices. We're all familiar with carrots and celery, but any vegetable tastes good sliced and dipped. Try something new, like zucchini wedges, or sugar snap peas, or fresh string beans... I like radishes, not sure about the breath afterwards. There are many low fat dips now, to take the place of regular dip. Fruit salad or any type of fruit is also a really good choice before a meal.

What about the cake, candy and ice cream that gets served up after the meal, at most of our picnics? Aside from the low fat version of those things, frozen fruit bars or sorbet are excellent alternatives. Berries with a little vanilla yogurt are great if you're having a sit-down meal. And, for picnics, there's always the good old Watermelon! *(1 cup of that juicy food is only 46 Calories.)*

Picnics are a great time for beer, wine, and soda. But we need to remember that 12 ounces of regular beer has 150 Calories, and the light version has 100 Calories. Four ounces of red or white wine has about 75 Calories. Twelve ounces of or soda is 150 Calories. A lot of the individual bottles of beer and soda are more than 12 ounces. I'm an advocate of drinking water when you're thirsty, and drinking alcohol or soda as if it were another food, like a side dish or desert. If you're not a big water fan, sparkling water, fruit water, or juice infused water offer some tasty alternatives!



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So, when do you just relax and “eat whatever”? I mean, after all, it is a picnic!! I actually never say, just eat whatever. I would say, indulge in moderation. Eat mostly healthy... then have a little something that’s not. That way, you won’t feel like you just blew it if you’ve been trying to eat healthy. Eating in this way you can have fun, taste a little of everything, and go home feeling good about yourself.

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