



Planning the Best Picnic Ever

Whether it's the company's annual summer event for 600 or the baseball team's end-of-the-season family get-together, the principles of picnic planning remain the same.

Guests, Guests, Guests

Just like the old joke that the three most important factors in selling a house are location, location, location, the three most important factors in picnic planning are guests, guests, guests. How many will there be? How old or young are they? What special needs do they have (in terms of food allergies or diets, ability to walk distances over grass or gravel, willingness to withstand heat and humidity)? What do they enjoy doing? Answer these questions, and you'll have the basis for planning the rest of the event.

Budget

If you have all the money in the world to throw at this event, skip right over this section! Otherwise, figure out a budget before you go any farther. Decide what items

you need to allow for. Food and beverages, rentals (including site rental), decorations and entertainment are the basics. You might also want to budget for items like favors, photography or prizes. Once you've determined the line items in your budget, allocate an approximate percentage of the budget to each.

If you already know the total you have to spend, it's a simple matter to determine how much you can spend in each area. If you don't already have a bottom line, make some educated guesses about how much you want to (or may have to) spend in each area and total the guesses. Regardless of how you arrive at the them, make sure you have at least ballpark numbers as you move forward.

To Cater or Not To Cater?

This is certainly a critical decision. The answer will depend on several factors, including the number of guests and the size

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Simply Fresh Events, an event-planning and catering company serving the Greater National Capital Area, is pleased to present another in our series of event-planning resources. Call our office, (240) 685-2500, or visit www.simplyfreshevents.com to learn more about the services we provide to make your event uniquely yours.

Planning the Best Picnic Ever (continued)

of your budget. Be sure to take into account, however, how much your time and mental health are worth. A top-notch event-planning and catering company like Simply Fresh Events will vastly improve both the quality of the event and the quality of your life leading up to the event!

Venue

In event-planner-speak, the venue is where your event will take place. Maybe it's your backyard, but then again, maybe it's a local or regional park. Before you make a final commitment, think about parking, accessibility for any of your guests who have problems walking, location and number of restrooms, shelter/shade in case of rain or heat, and the number of picnic tables or other places to sit. If you're planning to do your own cooking, be sure to check on the availability of grills as well as on any local regulations (including noise ordinances).

Theme

Many picnics don't have themes. It's been our experience, however, that setting a theme, even a very loose one, turns up the event quality dial several notches. It also simplifies planning invitations, decorations and entertainment. It doesn't add too much to the budget to give your guests cowboy bandanas to tie around their throats for an "Old West" or "Dude Ranch" or "Ride 'Em, Cowboy!" party, and you have some great event colors: red and blue. Maybe you decide to go all out and hire a vendor to provide pony rides for the kids. Maybe you decide to

keep it simple to bandanas and red- and blue-checked plastic table coverings. Wherever you land on the Western spectrum, you're showing your guests that you've put extra thought into your hospitality.

Decorations, Entertainment and Favors

Like a picnic theme, you may choose to omit decorations, entertainment and/or favors. However, even the smallest details turn up that event quality dial. Think simple (votive candles floating in shallow bowls) or elaborate (fresh flowers draped down the center of each table like a lei). Load your MP3 player with ukulele music or hire a local steel drum band. Provide each guest with an inexpensive plastic or paper lei from the party store, or give each guest a small potted orchid to take home. However you do it, make your "Blue Hawaii," "Island Getaway" or "Sail Away" theme come to life.

Hospitality Starts with H

That's really the key to any successful event, picnic or otherwise. Hospitality starts with the hosts, hosts who are attentive to their guests' comfort and enjoyment, hosts who plan ahead thoroughly so that they can enjoy the picnic right along with their guests. The staff of Simply Fresh Events hopes this resource helps you be that kind of host.

Looking for an easy way to incorporate these suggestions into your next event plan? Visit our website to download the worksheet which accompanies this resource.