



# p i q u a n t p i c n i c



**W**ITH winter literally knocking on the door and the Eid holidays nearly upon us, this is truly the time to start planning for some recreation and quality time with friends and family. While countries in the North have snowy winters where there's not much to do, in our country, this is that special time of the year when Mother Nature decides to give us all a break from the sweltering heat of the summer sun, which is usually around for much of the year. All the more reason for us to not waste these very few precious months and get down to having some serious fun!

Now, the first thing that probably comes to mind when thinking of a Bangladeshi winter is 'picnic', since this is obviously the ideal season for such an outing. There is undoubtedly no better way to reconnect with family and relax in the company of nature, in short, unwinding from the year round nerve-wrecking schedule of work, work and only work! And yet, probably the best thing about going on a picnic is that one doesn't really need a whole lot of planning or think about financial aspects either, unlike that of vacations. Something simple can be just as fun!

Choose someplace out of the city, where you can leave behind the hustle-bustle of city life and truly relax! But also make sure to not go too far, so as not to spend the major part of the day driving because winter days are very short after all, and its pretty much pointless to finally arrive at your destination only a couple of hours before sunset!

Plan a day or two ahead. Make a list of all the things required to make the picnic a big success. Since picnics are

all about having fun and enjoying yourself in the company of nature try to take along as many outdoor items as possible. For example, if you are likely to feel tired after a long drive, than a hammock is an absolute must! Just tie it up in a nice shady place and doze off while reading a book or listening to some relaxing music. You're guaranteed to feel incredibly rejuvenated even after a twenty minute nap, and that's when you can join in all the fun the rest of your group is having!

One other mandatory picnic item is the Frisbee. Although considered to be a kid's toy, this is actually a great way to unwind for people of all ages- stretch those otherwise inactive body muscles and just have some plain and simple frolicking fun! And when you feel like you've had enough of running around for a day, just sit down for a quieter version of fun with a board game, such as 'Travel Scrabble', or a deck of cards or a pack of Uno.

It's very important to also dress right for a picnic. While looking good is important, it is always wiser to dress according to comfort, especially on a winter day, where one must take extra care to dress warmly. Jackets and sweaters are so much more convenient than shawls, which tend to get caught in the brambles.

When choosing a picnic spot, try to go someplace that has a lake or pond nearby, so that you can also include fishing as one of the fun things to do. Also, you can later enjoy your 'catch of the day' as fresh fish for lunch, along with your family and friends.

Everybody loves music, be it something soft and mellow or fast and upbeat. To each his own. A picnic always

seems livelier with some music playing in the background. Therefore, a sound system is also a must-have item to carry along. But make sure to not take something too big and expensive- a small portable CD player is a more efficient choice. Even better is if someone in the group happens to be a musician, in which case taking along some musical instruments such as a guitar, flute or harmonica and playing a well-known tune while everyone else sings along can be a great deal of merrymaking!

Now, a conventional Bangladeshi picnic almost always includes food items such as pulao, kebabs and chicken curry, which are always cooked over huge brick fires on the picnic spot. Now, while this may be favoured by a few, this form of picnicking is not only hazardous to the environment, it is also quite a great deal of hassle, since you have to go through the arranging of all the raw materials for the food as well as hiring extra people for the cooking, cleaning and serving! Like the saying goes, 'the best way is to keep things simple.' Just pack a nice picnic basket, full of goodies such as sandwiches, chops, cakes, cookies, etc. Not only is this environmental friendly because there's no cooking or fire involved, but it also relieves us of the extra burden of carrying around stacks of plates. Since sandwiches are considered to be finger food category one doesn't need to worry about messy hands that we usually get after eating rice and curry! Another important item that you may want to include in your picnic basket is a hot drink such as tea along with your food, because a hot cup of tea is always refreshing, especially outdoors on a winter's day!

Among places to go, while the National Park in Gazipur

and the Ansar camp in Shafipur, are common haunts for picnickers, there are also various other new places worth visiting. For example, the beautiful Elenga Resort just off Jamuna bridge, where you also have the added option of renting a room or two and staying overnight.

However, if you are one of the fortunate few who own retreat cottages or bungalows in Tongi, Srimongol or Gazipur, or at least are related to someone who does, then all the hassles mentioned above shouldn't be a problem at all. In that case, you can even arrange a barbecue or a bonfire and continue with your picnic well into the wee hours of the night. Furthermore, you can even stay over for the night and extend your fun time for not just a day, but the entire weekend!

Going on a picnic doesn't necessarily have to be someplace on land. One can have a totally different experience with a picnic on water. Enjoy a day of mobile fun on a river cruise while sailing along the banks and soaking in some scenic beauty. Just make sure to get on a boat that doesn't have a loud engine because that could create some serious disturbances and inevitably disrupt your day of fun and relaxation with an incredible amount of noise pollution!

So, having all said and done, one can get right down to arranging an amazing outing, without wasting time, because, after all this is the perfect time for picnics, before this pleasant weather runs out on us and the real chill of winter starts to settle in. As Goldilocks and her three bears would say it- "not too cold, not too hot, just right!"

By Farina Nofreet  
Photo: Sazzad Ibne Syed

