

# Picnic Planning Extravaganza

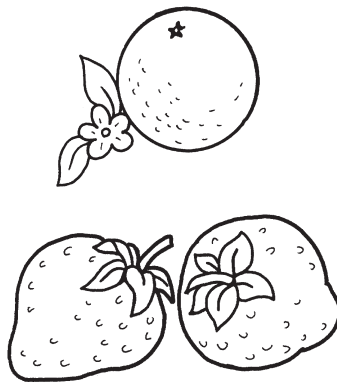
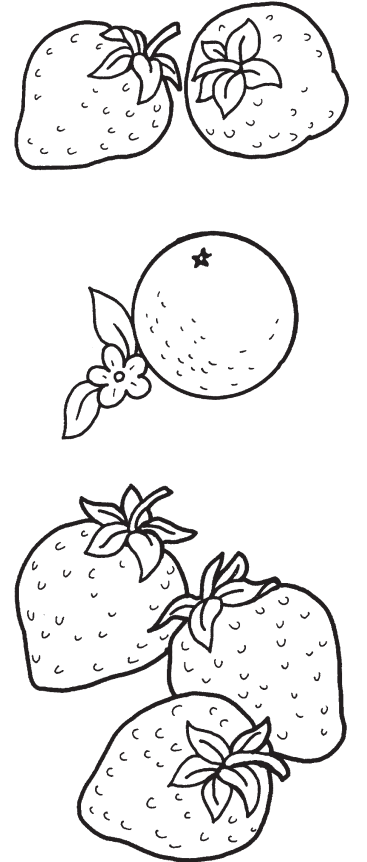
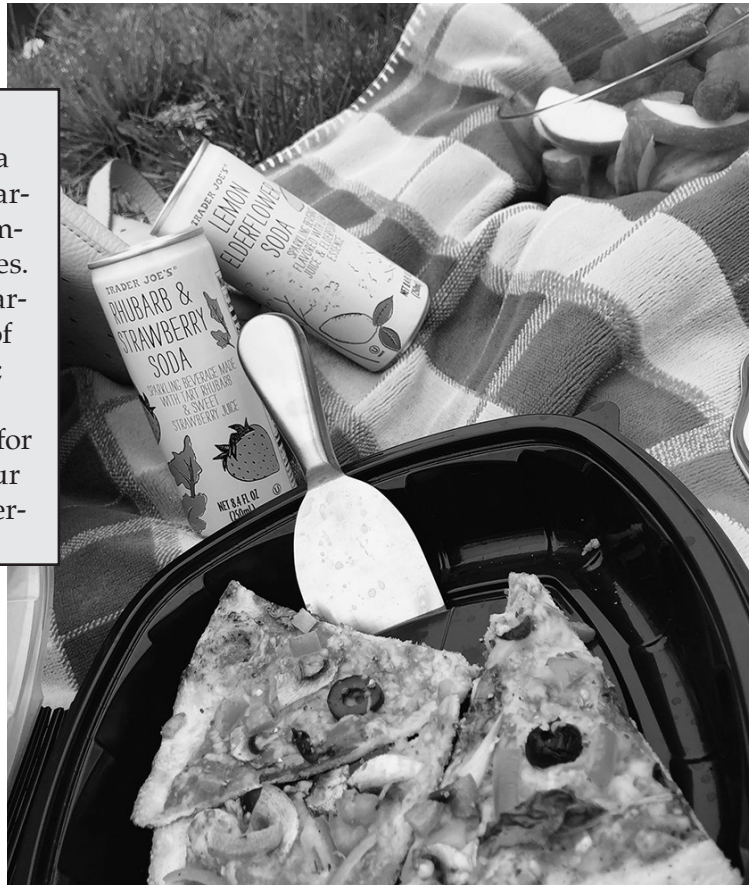
by Ava Hoelscher  
of The Gleaner

Spring has bloomed, and with it comes the ideal picnic season. Sunny skies, warm breezes, and budding flowers create the perfect atmosphere for a picnic. An outdoor meal with friends is a great way to relax, especially at the stressful end of the school year. It can be as quick and simple as takeout at a local park. A picnic can also be a more

thoughtful meal prepared for friends or family at a scenic location. Aesthetically beautiful picnics are all over social media. It's easy to conclude such a picnic would be overwhelming to plan or expensive to prepare; however, a cute picnic can be simple and relatively low budget. I started small with a picnic for two and learned some key takeaways.

### What is essential for picnicking?

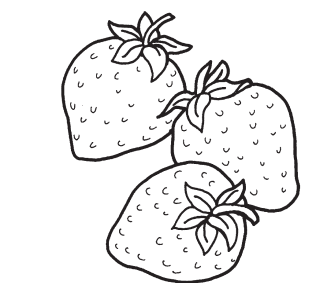
You can't have a picnic without food, whether it's a takeout bag of Chick-Fil-A or a masterfully crafted charcuterie board. Finger foods are a must-have, and it's important to bring a variety of food to please all attendees. For my picnic, I brought leftover pizza; a small charcuterie platter with cheese, crackers, and apples; lots of fruit; bread paired with cream cheese and cucumbers; and miniature cupcakes. A special drink can be a fun picnic treat as well; I decided to pack individual cans for increased ease. Overall, the food you pack is up to your group's preferences, though keeping simplicity and versatility in mind is always smart.



### Where should we picnic?

A scenic location with gorgeous views is ideal, but it can also be a convenient backyard or local park. Ideally, every picnic would be on a beautiful beach near the ocean. However, there are many more convenient and realistic options available. It's a great idea to take advantage of the many nature preserves in Dubuque, including Mines of Spain, Swiss Valley, Eagle Point Park, or Heritage Trail. These locations can make for a relaxing retreat without traveling a long distance.

For the ultimate convenience move, opt for a backyard picnic. These can still be lots of fun, and they don't require stuffing your car with overflowing picnic baskets and chunky blankets. When planning a picnic location, choose somewhere that you think will balance tranquility and ease.

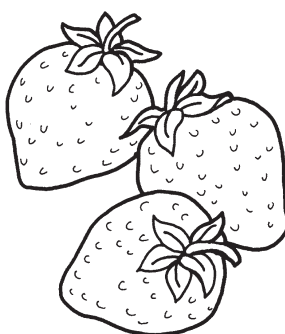


### When should we picnic?

It's hard to enjoy your picnic if the weather doesn't cooperate. Too windy -- your food is blown away. Too hot -- everyone is sticky. When I scheduled my picnic, I was hoping for nice weather, but ignoring the cold forecast. I ended up layering on sweaters to counter the 46-degree weather and harsh winds. While I still had fun, it would've been more pleasant on a sunny 70-degree day. I recommend you look ahead to select a moderate day or have some flexibility to shift between a couple of days or times. It's likely to be warmest during the afternoon, so take that into consideration, as it will affect your picnic differently depending on the time of the year. In the summer, a sunrise or sunset picnic can make for a beautiful atmosphere and offer cooler temperatures than you would find around lunch time.

### What did I learn?

You don't have to spend a lot of money or time to create a fun picnic. There's a good chance it will not go as planned; the weather may not cooperate, your food display may not be Instagram-worthy, your cute outfit may be buried beneath multiple sweaters. My advice is to go with the flow. If you are willing to accept minor setbacks and changes to your initial plan, you'll surely enjoy a great meal with the people you love.



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