

Get the Knack for Urban Picnicking

By Mrinalini Kamath

For me, summertime in New York means street festivals, green leafy parks, free film screenings and concerts and the opportunity to hang out on a blanket with good friends, food and wine. (For a complete listing of free film screenings and concerts in all boroughs, take a look at NYC Pulse).

It all starts with the blanket: A nice, spacious blanket is the difference between leaving cranky, with grass-stained, damp capris or having a perfectly lovely time. The Waffle Weave Throw by [Gilden Tree](#) is a 100% natural cotton blanket that comes in a variety of colors (the darker the color, the less noticeable the potential grass stains). Soft, yet sturdy, it works as an excellent beach or picnic blanket.



“Reduce Your Forkprint” – is the slogan of [To-Go Ware’s](#) Bamboo Utensil set. Made from bamboo (which neither stains nor retains smells), To-Go Ware’s fork, knife, spoon and chopstick set works well for either picnics or brown bag lunches. Each family member can have his or her own set in different colored holders which are made from recycled plastic water bottles.

Pass the hors d’oeuvres and preserve the earth – with products made from [Preserve Plastics](#). Their square food containers are perfect for carrying humus or spinach dip to that film screening in Bryant Park. What makes Preserve unique is their “Gimme 5” program, where they approach companies and individuals for their used #5 plastic products (not usually taken by recycling centers) and remake them into everything from food containers and cutting boards to toothbrushes and razors.



Use cloth instead of paper, and save some trees. I don’t care for paper napkins, since they often are quickly gone with the wind. I find cloth napkins to be the better alternative. You can always use the traditional kind of cloth

napkins, sold at household goods stores, or if you want to encourage your kids to get into the habit of using cloth napkins, and encouraging good table manners, you might want to try [Fabkins](#). Made from 100% organic cotton, Fabkins come in a variety of fun themes, including African Safari, Beach Bound, Garden Friends, and more.

Ditch the cooler: If you don't relish the idea of dragging a large cooler (and wasting water, in the form of ice) around on the subway to hold your cheeses, dips and other chilled finger foods, [Built NY's](#) Extra Relish Lunch Tote. Made from neoprene (the same material used for diving wetsuits) this insulating material keeps food cold for up to four hours.



Tote your wine: Again, no need for a cooler and ice – [Built NY](#) also makes unique looking wine totes. Also made from neoprene, the Fishnet Wine Tote, available in a wide variety of colors, allows you to carry your bottle with ease and style without a rise in temperature. There are also two bottle wine totes and even a six pack tote for carrying beer.

Sandwiches, anyone? Maybe your kids aren't into the cheese and crackers and chips and dips. If sandwiches are the way to go, consider carrying them in [Lunchskins](#). Lunchskins are a creation by the 3greenmoms – women who were concerned with the number of plastic sandwich bags being thrown into landfills. According to their website, the bags are made out of a food-safe material used by European bakeries and patisseries. They also give your sandwiches a little more protection than the average sandwich bag.

The Gilden Tree: <http://www.gildentree.com>

To-Go Ware: <http://www.to-goware.com/>

Preserve Plastics: <http://www.preserveproducts.com/>

Fabkins: <http://www.fabkins.com/>

Built NY: <http://www.builtny.com/>

Lunchskins: <http://www.lunchskins.com/>

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