

HOST A PERFECT

POTLUCK OR PICNIC

IDEAS FOR YOUR NEXT OUTDOOR GATHERING

Facts Up Front

helps busy shoppers by summarizing important nutrition information in a clear, simple and easy-to-use format on the front of food and beverage packages. In this voluntary labeling program, the facts are straight from the FDA-regulated Nutrition Facts panel on the side or back of food packages.

When the weather is warm, potlucks, cookouts and picnics abound. Even the most casual meal with family and friends is improved by a little pre-planning, so consider this your guide to flawless outdoor entertaining.

1 Remember: everyone loves apps.

Cut-up veggies with dip make a great (and easy!) appetizer that can be prepped ahead of time and set out while you're laying the table. Serve with whole-grain tortilla chips and guacamole.

Tip: For a boost of fiber, munch on veggies with hummus. You can have a full cup of sugar snap peas with 2 tablespoons of hummus for just a little more than 100 calories and about 3 grams of fat.

2 Thumbs up for hand-held foods.

Skip messy foods and pick those that are easy to eat standing or sitting. Sandwiches feel like party food when they're cut into small diamonds and served on a platter, and grilled vegetable kebabs don't even require a plate. Chop vegetables and meats into smaller pieces that work with plastic utensils—and remember that soupy foods might soak through paper plates (or spill onto someone's lap).

Tip: Serve burgers and hot dogs on whole-wheat buns for a little extra fiber.



3 Consider a grains-based salad.

Crisp green salads are a natural choice for summer eating—but a grains-based salad travels better and holds up to the heat longer. Add vegetables, nuts and cheese to your favorite whole grain (such as quinoa, wheat berries or bulgur) and toss with a robust dressing.

Tip: Get an extra boost of vitamin C by choosing coleslaw on the side.

4 Make dessert the night before.

Sorbets and ice creams are refreshing, but can be high-maintenance if everyone isn't eating at the same time. Plan ahead and bake cookies the night before, giving you less day-of prep. Seasonal fruit with a dusting of powdered sugar also makes a great summer dessert.

Tip: If dessert is your favorite part of a potluck, save room for the cherry pie but go for lighter options elsewhere.



5 Don't forget the drinks.

Guests love to bring appetizers and desserts to a potluck, but don't overlook the drinks. Make a pitcher of homemade iced tea feel festive with citrus slices or slivers of fresh mint.

Tip: Get a nonalcoholic fruit fix with a glass of zero-calorie seltzer. Add fresh berries, mint leaves or a spritz of citrus to give it a fresh, summery taste.