

## [En Plein Air: Picnicking like semi-pros](#)



Imagine the scene: two people are together-ish in a park, underneath the shade of a white elm tree, each wearing masks, standing on their own separate blankets, hovering cell phones over plastic trays of finger foods, taking aerial photos.

If you asked someone from the 1990s to identify what was happening in such a scene, you'd be hard pressed to get the response, "Two foodies are picnicking in the time of coronavirus," but that would be the correct answer. And that's exactly what my friend Melissa (@intherhode) and I were doing last week in Lippitt Park.

Until social distancing became mandatory and outdoor dining essential (even more so than normal for Rhode Islanders), picnicking was an underrated enterprise. Why bother packing your own supplies when you can drink and dine [al fresco](#) at one of our wonderful restaurants? But the demand is creeping higher than the supply, and while restaurants are doing a great job accommodating these requests (such as [Angelo's Civita Farnese](#) - "Angelo's on the Hill" - which is breaking their 96-year-old-mold with new outdoor dining), there is more than one way to maintain safe social distance while eating outdoors. That's what Melissa began doing as soon as restrictions let up, and she invited me along for the

experience.

We planned ahead by dividing food responsibilities, with all of the difficult work going to Melissa. My job was to bring **Yoleni's** flavored yogurt, which I constantly rave about but which she had never tried, and "snackybread," which was an unintentional autocorrect on her part that resulted in me purchasing a loaf of **Seven Stars'** Country Round Bread. I considered it a great accomplishment that I remembered to bring both bowls and spoons, *and* a bread knife. My year as a Girl Scout really paid off.

Melissa arrived in style, with a terry cloth blanket that folds into itself, creating its own duffle bag, and an insulated tote from Gotham Greens for the food. (In contrast, I brought an airline blanket and a paper bag from Whole Foods.)

We kept a safe distance once situated on our respective blankets, and of course, after the photo taking had commenced. Melissa had read about the "[Quarantini](#)," a recipe shared with *Motif* by **Little Bitte Artisanal Cocktails**, and she began making these drinks weekly. She brought them in mason jars alongside a Ziploc bag filled with garnishes. They were the perfect picnic cocktail: refreshing, with just enough zest and honey to sweeten.

The "main course" consisted of prosciutto, melon and mozzarella skewers. Along with the homemade bread and lemon yogurt, it felt like a well-rounded meal — satisfying without being heavy, touching on all of the important food groups (we replaced vegetables with vodka).

To end, Melissa made us each our own lemon cake jar, with a homemade lemon curd and lightly sweetened whipped cream. Cake jars are fabulous dessert wonders, ready-made cake and icing layered in a jar, and they make excellent picnicking desserts; all you need is a spoon.

If you're feeling inspired to create your own picnic basket, please shop locally for supplies. Here are a few places to get you started.

**Farmers Markets.** For a list of farmers markets near you, visit [Farm Fresh Rhode Island](#). As a Providence resident, you'll be happy to know that [Hope Street Farmers Market](#) is back in Lippitt Park! They update [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) weekly with vendor lists and opportunities to order ahead of time.

[Stock Culinary Goods](#) is as fabulous as ever and offers everything from locally made cutting boards by [Andiamo Woodworking](#) to savory Carrot Apple Jam from the [African Alliance of Rhode Island](#). And, to

prevent yourself from bringing a paper bag to a picnic, you can find high quality picnic baskets there as well.

[Yoleni's](#) offers Mediterranean fare: cheeses, olives, honey, dried nuts and fruit, yogurt (this comes with a Jenny guarantee of "best yogurt of your life"), as well as fresh produce. You can also grab a gyro and a salad to go.

[The Pantry at Avenue N](#) has fresh fruits and vegetables, top notch sandwiches and pantry items from across the state (from [Virginia & Spanish Peanut Company](#) nut butters to [Poblano Farm](#) salsas). They even stock cans of [Borealis](#) Nitro Cold Brew!

However, if putting a picnic together yourself seems too taxing (believe me, I feel you), order food to go from your favorite local restaurant, which has likely adapted to the COVID reality of take out. Or if you'd like to try something new, here are a few that struck me as exciting:



Bucktown's Buckets & Bubbles

[Bucktown](#): Try one of their "Buckets & Bubbles" combos, with a bucket of fried chicken and a chilled bubbly to go.



Chez Pascal's Picnic Box

[Chez Pascal](#) (before July 3): Try their "Picnic Box" with all the cheese and charcuterie you need for two people.



The Malted Barley's Crowler

[Malted Barley](#): Grab a pretzel sandwich and a 32-oz aluminum Crowler of craft beer, or a cocktail served in a giant Capri-Sun-like pouch.



Cake pops from Bake Eat Love Bakery; photo credit: Sweet Finish Photograph

[Bake Eat Love Bakery](#): For dessert on the go, order cake pops! Or if you want my favorite classic cake jar, try [Whisk Me Away](#) or [Cakes by Eboni](#).