PLANNING A PICNIC? MEMBERS OFFER TOP PICKS FROM THE COOP'S BOUNTY

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By Liora Fishman

Watermelon salad with lime and mint is a vegan picnic go-to.
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What better way to celebrate summer than with a picnic! Of course, the bountiful choices at the Coop can sometimes feel like a curse; where to begin?

I spoke to Coop members and staff to find out what they're bringing to their picnics this summer, and what products Coop members should look for.

Brett Krasner, who lives in Prospect Lefferts Garden and has been a Coop member for three years, suggests eliminating choice paralysis by planning a menu in advance. Krasner prefers shelf-stable options and easily portable perishables alike: "Tinned fish is an easy, portable protein for any sandwich. Layered between sliced cucumbers, micro greens and spicy mayo—you can never go wrong."

Tinned fish is a protein that travels well.

Coop cheeses travel especially well. Krasner recommends pairing cheese with Firehook crackers and Amaro cherries. “I use Amaro cherries the same way anyone would use jam—it’s just a bit of a twist on a classic pairing,” he said. “My favorite is Le Secret de Lys Soft Ripened Cow’s Milk cheese.”

Yuri Weber, the Coop’s buyer for cheese, shared that sales for burrata, fresh mozzarella and feta “almost double in the warmer months.”

Cheese paired with fruit or jam is another popular picnic choice.

Weber also recommended cheeses from Moser, in Switzerland, of which the Coop typically stocks about three or four varieties, including Aux Noix (with hazelnuts), Riesling x Sylvaner (washed with wine), and Charmant (triple cream). The Coop also stocks miniature-size versions of those cheeses.

Receiving Coordinator Lisa Hidem suggested picking up “any of [the Coop’s] delicious breads to go with that cheese. And for vegans there’s hummus or baba ghanoush.”

No pairing more classic than bread and cheese.

For vegan Coop members like Tamar Lindenbaum, another simple but no less refreshing option is a staple at picnics: “Limes, mint and watermelon, baby! No better snack to stay cool and share with friends at the park,” Lindenbaum said. “Cutting the watermelon is the toughest part—beyond that, it’s a simple snack that requires all of five minutes to prepare and is a crowd pleaser.”

Sabina Tilevitz, a Crown Heights resident and Coop member for two years, echoed Lindenbaum’s sentiments and added: “I love the Mi Niña ‘Pico de Gallo’ flavored chips. I’ll often bring those to the park with a jar of salsa and an avocado or two.”

Weber suggests a simple, grain-based salad: “I always bring orzo salad to picnics. Kalamata olives, ricotta salata, cherry tomatoes and fresh herbs—basil and mint.”

The Coop’s fresh herbs can punch up a grain salad.

Beverages are also a crucial consideration in your picnic planning, and Coop members have no shortage to choose from. “I love to bring some Basque cider to the park—it’s light and the bubbles are refreshing,” Krasner recommended. “Although, if you prefer a more involved option, you could consider bringing a thermos of a favorite summer cocktail to share with folks.”

And if you’d like to end your meal on a sweeter note, Hidem recommends checking out the personal-size Noble pies, in flavors like apple, blueberry, cherry and other rotating seasonal flavors.

When preparing for a picnic, Coop members ought to also consider essentials that will make them more comfortable at their picnic, like a large picnic blanket and foldable chairs.

The Coop carries Baggu products that often can be used for picnicking, including wa-

terproof picnic blankets, insulated lunch boxes and reusable bags. I most recently bought a green gingham Baggu picnic blanket from the Coop that I've been sporting all summer when I head to the park after work.

Liora Fishman joined the Coop in December 2021. She lives in Prospect Heights and has a wonderful dog, Ollie, whom she loves very much.