

PICNIC PERFECT

Have you had a picnic this summer? I've had at least a dozen! I must confess, I love picnicking, and summer is the best time for it, at least in Victoria that is.

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Is there a better way to spend a warm days' afternoon than indulging in some delicious foods in a casual and relaxing atmosphere, while soaking in the sunshine? I'd say a summer's day picnic is pretty hard to beat. And hey, for the lucky ones reading this from the comfort of their caravan while travelling around the country, every meal is a picnic, as long as you're eating outside!

For me, a picnic never goes without wine (I guess this goes without saying, though). With that comes the task of choosing the right one for the occasion. Most picnics tend to be a spread of different foods, so it's important the wine you choose is quite versatile and goes with a lot of things. You also don't want to go with something super unique or different – instead choose from the 'crowd pleaser' range.

But before you pack your bag full of food goodies, match your perfect bottle of wine and venture out for your perfect picnic – one piece of advice, though, check the drinking in public regulations for the area you're planning to visit. Most parks and reserves, as well as beaches, allow alcohol consumption of BYO beverages in a picnic setting, but it is worthwhile to look up the council website beforehand to avoid hefty fines. Now that the formalities are dealt with, let's delve into some picnic ideas in a bit more detail.



ABOVE The right wine will take your picnic to the next level

BEACH PICNIC

The beach is one of the most popular choices for a day's outing in summer, and once you're there no one wants to leave at the first feeling of growling tummies, so it is quite sensible to pack food. To make a beach picnic special is not hard. After all, you already have the main component – the atmosphere. The key here is not to ruin it.

In a beach environment it's important to choose things that are simple to eat, so no fancy cheese platters, unless you enjoy the extra crunch of sand with your soft melted double brie. I tend to go for stuff you can grab with your hands and easily wash off with water if sandy wind does get to it. Fruit platters are ideal and being next to the ocean often leads me to eating foods that come from it, like prawns, calamari rings or oysters, all which fit perfectly within the realms of finger foods.

Staying on the side of simplicity, the same principle applies when choosing the right wine for the occasion. There's nothing better

than a crisp chilled white, so I tend to go for a Sauvignon Blanc or a Pinot Grigio, or perhaps a light sparkling rose. One thing that's becoming quite popular lately, and I love the idea for a beach picnic, is canned wine. Firstly, it comes in a well-protected from sand drinking vessel – the can – so no need to pour into plastic cups in the wind as we all know how this ends. Secondly, it's much easier to dose than a bottle for those of us responsible for driving.

IDYLIC NATURE SETTING

Planning an escape to nature? Perhaps a nice lunch somewhere in the mountains or by a waterfall? This is where you can get craftier.

Without the sand and wind, you can opt out for foods that can be nicely plated up in a relaxed and calm atmosphere. This is where I bring out that fancy cheese platter, pickled olives and cured meats. You can make this into anything you like, just give yourself enough time to set it up and make it pretty – after all we get as much enjoyment from looking at

pretty foods as we do from eating it.

Getting to those idyllic nature settings often requires extra time and effort, so when it comes to wine, this is where I go for things that don't need to be ice-cold, but rather slightly chilled. Chardonnays or Viogniers are a good option for whites, or I'd go for a Pinot Noir for a light red.

WINERY

With the world embracing outdoor dining now more than ever, many wineries have started offering picnic options to their visitors. This is probably my favourite style of picnic. Firstly, it's at a winery, which is quite high on the list of my favourite places to be. Secondly, it requires close to no organisation or pre-planning. The venue should provide the setup, picnic blanket, cushions, food boards and cutlery. You just need to rock up. This makes it a good option if you have a larger group of friends and don't feel like dealing with messy logistics and extensive lists of who brings what.

Finally, there's an endless supply of great variety of food and wine, available to order at any given time. This is where the choice of wine is really up to every individual and doing a quick tasting before sitting down, you can be sure that everyone will end up with a glass of something they enjoy.

PUBLIC PARK

If you do enjoy the planning and prepping process, though don't feel like venturing out too far, a nice city park could be a good option. This is also where going all out is going to be the easiest, as most parks and reserves will have picnic tables installed, along with BBQs to cook on, so bringing and cooking fancy foods is more manageable. Also, a lot of parks will be close to civilization, so you could always get a take-out nearby and fill up on food and drink supplies as you go on. Choosing wine in this setting really does depend on what you feel like and you are the least restricted here, as there's always an option to change. 🍷

UP TO TASTE!

2020 SERAFINO BELLISSIMO PINOT GRIGIO – \$25

This wine is crisp and refreshing, making it a perfect candidate for a beach outing. It's floral aromas, with hints of tropical fruit, like honeydew melon, scream summer and the palate, full of stone fruits like peaches, apricots and mango, put it right into the category of crowd pleasers with its not too dry, not too sweet taste.

2019 IOX PINOT NOIR – \$34

This wine is heaven for those that love different smells! It has everything: seductive fruit setting up the scene with strawberry and red cherry aromas; spiciness and herbaceous keeps the interest going, until it finishes with a hint of vanilla and forest floor. On the palate this wine is equally as exciting, starting with blackcurrant intrigue, progressing into dried juniper berries, finally finishing with long and silky tannins.

HELEN AND JOEY FRESH FRUITY FLORAL FIZZY ROSE – \$185 (SLAB OF 24 CANS)

The seductive salmon pink colour of this wine almost makes it a shame to drink from a can, but convenience prevails. Made from merlot grapes, the palate is very fruity with notes of mango, pineapple, strawberry and paw paw. It is quite light in alcohol and the gentle fizz makes this wine ultra-refreshing and full of life.

MAXWELL SPARKLING MEAD – \$20 (4 CANS)

Technically not a wine but produced by one of my favourite wineries in McLaren Vale, this is a beverage I've really been enjoying this summer. It's light, sweet and refreshing. Made by fermenting honey, this creation is deliciously contemporary with its thirst quenching fizziness, hints of ginger spice and orange peel.