

Lem Recalls

A Sad Picnic; Gives Ingredients For A Perfect One

By LEM MESEE

The saddest picnic I ever witnessed took place in a lovely park shelter on Lake Michigan. It involved a group of three families, the matrons apparently being sisters.

Out came multitudes of picnic baskets. Out came tablecloths. Out came dishes and silverware.

Out came three different kinds of potato salads -- each sister was trying to out-do the other -- along with elaborate spreads, gelatin salads, desserts and all the rest. Finally, they said grace.

Saying grace before a meal is OK, but all the rest of it was bad. You couldn't imagine anything more-uncomfortable than the poor children involved thinking they were going out to have fun and winding up at a dinner that was in reality harder to put together than a Sunday dining room repast because there wasn't a kitchen close by. The wind blew napkins and tablecloths around, and no one heard as much as a seagull with all the bejabbering going on.

That isn't my idea of how to have a picnic.

THIS MEMORIAL Day weekend, you'll see beaches and picnic sites jam-packed with people swarming like schools of smelt. You get the impression that our

parks are crowded, but it simply isn't so.

In any park, on the most crowded day of the year, there are always vast tracts of empty acreage. Why? Simply because the average picnicker won't walk more than 50 feet from his car.

So the first thing is to make up your mind to hoof it -- a quarter of a mile, maybe even a full mile to get some solitude, a place where you can hear a few birds and quietly watch ducks and geese on their nests. You'll never see wildlife by shouting, riding a mini-bike, bouncing around on a snowmobile (in season) or racing around in a motorboat. You've got to walk, then sit quietly for awhile.

It means your picnic preparations will have to be simpler. You don't want to haul a lot of stuff out there and then either leave a lot of junk or have to haul it back. Eliminate the bulky, unessential items, and pack your stuff compactly in a haversack or picnic basket -- the fewer packages, the better.

YOU'RE GOING to cook steaks or hamburgers? No need to haul a 20-pound bag of charcoal the way most city slickers do. Just pack the charcoal you need in a small paper sack. Then use the paper sack to store your junk until you find a trash can.

There are other times besides Memorial Day to have a picnic. I like 'em all year around, even in winter. In fact, winter picnics are often the best because you can have a whole park to yourself. If you have a dog, like I do, you don't have to leave him behind or fear that he'll bother folks.

My idea of a picnic meal is the foil dinner so popular with girl and boy scouts. Hamburger, diced beef, pork steaks, even a hunk of coho can make a good meat base. Diced potatoes, carrots, celery, onions round out the stew. Salt and pepper it, then pour on some catsup, barbecue sauce or tomato sauce. The whole thing fries, simmers, steams, roasts, boils and broils together in the aluminum foil in 15-30 minutes. And no dishes to wash and haul home!

A warm weather favorite for on-the-ground picnics is the European menu: Rolls or unsliced French bread, sausage, a hunk of good cheese, a bottle of wine -- and don't forget the sharp knife and the corkscrew.

My favorite picnic spots are on some remote shores of the Huron River, reachable by footpaths. The reason I'm telling you where is that you won't find any trace of where I've been. I leave the site cleaner than the way I found it, and I hope you'll do the same.

Beef Strip Steaks Please

To please a favorite man, husband or sweetheart, serve one food he never tires of -- steak. Lured into a mood of contentment by the hearty beef aroma of tender strip steaks broiling over charcoal, he'll conclude you're a brilliant cook.

Strip steaks are a fine choice for this special outdoor meal because they are cut from the loin, an especially tender section favored by beef-eating men.

BROILED BEEF STRIP STEAKS

Beef top loin steaks, cut 1 to 2 inches thick

Salt and pepper

Let charcoal burn until covered with gray ash before placing steaks on the grill. If a grill thermometer is used, it should register about 350 degrees F for the cooking period. Place steaks on grill and broil eight to 10 minutes. Turn, season with salt and pepper. Brown second side about eight to 10 minutes. Total cooking time for a one-inch thick strip steak will be about 15 to 20 minutes for rare, 20 to 25 minutes for medium. If the strip steak is 1 1/2 inches thick, the total broiling time for rare will be about 25 to 30 minutes, for medium about 30 to 35 minutes. Two-inch steaks will require a few minutes more.

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