

# Tom's Aikens' perfect summer picnic



**Keep your picnic food simple and prepare it in advance**

WITH picnics, keep the food simple and light and choose things that will travel well. In June, there are a lot of things that are coming into season—lots of nice vegetables, such as peas, broad beans, asparagus and mangetout—so it's a very healthy time of year. Elderflower is also in season so you could make an elderflower cordial to serve with your picnic.

Try and make dishes that are happy to be served at room temperature and aren't going to suffer if they get slightly warm from being in the sun. A great deal of the work that goes into a picnic can be done in advance, so if there are any salads or cooked cold meats to be marinated, I always do them the night before.

Try not to be too clever or too fussy with picnics, as this is when mistakes happen—over-complicating good, simple dishes is a recipe for disaster! Try and make foods that can be eaten out of bowls or dishes as opposed to plates, as this is more practical.

In Tom Aikens at the moment, we're serving a delicious dish of very thinly sliced shavings of asparagus with a sharp lemon dressing, summer truffle and summer herbs. This has proved to be incredibly popular, as it's a very seasonal and light dish to eat.

Find out what's cooking at Tom's restaurants at [www.tomaikens.co.uk](http://www.tomaikens.co.uk)

## Food in season for June

English strawberries  
Cherries  
Mange tout  
Carrots  
Peas  
Early broad beans  
Courgettes (and flowers)  
Sea bream  
Gooseberries  
Sardines  
Green beans  
Globe artichoke  
Blackcurrants (end of June)  
Cauliflowers (end of June)  
English lettuce

Rocket  
The start of English tomatoes  
English cucumbers (end of June)  
Elderflower

## Peas

Peas are very versatile, so we use them for a lot of different dishes—as a *purée* and for hot and cold mousses, and in salads. One very simple dish to make is this: cook your peas in boiling salted water until slightly soft, and then refresh them in ice cold water and drain well. Crush them with a fork, season with salt and pepper, splash them with olive oil, and add freshly chopped oregano and fresh mint.

Crumble some goat's cheese into it and, with a fork, mix it all together.



## Potted devon crab

To serve 4

400g cooked Devon crabmeat  
200g butter melted  
2g Cayenne pepper  
1g lemon zest  
1g coarse sea salt  
1g ground mace  
¼tsp nutmeg  
30g lemon juice  
Milled pepper  
Melted butter for the top, can be clarified or just melted

### Method

Melt the butter, add it to the cayenne pepper, mace, nutmeg, lemon zest, and leave to one side. Put the crab onto kitchen paper to dry really well. To the crab, add the salt, milled pepper and lemon juice, mix well and leave to stand for 20 minutes. Fold the spiced butter into the crab mix, spoon it evenly into the ramekins and put in the fridge to set for at least an hour. Once they're set, seal each dish by pouring a thin layer of butter over each one. Refrigerate for at least six hours before serving. Serve with brown bread and a little green salad.

## Couscous

Zest of 1 orange and 1 lemon  
Pinch ground turmeric  
Pinch ground coriander  
Pinch ground cumin  
Pinch ground ginger  
15g diced dried apricot  
5g sultanas  
5g raisons  
200g couscous  
20g olive oil  
2g salt  
4g chopped coriander  
4g chopped mint  
Juice of 1 lemon  
250ml boiling water

### Method

Put all dry ingredients in a bowl, apart from the herbs, and add the boiling water. Cover with clingfilm and leave to stand for 15 minutes, then fluff up with a fork and add



the fresh herbs along with the juice of one lemon. Keep in a plastic container with a tight-fitting lid and add the herbs last so they stay green and fresh.

## Beetroot marinated salmon

To serve 4

500g fillet of cooked salmon  
225g beetroot, peeled and grated  
Zest of 1 orange and 1 lemon  
75g coarse sea salt  
50g caster sugar  
10g cracked pepper  
25g fresh dill, chopped roughly

### Method

Chop the orange and lemon zest together, add the chopped dill and mix with the grated beetroot. Blend the salt, sugar and pepper, and place half on a tray in the shape and size of the salmon fillet, sprinkle the beetroot mix over it and lay the salmon, skin side down, on the tray. Place the rest of the mixture on top and cover with a flat tray. Put a weight on it and leave for nine hours in the marinade. Remove from the marinade and lightly wash the fish in a bowl of cold water, then pat it dry with a clean cloth. Put it on a board and, carefully, thinly slice the salmon and arrange it on paper plates or put it in a plastic-covered container for later use. Serve with the roasted beetroot and the beetroot dressing.

### Roasted beetroot

600g medium-sized beetroots



2tbsp mini capers  
Fresh cracked black pepper

On the plate, drizzle the salmon with the red beetroot vinaigrette, and sprinkle with the mini capers, finely chopped shallots, and fresh cracked black pepper. If you like, you can also serve this with *crème fraîche*.

## Roast coronation chicken

To serve 4

### For the chicken

1 roast chicken—break it down, shred the dark meat into quite small pieces and slice the breast meat

30g finely chopped shallot  
3g fine-chopped red chilli  
3g of curry powder  
5g tomato paste  
100ml white wine  
1 bay leave  
100ml chicken stock  
45g apricot jam  
190ml mayonnaise  
40g *crème fraîche*  
30ml lemon juice  
2 drops of Tabasco  
1g chopped coriander  
1½ sliced spring onions  
5g salt  
½g pepper  
1 mango

### Method

Sweat off the shallots and chilli in a little butter with no colour for four minutes until they're soft, add the bay leaves, curry powder and tomato paste, and cook out for three minutes. Add the white wine, reduce it, then add the chicken stock and the jam. Reduce until syrupy—once reduced, take off the heat and then chill in the blast chiller, whisking in the rest of the ingredients, except the mango. Mix the shredded leg meat with some of the dressing and leave to marinate for at least two hours. Reserve the breast and arrange it on the top of the salad with some of the sauce to coat the sliced breast meat.

Peel the mango and cut it down the centre. Square the halves off, cut them into 0.5cm dice and then toss them in a little lime juice. This can then be folded into the shredded leg-meat mix.

50ml olive oil  
1tsp picked thyme  
Salt and pepper

### Method

Toss the beetroots in the olive oil, then season with salt and pepper. Wrap them in foil, place on a tray and bake in the oven for about 1½ to two hours until they're cooked through but not soft. Leave to cool, then peel off the skin and cut into small dice about 0.5cm square.

### Beetroot dressing

100g peeled and finely diced shallots  
50ml olive oil  
1tsp picked thyme leaves  
100g diced beetroot from two baked beetroots  
250ml beetroot juice  
150ml port  
150ml olive oil  
80ml balsamic vinegar

### Method

Reduce the port to syrup, add the

beetroot juice, and reduce by two-thirds. Put olive oil in a saucepan on a low heat, add the diced shallots and cook for 2–3 minutes until soft, then add the rest of the ingredients.

Bring this to a simmer and cook for two minutes, then remove pan from the heat and place on the side to cool.

### To finish

2 peeled banana shallots finely diced

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