

# Meat-Free, Gluten-Free and Local!: These recipes take picnics to the next level

Picnics suck. I hate them. I'd rather eat a pretty plate of food at home, standing over a garbage can like a normal person. But I enjoy riding bikes with my friends and we inevitably pack a lunch and then eat it outside which is, I guess, a picnic.

Some of my favorite recipes to take on the road taste great freshly made or packed and rattling around a backpack all day. While fried chicken is always a classic and a good sammich will get the job done, these gluten-free treats are meat-free as well.



*Not Meatballs*

**Not Meatballs** are made with crimini and shiitake mushrooms from **RI Oyster Co.** I use about eight ounces of mushrooms and 15 ounces of white beans.

In a food-processor combine mushrooms, white beans, one celery stalk, one red onion, fresh thyme and one egg until smooth. Add gluten-free panko from **Aleia's** in Connecticut until the texture is meatball-

like. Using a two-ounce ice cream scoop, place balls close together on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake for about 25 minutes at 400 degrees Fahrenheit, and serve with roasted poblano and tomatillo salsa (recipe below).

To make the **roasted poblano and tomatillo salsa**, char the poblano peppers in the broiler or over an open flame. Once all sides are blistered and black, place them into a paper bag and close it up. After they become cool enough to handle, remove the charred skins from the peppers. Cut open the peppers, remove the stems and seeds.

Husk and quarter a pound of tomatillos. Combine them in a food processor with the poblanos, one red onion, several garlic and juice from two lemons.

Simmer the mixture over medium heat with a handful of thyme sprigs until the mixture thickens to a salsa-like consistency. Remove the thyme and transfer back to food processor with a few green onions, one bunch of cilantro and a handful of parsley. Pulse to combine, and cool.



*Not Sushi*

**Not Sushi** is a chickpea-based wrap with wasabi and seaweed flavors reminiscent of sushi, but completely vegan and stable enough to pack in a gluten-free wrap with lettuce from **Gotham Greens**.

In a food processor, pulse wasabi peas and set them aside; then combine the juice of two lemons, a splash of apple cider vinegar, two tablespoons of tamari soy sauce, sesame oil, salt, dried chili pepper to taste, one inch fresh ginger root, two cloves of garlic, seaweed to taste, one bunch of cilantro and 30 ounces garbanzo beans. Process until mostly smooth then add one sliced red bell pepper and enough wasabi peas to get the consistency you want. Process until combined and red bell pepper is appropriately small.



*Not Hummus*

The Not Hummus is stuffed full of parsley and lemon and is a refreshing accompaniment to crackers and snacking vegetables like raw beet slices from **Deep Roots Farm**.

In a food-processor combine lemon juice, olive oil, white vinegar, garlic, salt, parsley and chopped cauliflower until dip-like. The quantities for this recipe are difficult to define, but I start by chopping the cauliflower and then adding at least one, sometimes two, bunches of parsley. I've used up to four lemons and about a tablespoon of white vinegar if the lemons aren't acidic enough and three cloves of garlic should do it. Be prepared to add olive oil to the food-processor until the texture becomes smooth, and add salt to taste.

With all of these recipes in mind, maybe picnics aren't so bad after all. Let's trade snacks if we meet on the bike path.