




with food that's easy to eat without elaborate cutlery or refrigeration. Food is laid out while balls might be tossed around, swimmers might be splashing, and conversations might get animated. For me, food that's easy is the operative desire. I certainly don't want to stress out if my guests aren't rushing to the table to eat food "while it's hot."

On the other hand, the food I serve at a picnic still has to be delicious and tastefully, or even beautifully, presented. Right now, there are gorgeous vegetables at farmers markets and at our local grocery stores. Take advantage of that bounty. You can't do better than fresh vegetables nestled in creamy hummus. Since hummus is made without mayonnaise or other ingredients that need refrigeration, it can hold court on a picnic table all afternoon or evening. The raw vegetables stay firm, crunchy and might I say, enticing. The dukkah, an Egyptian nut and spice mix, is entirely optional. It's great to have a jar on hand to sprinkle over dips, vegetables, or olive oil dipped crusty bread. But this is summer, and the livin' is easy. Get outdoors. Work up a big appetite, then dive into this display of Mother Nature's finest gifts. 

Kathy Harrison offers this serving suggestion for her recipes. Hummus is sprinkled on top with dukkah and fresh vegetables for dipping.

All Day Al Fresco

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NATURE'S SUMMER BOUNTY

I CAN'T CLAIM expertise on too many subjects, but I do know with certainty, that when the temperature reaches even a few degrees over what I would call chilly, the outdoors beckons with an almost hypnotic magnetic force. The air becomes pungent with the aroma of smoke from countless backyard grills coming out of hibernation. Getting outdoor seating at restaurants becomes a fierce competition.

I turned to Wikipedia, primarily to get the history of picnics. What I learned instead is...those authors have never visited Barrington.

Picnic: "A meal taken outdoors as part of an excursion." An excursion? We don't have to rev up our engines. We can open our doors to an expanse or even a patch of grass. We can walk to the park or forest preserve. We can drag some card chairs out on our balconies or decks.

Picnic: "It is different from other meals because it requires free time to leave home." (Wrong again. See above.) We can...but we don't have to leave home. Home cooking and home picnics sound pretty good to me.

In my mind, a picnic is a meal eaten outdoors



Dukkah is a traditional Egyptian condiment that is a blend of nuts, seeds, and warm spices. Serve as a dip with olive oil and your favorite crusty bread. Dukkah makes a flavorful coating for meat, chicken, or fish. Or use as a finish for dips, soup, salad, or toss onto roasted cauliflower.

Beautifully Smooth Hummus

INGREDIENTS:

2 garlic cloves, minced and mashed to a paste with 1/2 teaspoon salt
16- to 19-ounce can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
1/3 cup well-stirred *tahini* (sesame seed paste)
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 teaspoon ground cumin
3 tablespoons water
3 tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves

INSTRUCTIONS

In a food processor blend together garlic paste, chickpeas, *tahini*, lemon juice, oil, and cumin, scraping down the sides, until smooth. Add water, parsley, salt, and pepper to taste and pulse until just combined. Then process until smooth and creamy. Hummus may be made two days ahead and chilled. Makes about 2 cups.

To serve: Mound hummus about 1-inch thick on a platter. Sprinkle with dukkah, if desired. Stand assorted fresh vegetables in the hummus and serve.

Egyptian Dukkah

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup hazelnuts
3 tablespoons almonds
3 tablespoons white sesame seeds
3 tablespoons shelled pistachios
1 tablespoon fennel seeds
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste
Kosher salt

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place the hazelnuts and almonds in a dry cast iron or heavy skillet. Toast over medium-high heat, stirring often, until the nuts are golden brown. Transfer to a dish and set aside.
2. Place the sesame seeds in the same skillet and toast over medium heat until the seeds turn golden. Turn the seeds and the reserved nuts into the bowl of a small food processor. Add the pistachios, fennel seeds, cumin, coriander, and a generous pinch of kosher salt. Pulse until coarsely ground. Transfer to a jar with a lid. The dukkah can be stored at room temperature for two weeks. Makes one cup.



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