

Make-ahead dishes perfect for quasi picnic

In the past, I have often written about picnic meals — which are fun to prepare and eat at all sorts of unusual times and places. These include breakfast picnics, after-dark romantic repasts under the stars, roadside lunches, and the more elaborate picnic feasts that are works of art.

However, strange as it may seem, there are large numbers of people who do not like picnics. They prefer to eat their meals in air-conditioned comfort, or — at least — in screened-in rooms or porches, away from the flies and mosquitoes.

One of the nicest features about picnics is that they are often make-ahead meals with no last-minute work. Everything is prepared and packed ahead, so that you can enjoy eating it along with the rest of the people.

The dishes are either paper throw-aways, or they are packed back into the basket, to be done later.

If your mate is one who doesn't enjoy picnicking, and you still want the fun and relaxation of such a meal, try some of these wonderful make-ahead recipes.

Serve them on a screened-in porch, or in any room of the house. Use your imagination, and plan as you would for a real picnic.

Eat on throw-away dishes, or, if you prefer real ones, stack them in the sink or dishwasher and worry about them later. You're entitled to rest period after dinner, too — especially if you're the one who prepared the meal.

Here are some of my favorite easy to serve, make-ahead summer dishes. I hope you'll enjoy them.

DUCK AND LIVER PATE

1/2 pound bacon, coarsely chopped
1 pound meat from duck (skinned and boned, fat removed, and cut in pieces)
1 duck liver (optional)
1 pound chicken livers
1/2 cup flour
1/4 cup dry sherry
2 tablespoons brandy
6 tablespoons heavy cream
2 eggs
4 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg

Blend duck, livers and bacon in a food processor or blender until finely chopped. Add the flour, and beat until smooth. While beating, add the sherry, brandy, cream, eggs, salt, pepper and nutmeg.

Four into a well-greased loaf pan, tightly cover with foil, and place in a larger pan of hot water (bain-marie). Bake at 325 degrees for two hours. Remove from hot water, loosen foil and cool for 30 minutes. Place a weight (a brick wrapped in foil works nicely) on the pate, and let it sit for one more hour.

Remove the weight, and refrigerate for several days. This is best served at room temperature, accompanied by onion marmalade.

ONION MARMALADE

(good with all meats)
1 small yellow onion, peeled
1 small orange
2 tablespoons raisins
2 large pitted prunes
1 teaspoon minced green onion
3 tablespoons dry sherry
1/4 teaspoon grated lemon rind
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1 cup red currant or apple jelly

Here's recipes for MC muffins

Here are some Motor City Muffin recipes to try:

BLACKBERRY MUFFINS

2 cups flour
1 tablespoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 cup sugar
1 egg, beaten
1/2 cup sweet butter, melted
1/2 cup milk
1/4 cup sour cream
1 1/2 cups fresh blackberries
1/2 cup chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Sift first four ingredients together. Add egg, butter, milk and sour cream and mix just until moistened. Fold in blackberries and pecans. Fill paper-lined muffin tins full. Bake approximately 20 minutes. Makes 12 muffins.

RAISIN OAT BRAN MUFFINS

1 cup oat bran
1/2 cup whole wheat flour
1/4 cups unbleached flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 egg
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/2 cup molasses
1 1/4 cups milk
1/2 cup raisins

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Combine oat bran, wheat and white flours, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Beat egg and combine with oil, molasses and milk. Add wet mixture to dry ingredients. Mix in raisins. Spoon into muffin tins and bake 16-20 minutes. Makes 12 muffins.



kitchen witch

Gundella

1 teaspoon crushed white peppercorns
1/4 teaspoon Dijon-style mustard
3 tablespoons finely chopped pine nuts or pistachios

Cut onion in quarters lengthwise, and soak in salted water for one hour.

Cut half the orange rind into fine strips. Squeeze and save two tablespoons orange juice.

In a small sauce pan, combine the raisins, prunes, green onion, sherry, strips of orange peel, orange juice, lemon rind and lemon juice. Bring to a boil.

Reduce heat and simmer slowly for 20 minutes. Cool and drain. Save the cooking liquid, and coarsely chop the raisins, prunes and strips of orange rind.

Rinse and drain the onion, and then mince it. In a bowl, combine the currant jelly, minced, crushed peppercorns, pine nuts and mustard. Stir in the chopped raisins, prunes and orange rind, and their cooking liquid. This sauce can be used right away, or refrigerated and kept for several days.

NELS WALTON'S CURRY CHICKEN AND RICE SALAD
This recipe, which serves 8 to 12 people, is absolutely the most fantastic-tasting dish I guarantee your friends will love it.

Combine:
3 cups cooked rice

1/4 cup chopped green onion
1 cup golden raisins
1/2 teaspoon curry powder
salt and pepper
Set aside to cool.

In a separate bowl, mix:
3 cups cooked cubed chicken meat
curry chutney dressing (see below)

Let sit for one hour, then add:
One Granny Smith apple, finely cubed

1 1/2 cup bok choy (Chinese cabbage). It grows like celery — you may substitute sliced water chestnuts if you like.)

1 cup cashews (or chile peas)
1/4 cup julienne carrots (optional)
2 pounds cleaned fresh spinach, torn into pieces

Toast this chicken/vegetable/dressing mixture together with the seasoned rice mixture, and serve. Slices of melon, kiwi, green grapes, or strawberries make a nice garnish.

CURRY CHUTNEY DRESSING
10 tablespoons chopped chutney (any kind will do, but mango is best)

1 1/2 teaspoon curry powder
1/4 teaspoon cloves
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
6 tablespoons white wine vinegar (Orange or strawberry vinegar is a nice substitute. You may add a little more or a little less, depending on the thickness of the chutney.)
Mix the above ingredients well.

Serve any or all of these dishes on a screened porch, or in any room of the house. Use your imagination and plan as you would for a real picnic.

LOMI-LOMI LAU

(10-12 servings, depending upon the number of other appetizers served)

1 1/2 pounds lox or Scottish smoked salmon
4 large tomatoes (beefsteak are best), peeled and diced

1 cup minced green onions (including tops)
1/4 cup minced coriander leaves (or Chinese parsley)

Mix well, and season with a dash of hot pepper sauce and the juice of one lemon. Cover and refrigerate until serving time.

Serve with crackers.

SEVEN-LAYERED FRUIT SALAD

By now, I am sure that everyone and his uncle, has tried the popular seven-layered vegetable salad. (If not, and you'd like the recipe, please call me.)

But here is a seven-layered salad that is different because it is made with fruit. This recipe serves six.

2 cups shredded lettuce
2 apples (cored and chopped with peel left on, sprinkled with lemon juice to preserve color)
2 navel oranges, peeled and sectioned

2 cups seedless green grapes
1/4 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup sour cream
2 tablespoons sugar
1 cup shredded cheese (almost any kind will do — Cheddar, Monterey Jack, or even grated parmesan)

Spread lettuce on the bottom of a two-quart serving dish. Arrange the apples on top. Layer the orange sections on top of the apples. Then layer the grapes.

Combine mayonnaise and sour cream, and spread over the grapes. Sprinkle sugar evenly on top of the mayonnaise mixture, and top with a layer of cheese.

Cover tightly with foil or plastic wrap, and refrigerate overnight.

Note: If you have any questions about these or other recipes, please call Gundella at 427-1072.

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