



# Being Present

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## July is National Picnic Month

### EAT

Picnics are memorable occasions that allow us to explore and enjoy the great outdoors. During July and beyond, enjoy moving your dining outdoors, whether in a park or in your backyard. Choose a spot where you can use your mindfulness skills to explore the sights and sounds of nature, including trees, flowers and living creatures such as birds.

Be creative with your picnic menus. As long as you can keep foods cold in a cooler, you can bring almost anything safely. Trail mix, peanut butter sandwiches and whole fruit, such as apples, are safe without a cooler.

Remember that germs grow quickly in warm, humid temperatures, so take steps to keep your food safe.

- Keep perishable foods cool by transporting them in an insulated cooler with plenty of ice or frozen gel packs. Perishable foods include meat, poultry, seafood, eggs, dairy products, pasta, rice, cooked vegetables and fresh, peeled and cut fruits and vegetables.
- Pack the cooler just before leaving home. Foods chilling in your refrigerator should be placed directly in your cooler with ice or frozen gel packs.
- Store beverages and perishable foods in separate coolers.
- Avoid frequently opening coolers containing perishable food. Keep the cooler in an air-conditioned vehicle during travel and in the shade at the picnic site. Avoid transporting the cooler in your vehicle's trunk, which is hotter than the air-conditioned vehicle.
- Avoid using bug spray close to the serving area.
- If soap and water are not available at your destination, bring wet wipes or hand sanitizer to clean your hands.

## Try Some Picnic-friendly “Finger Foods”

Be sure that the sizes and shapes of the food are appropriate for the age of the child and do not pose a choking hazard. Avoid using toothpicks and skewers with young children.

Older children can help prepare and pack “food on a stick” at home. Pack in zip-top bags or other containers over ice.

For younger children, bring prepared foods in a bowl along with spoons, tongs and plates.

- Strawberries, orange segments, grapes, pineapple chunks, blueberries or other fruits
- Grape tomatoes, mozzarella cheese balls or cheddar cheese, basil and/or zucchini rounds
- Watermelon wedges on a stick.
- Small sandwiches with meat, cheese or other fillings cut in triangles and threaded on a stick
- See [www.ag.ndsu.edu/food](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/food) for more recipe ideas and food safety tips.





Spending as many minutes as possible outdoors in good weather is the goal for many people with children. What can your family do outdoors to extend your mindfulness practices?

Bring yoga mats, blankets or beach towels outdoors and practice some yoga poses. If you are new to yoga, just try two or three poses until you know them well. Look up beginner poses on the internet. Add more as the summer progresses.

Use those same mats, blankets or towels to find a soft and comfortable place to lay down in the grass or sand on your back. With one hand on your heart and one hand on your stomach, take a deep breath and feel your lungs and belly fill with air. Relax. Do a guided meditation with your family by starting with your head and going to your toes. In a soft voice, tell them to “relax your forehead...” Relax your eyes... etc. Be sure to explain what relax means to young children before you begin.

Enjoy outdoor games together. Pull out the frisbee, the softball mitts, the croquet set, the badminton racquets. Whatever your family enjoys doing together, spend an hour at it and then share a water break and some things you are grateful for.

Art is a great stress reliever and sidewalk chalk is a wonderful way to go big with your art. Use it to write greetings on your walkway to make others feel welcome in your neighborhood. Draw pictures to celebrate special days and events.

## Savor (the Savings)

Enjoy a family meal prepared at home but taken to a picnic site. Food prepared at home usually is healthier and tastes better.

While stopping for food at a restaurant is easy, you can save money by packing your own picnic at home. Often, food purchased at a restaurant may cost twice as much (or more) than food prepared at home.

Meals from restaurants often use a lot of plastic or other packaging. Making use of reusable containers also is good for the environment.



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July 2023

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