



A GREEN PICNIC

BY SERENA BARTLETT
AND CHERYL KOEHLER

Back in the 1950s, when this magazine's publisher was a kid, her family had a big green woven-wicker picnic basket. Whenever it got hauled out for a summer's outing, it carried a festive set of reusable plastic plates and cups, some mismatched cloth napkins, the official family picnic blanket, and several of those clever new Tupperware containers, which were packed with homemade salads and sandwiches. The thermos jugs, since replaced by more-efficient versions, were filled with homemade iced tea. A well-loved pie tin holding Mom's sour cherry pie, with its flaky homemade crust, was packed for dessert. At the end of the picnic, everything went back inside the basket. The leftovers needed no repackaging and the dishes would be washed for reuse.

These days, all of us overly busy people are more inclined to buy ready-to-eat food for our picnics, most of which is packaged in convenient single-use containers. But hiking past trashcans brimming with disposables on our walks at the regional parks, we might stop to wonder if all that trash is necessary. Our memories can tell us it's not—we've just forgotten how to plan. Here are a few ways to envision a splendid sustainable East Bay picnic.

PICNIC GREENWARE

The first tenet of sustainable waste management is *reuse*, so check the garage, basement, attic, and closet for that old picnic basket. If you come up empty-handed, you'll find that a growing number of local shops are selling bags and baskets crafted locally, sustainably, and/or by Fair Trade companies. The Urban Green (on Solano Avenue in Berkeley) carries a line of attractive containers and baskets made from recycled chopsticks, as well as sturdy bags made from recycled packaging. You'll also find a pretty silver tray and napkin rings, fashioned from chewing gum wrappers, which hold some reusable cloth napkins—yes, cloth napkins, like you might enjoy using at your dinner table. While you're shopping, you can taste the wild-crafted Douglas fir tips tea from Juniper Ridge. It will make a great iced tea to go in your thermos.

More cute bags from recycled materials can be found at Entrez! Open-House (on Telegraph Avenue in Oakland). Look for the tote bags that local designer Jennie Hurth makes out of ban-

ners from advertising projects and past events. The shop also sells Fair Trade goods from Gecko Traders, who cleverly reuse Vietnamese rice bags to create their various receptacles of many sizes and shapes—each one unique.

Most of us have a drawer full of reusable plastic containers, but with growing concern over toxins leaching from plastics, the new To-Go Ware 2-Tier Stainless Steel Food Carrier might be a nice investment. Look for the food carrier and the To-Go Ware Utensil Set (a beautiful, lightweight set of reusable utensils made from organic, sustainably grown bamboo) at Biofuel Oasis, Café Gratitude, Elephant Pharmacy, and the Ecology Center, all in Berkeley, as well as Kate's Caring Gifts in Fremont and Patricia's Pantry in Alameda.

If you can't handle the idea of washing utensils, look for Spudware—compostable forks, knives, and spoons made from potato starch. Buy them at Berkeley Natural Grocery Co., El Cerrito Natural Grocery Co., or online at Green Home (see Details).

Picnic greenware from The Urban Green (above) and Kate's Caring Gifts (below).



DETAILS

ALAMEDA MARKETPLACE
1650 Park St., Alameda
(Farmstead Cheeses & Wines (510) 864-9463
and Patricia's Pantry, (510) 769-5424)

BERKELEY NATURAL GROCERY CO.
1336 Gilman St., Berkeley
(510) 526-2456

BIOFUEL OASIS
2465 4th St., Berkeley
(510) 665-5509

CAFÉ GRATITUDE
1730 Shattuck, Berkeley
(415) 824-4652

THE CHEESE TASTER DELICATESSEN
43367 Mission Blvd. Fremont
(510) 656-5480

THE ECOLOGY CENTER
2530 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley
(510) 548-3402

EL CERRITO NATURAL GROCERY CO.
10367 San Pablo Ave., El Cerrito
(510) 526-1155

ELEPHANT PHARMACY
1607 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley
(510) 549-9200

ENTREZ! OPEN-HOUSE
1645 Telegraph Ave., Oakland
(510) 268-9101

GREEN HOME
www.greenhome.com

KATE'S CARING GIFTS
45953 Warm Springs Blvd., Unit 2, Fremont
www.katescaringgifts.com

NATURE'S BOUNTY TO YOU
211 G St., Antioch
(925) 777-0600

RATTO'S DELI
& INTERNATIONAL MARKET
821 Washington St., Oakland
(510) 832-6503

THE URBAN GREEN
1880 Solano Ave., Berkeley
(510) 525-2500

#1

GREEN PICNIC OLD OAKLAND OUTING

If you've never been to Ratto's Deli, on Washington St. in Old Oakland, it's time to visit. It's a great place to put together a Mediterranean-style picnic with locally baked Italian-style bread, cheese (a hard cheese, like sheep's milk Petite Basque, holds up well on a hot afternoon), some Ratto's blend olives, and perhaps

a grilled sun-dried tomato spread. For dessert, try some Turkish delight, a rosewater-flavored chew stashed with cashews and pistachios.

From Ratto's you're poised to discover one of Oakland's newest regional parks. Middle Harbor Shoreline Park is located due west of the deli at the west end of 7th Street in the midst of the Port of Oakland's Trojan horses—the gargantuan loading equipment. The park is beautifully laid out with greenery, open or shaded picnic areas, and a deck where you can chase geese or admire waterside views of San Francisco and the Bay Bridge.



#2

GREEN PICNIC AN ALAMEDA IDYLL

Alameda Marketplace has every food and beverage item your picnic might require, along with the convenience of Patricia's Pantry for your greenware needs. If the picnic spot you've chosen is one that permits alcoholic beverages, you might grab a bottle of biodynamic wine from Farmstead Cheeses & Wines. But even if you have to forgo the wine, Jeff Diamond and his expert staff will help you select from among the many fine cheeses they carry.

The island of Alameda offers many waterside picnic spots, but one of the nicest is Crab Cove at Crown Memorial State Beach (1252 McKay Avenue). The park has an interesting history as a resort and, later, a training base for Merchant Marine commanders. At the discovery center, rangers (and junior rangers!) are happy to explain the ecosystem surrounding your picnic site. Waterside views of San Francisco and the Bay are a nice backdrop to whatever you find in your basket.





Mission San Jose in Fremont

#3

GREEN PICNIC FORAYS IN FREMONT

Pick up your To-Go Ware at Kate's (see Details), then head to the Cheese Taster Delicatessen, in Fremont's Mission District at 43367 Mission Blvd. This is a real honest-to-goodness deli with a wide selection of high-quality cheeses and local (Molinari)

salamis. Order your handmade sandwich with 'the works' and you'll find you're getting a healthy helping of lettuce and bean sprouts. The Cheese Taster is a small, family-owned business that's been at its location catty-corner from Mission San Jose for 33 years, and there could not be a better picnic spot than the garden in front of the mission's old adobe walls. More ambitious visitors will head for the Mission Peak Trail, which starts at nearby Ohlone College, and those who want to explore yet another quaint historic district (one with loads of antique shops) can head northwest on Mission Boulevard to Niles. There you'll find Quarry Lakes, a large regional recreation area with plentiful picnic spots among the little lakes.



Classic deli sandwich from The Cheese Taster



#4

GREEN PICNIC ANTIOCH AMBLE

If you've never visited Antioch's historic district, you're in for a treat, especially now that you can pick up sandwiches, salads, and smoothies made from local, seasonal produce at Nature's Bounty to You, located at 211 G Street.

At the end of the street is the San Joaquin River. If you wander a block west to F Street, you'll find a shady city park that's a good spot for a picnic. You'll also be right at the site of Antioch's first settlement. From 1850 until 1880, the river was the settlers' only means of transportation and communication with the outside world.

The river is still important to the folks who fish from the Antioch Pier, located about four miles east, under the Highway 160 bridge to Sherman Island. Here at the Antioch/Oakley Regional Shoreline, they also have barbecue grills and picnic tables, so you can cook and serve up your catch as fresh as it gets—provided you get lucky with your fishing line..

