

Title:

Put Comfort on Your Picnic Menu

Word Count:

497

Summary:

Warm weather is the time for outdoor fun and good food to satisfy appetites sharpened by open-air activities. Whether you're planning a barbecue, patio party or picnic, potato salad is a classic comfort food that can take the edge off hunger pangs brought on by fresh air and exercise.

Keywords:

Put Comfort on Your Picnic Menu

Article Body:

Warm weather is the time for outdoor fun and good food to satisfy appetites sharpened by open-air activities. Whether you're planning a barbecue, patio party or picnic, potato salad is a classic comfort food that can take the edge off hunger pangs brought on by fresh air and exercise.

For toting to away-from-home locales -- perhaps a neighborhood park or an outlying band-shell or forest preserve -- a cold potato salad is best. Prepare the ingredients several hours or the night before, combine or layer them in a covered container and let the finished salad chill in the fridge until you're ready to roll. Transport the salad in your cooler with plenty of ice or commercial coolant. For backyard, deck or patio get-togethers, though, you can add a unique twist by serving your salad hot. Potato salad takes on a whole new personality when it's heated in the oven just before serving.

Hot or Cold Layered Potato Salad is just as hearty when served hot or cold and is simple to compose. Just layer a rainbow of fresh veggies with sunny hard-cooked eggs and pour on your choice of bottled salad dressing, even a reduced-fat variety, if you like. What could be more convenient?

Hot or Cold Layered Potato Salad

4 servings

4 hard-cooked eggs\*, sliced

4 medium red potatoes, cooked, peeled and thinly sliced

2 cups shredded carrots (about 8 oz.)

1 cup chopped zucchini (about 3 small)

1 cup chopped tomato (about 1 large)

1/3 cup bottled creamy salad dressing (any variety)

Parsley sprigs, optional

Reserve a few center egg slices for garnish. In 10 x 6 x 1 1/2-inch baking dish or casserole (ovenproof for heated version), evenly layer 1/3 of the potatoes, the carrots, another 1/3 of the potatoes, the zucchini, the remaining 1/3 of the potatoes, the unreserved egg slices and the tomatoes. Evenly drizzle with dressing.

To serve cold: cover and chill to blend flavors, several hours or overnight.

To serve hot: bake, covered, in preheated 350 degree F oven until heated through, about 20 minutes.

Garnish with reserved egg slices and parsley, if desired. For each serving, serve a portion of all layers.

\*To hard-cook, place eggs in single layer in saucepan. Add enough tap water to come at least 1 inch above eggs. Cover and quickly bring just to boiling. Turn off the heat. If necessary, remove pan from the burner to prevent further boiling. Let eggs stand, covered, in the hot water about 15 minutes for Large eggs. (12 minutes for Medium, 18 for Extra Large.) Immediately run cold water over eggs or put them in ice water until completely cooled.

To remove shell, crackle it by tapping gently all over. Roll egg between hands to loosen shell. Peel, starting at large end. Hold egg under running cold water or dip in bowl of water to help ease off shell.

Nutrition information per serving of 1/4 recipe using bottled creamy garlic salad dressing: 288 calories, 12 gm total fat, 226 mg cholesterol, 318 mg sodium, 836 mg potassium, 36 gm carbohydrate, 10 gm protein and 10% or more of

the RDI for vitamins A and C, niacin, riboflavin, thiamin, iron, phosphorus.