PICNIC in the *park*

By Cathi Turow

TAKEOUT TIPS
FOR NO-FUSS AL FRESCO

ARE YOU UP FOR A PICNIC, but the thought of making what feels like 300 tuna fish sandwiches puts you over the edge? Maybe the memory of coleslaw leaking all over your car seat is still haunting you? If so, let it go. With an astounding variety of picnic-style foods available on Long Island, you can have a wonderful meal on the beach or in the park without cooking a thing. Plus, with innovative, mess-proof picnic products to carry your food, you'll never taste a sandcastle inside your sandwich again. The outdoor meals combined with accessories below highlight some of the best ways to put together an amazing picnic on Long Island.

Elegant accessories from Picnic at Ascot.
Photo credit: Picnic at Ascot

Stew Leonard's

East Meadow and Farmingdale

In this diverse market, create a multi-cultural picnic in a flash at six salad bars filled with everything from saag paneer to fried rice to tacos. The signature BLT pasta salad guest stars beside countless classic picnic salads. Bring along fresh lobster rolls, sushi picnic platters, 3-foot hero sandwiches, an endless variety of chicken wings, tenders and fries, even fresh grilled corn. Plastic, tin and paper food holders in all shapes and sizes are tight-fitting and easy to carry. The handiest is the three-sectioned container with deep pockets, so there's no need to stuff rice pudding on top of your Swedish meatballs. *stewleonards.com*

Uncle Giuseppe's Marketplace

East Meadow, Farmingdale, Massapequa, Melville, Port Jefferson, Port Washington and Smithtown

You'll find enticingly displayed salads perfect for a picnic in long, plastic containers (spinach salad with strawberries, berries and pecans is a favorite). The counters are filled with gourmet sandwiches and side dishes that can be combined as picnic platters. Enjoy them, along with a fresh steamed lobster to go. Warm egg sandwich wraps are always available for a picnic breakfast. The most fun picnic dessert is the signature Holy Cannoli (a container of cannoli shells broken into bite-sized pieces with cannoli cream in the center as the dip). On your way out, grab containers of kid-friendly fruit slices, and pack everything in thermal "hot and cold" bags at the cash register. *uncleg.com*

The French Workshop

Garden City

If a romantic picnic is more your style, pick up home-baked baguette and croissant sandwiches in this elegant cafe. A baguette with grilled chicken, prosciutto, Brie and house mustard is a lovely choice, as well as one with

LEFT - Top: Stew Leonard's has a wide range of food to go. *Photo credit Stew Leonard's*

Middle: A classic brisket sandwich from Ben's deli. *Photo credit: Yana Paskova*

Bottom: Prepared food from Uncle Giuseppe's. *Photo credit: Uncle Giuseppe's*

RIGHT - Top: Macarons from The French Workshop. *Photo credit: The French Workshop*

Middle: Food trucks at Shoregasboard in Long Beach. *Photo credit; Yana Paskova*

Bottom, far right: Watermelon picnic blanket from Built2QuiltDesign on Etsy. *Photo credit: Lisa Todaro*

Bottom, right: Cooler/seat from picnictime.com *Photo credit: Picnic Time Family of Brands*

smoked salmon, avocado, spinach and tomatoes. If you have a cooler, definitely include delicate pastries (such as the pistachio gateau). Otherwise, the cheesecake brownies or rose and lavender macarons should hold up well. Everything is packed in chic boxes. *thefrenchworkshop.com*

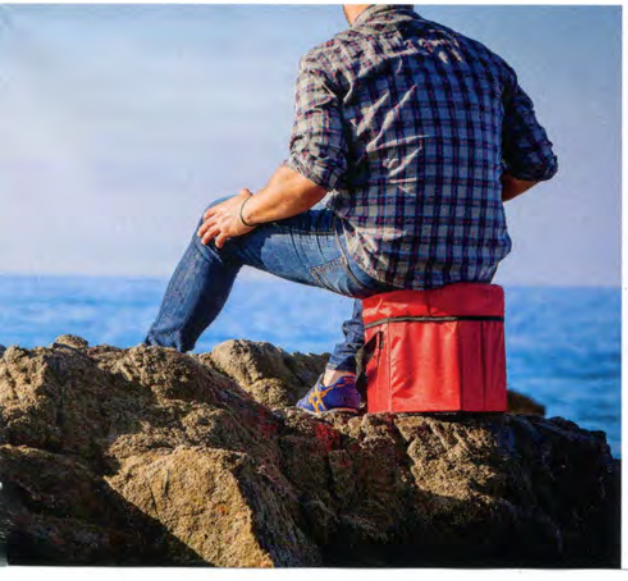
Picnic Accessories Galore

Find a mind-boggling variety of coolers on wheels, waterproof picnic blankets, picnic backpacks, picnic casserole carriers, wicker baskets with complete table settings and so much more at *picnicatascot.com* and *picnictime.com* (There's even a cooler that doubles as a seat on this site). For a charming country feel, order a handmade picnic blanket with pictures of little ants nibbling watermelons. On Etsy from *Built2QuiltDesign.*

You'd Rather Not Carry?

If hauling is not your bag, you can still have a picnic. Head over to Shoregasboard in Long Beach (Riverside Boulevard, next to the beach). Food trucks there surround picnic tables and have everything from acai bowls to gluten-free sandwiches to fish tacos. All foods are also packaged to enjoy right on the beach. *longbeachny.gov*

If there are 10 or more at your picnic, you can order "Ben's Meal Box" from Ben's Kosher Delicatessen Restaurant and Caterers in Carle Place, Greenvale or Woodbury. Choose a lunchbox with a salad, overstuffed deli sandwich or boxed "Finger Lickin' Chicken Picnic." *bensdeli.net*

And if it rains? You can still have a picnic. Most of the eateries mentioned here have indoor seating. Bon appetit! *LIL*

Cathi Turow is a Long Island-based food writer and script writer for the PBS children's television series "Pinkalicious."