



Pack A Picnic Basket And Explore Sonoma County

The rain has finally let up and the sun is shining on Sonoma County again! Its time to take a short day trip with a picnic and explore our backyard! Here is just a short list from the hundreds of parks, beaches and trails throughout Sonoma County perfect for a picnic. We live in one of the most beautiful places in the world, lets enjoy it!

Spring Lake Regional Park is located at the eastern edge of Santa Rosa right in between Howarth Park and Annadel State Park. Spring Lake is 320 acres with miles of trails, some leading into Howarth Park and Annadel, for walking, biking and horseback riding. A 3 acre swimming lagoon and a 72 acre lake provide for all kinds of water fun. There are many benches along the trails and many picnic areas with tables. Before or after your picnic be sure to visit the Environmental Discovery Center for some fun and discovery suitable for all ages.

Shiloh Ranch Regional Park in Windsor covers over 850 acres including a natural woodland area and over 3 miles of trails for walking, biking, and horseback riding. There are picnic areas including an area with tables under a gazebo, however, if you make your way to the top of Shiloh Ridge you can picnic by the pond with great views.

Armstrong Woods State Park in Guerneville is home to the oldest and tallest living things on earth. The Parsons Tree stands at about 310 feet and the Colonel Armstrong Tree is more than 1400 years old!! Armstrong Woods will instantly calm your mind and body. The towering redwoods are breathtaking. Take a stroll to the amphitheater where you will find yourself amidst droves of beautiful butterflies, a perfect place to rest your feet and have a picnic. There is also a designated picnic area.

Sonoma Coast State Beach encompasses the many beaches along Highway 1 in Sonoma County. Many have turnouts and small parking areas, some beaches are footsteps from the highway and others require some rock climbing ability to get to. If you're in the mood for a nice hike take the Sonoma Coast Trail, a bluff top trail that is covered in wildflowers and connects to some secret beaches. Goat Rock State Beach located just south of Jenner is the perfect place to sit at a picnic table and watch the harbor seals. If it is a beach blanket picnic you are in the mood for, but not so much the sand, stop at Schoolhouse State Beach.

State Parks and Beaches are generally open sunrise to sunset and parking is usually \$6 in the lots. Always remember that what you take in you take out, not all places will have facilities or trash collection. For more information on Sonoma County's Parks, Beaches, and Trails go to Sonoma-county.org.

So many more places to enjoy a picnic in Sonoma County...

Most wineries have nice picnic areas. Some favorites are Gundlach-Bundschu Winery, Cline Cellars, Bartholomew Park Winery. There are just too many to list so to help you decide go to Sonomauncorked.com.

These summer events are sure to please especially since you can bring a blanket, low chair, and of course, your picnic!!

- ~Sunday Concert Series: Live at Julliard Park, Sundays, July 10 thru August 14
- ~Kids Outdoor Movies on the Green in Windsor, Tuesdays 15 minutes after sunset
- ~2nd annual St Francis Summer Film Festival, Thursdays July 14 thru August 18
The evening starts off with live music on the lawn at the Sonoma Visitors Center
- ~Landmark Saturday Concert Series, Saturdays 1:00 to 4:00pm

July 7th thru August 27th enjoy music, a game of Bocce, and more.

Admission is free so you can splurge on your picnic basket goodies! For more information on these and other events around the county go to Sonoma.com.

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Can't decide what to put in your picnic basket? You can go gourmet from the local deli, which is a must on occasion, but why not go gourmet from home this time! Read on for some simple recipes to prepare the night before your picnic. As with any recipe substitutions always make great personalized dishes!!

♦ *The Best Chicken Salad, serves about 4*

1 whole chicken breast, roasted with olive oil, salt and pepper. Pull meat from the bone and remove skin then shred or dice.
1/2 cup pecans and 1/2 cup cashews (or your favorite nuts), toasted
Mix together 1/2 cup mayonnaise, 1 1/2 teaspoons salt, 1/2 teaspoon pepper, 1/2 teaspoon minced garlic, then add two teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon leaves, one teaspoon fresh dill, and 1/8 teaspoon fresh nutmeg. Mix together chicken and dressing mixture and store in a covered container in the refrigerator. In the morning add nuts and 1 cup halved green grapes. Bring along your favorite roll or loaf and lettuce leaves to serve on.

♦ *Fruity Yogurt Dessert, serves about 4*

2 cups plain yogurt mixed with 2 tablespoons honey and 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon fold in 1 cup fresh berries or diced peaches, store in a covered container and place in freezer. In the morning take out and place in the bottom of your basket, by lunchtime it will be a cold tasty treat. Top with crunchy granola or dark chocolate.

So the next time your at home on the weekend or decide to take the popular "Staycation" remember all you have to do is pack a picnic and head out the door. Sonoma County is waiting to be explored by you and your family.

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Other Stuff To Do Around Town:

Just about every town has a farmers market full of local fruits and vegetables, fish and meats, baked goods, and so much more. They are also a fun place to hang out, eat, and enjoy some local artists.

75th Anniversary Diamond Jubilee at the Sonoma County Fair
This year the fair celebrates its 75th Anniversary and is running for 17 days! It will be a look back at the Fair's past.
June 27th through August 14th, the fair will be closed Mondays.

Wings Over Wine Country Air Show, August 20 and 21
See restored planes with history to today's machines. The air show begins at 11am.

Sonoma County is rich with art and history, visit a museum or take a guided tour through someplace you may have been before. There are all kinds of music and art festivals and food and wine tastings throughout the region this summer and throughout the year.

Subscribe to *John's Blog* for his pick of things to do around town.