

Pack Your Picnic

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Summer meals are best taken on the wing, or at least, out of the house. Sure, you can grab Italian mix subs, but Sovrana is only sometimes on the way to your destination. I love Sovrana because a sandwich is only as good as its ingredients, and many of theirs come straight from their garden. Check out their peppers and pickles, their sausages. This stuff is homemade, my oh my, homemade. Follow their lead and make the good stuff if you can, or buy it, OK?

I try to keep the fridge stocked with food that's ready to roll so when an outdoor eating opportunity arises, I'm prepared. Here's a list of what you might want to keep on hand.



Onions and peppers pickle nicely, either quickly with a sugar and vinegar soak or canned from last season. I like the way the bread sponges up the moisture of the vinegar and whatever spices you add to your sweet and hot peppers. Byron's twist on this is to make big batches of grilled peppers and onions. A fine idea for households that don't have to go to committee to decide whether the rusted-out grill needs replacement.

Mustard is super simple to make. Ground dried mustard seeds in gradations of powder and crumbs get mixed with vinegar, or alcohol, maybe some sweetener, and herbs and spices. The From Scratch Club has some great mustard recipes online, but it does take a little while to cure, so get your act in gear for sandwich season.

Get some good cheeses, whatever suits your budget and fancy. Around here we like Cabot's Seriously Sharp Cheddar, a sturdy taste that works on its own and plays well with plenty of other ingredients. But we also go for much less pedestrian stuff when the occasion strikes. Gustav and his helpers at Honest Weight's cheese dock can steer you right.

Make or buy good bread. If you aren't already a devotee, read up on either *No-Knead* or *Artisan Bread in Five Minutes a Day* methods, and get busy. A multigrain no-knead recipe published on Culinate.com is the root of all our fiddling. And when we're too busy to bake or it gets too hot to use the oven, go to your favorite baker. Mine is the Placid Baker in Troy. The king of all their loaves? The Swedish Rye. The Swedish Rye!

Keep your yard or crisper full of greens, and your mouth full of chlorophyll—an essential layer in any sandwich. One summer in Rome I ate brie and rocket—another name for arugula—sandwiches from a place with a wood-fired oven every single day for a month. I could not bring myself to try anything else. Sometimes, I'd have one at 11 and one at 4. Every arugula and cheese sandwich I make now competes with, but never meets, that benchmark.

Cold cuts. Buy some cold cuts. We go for sandwich pepperoni and salami. You might like other things, though I'm not sure why.

Potato chips and dill pickles will make you feel like you really know how to eat. Might not be the healthiest choice, but it is very satisfying. You could swap a sliced and salted egg turnip for the chips. Even if you don't swap, you should get

thee to a farmers market and start putting these little globes in your life. I used to have to buy two bunches if I wanted to eat any once we got home, my kids loved them so much.

Do you like potato salad? Tweak your recipes till you're happy. My sister now has the responsibility of making her mother-in-law's version, which thrived because of a jar of olives, and the juice that jar contains. You like hard-boiled eggs? More power to ya. Boil them up and add 'em. But don't invite me.

I make grain salads. I cook rice, or wheat berries, and these days freekah, which is a green roasted spelt, and mix that with some kind of pesto. Straight up basil and garlic style is great, but I have loads of dill and parsley in my yard, so I use those, with some kind of nut or seed. If you have some of the aforementioned egg turnips, dice them up and add them too.

Perfect your coleslaw. I like nothing more than a good coleslaw, which sits best on a bun with some cheese. Coleslaw sandwich, yes! Here's the general formula I follow, based on a Moosewood recipe for Spicy Asian Slaw. Remember, this is a formula, so vary it widely. I often substitute carrots, apples, turnips and beets for some, or sometimes all, of the cabbage.

Formula for Coleslaw

1 head cabbage, about 2 pounds shredded, or about 12 cups

1 cup raisins

1/2 cup sunflower seeds

1/2 cup pumpkin seeds

1 tablespoon chopped ginger

1/4-1/2 teaspoons Sambal Oolek or other hot sauce

2 tablespoons soy sauce

1/2 cup olive oil

1/3 cup cider vinegar

1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil

Whisk together the dressing ingredients and pour them over the combined vegetables, raisins and seeds. Don't be intimidated by the amount; coleslaw improves over the week it rests in the fridge, ready for your impulsive suppers.