



A Nutrition Expert Walks Into a Barbecue...

And here's what she (and nine others) bring.



A simple slaw is among dietitians' picks for summer potlucks.

By [Keri Gans](#) June 5, 2015 | 11:32 a.m. EDT + More

In the summer, there's nothing I love more than hosting a [barbecue](#). But truthfully, sometimes it is so much easier to simply be a guest. All that's required is showing up (hopefully with a smile) and maybe, just maybe, bringing a dish to pass.

Being a nutritionist, my friends feel they can count on me to bring something healthy (well that, or a bottle of Kettle One). I have no problem obliging – especially when it comes to dessert.

Fruit salad seems to be my thing. I throw together a huge mixture of berries, honeydew, pineapple, peaches, watermelon, orange and grapefruit – no added juice or sugar needed. It's the one leftover I don't mind bringing back home. But let's be honest: If my friends requested a fresh fruit pie, I would probably say yes to that, too. Personally, I don't love pie (I'm way more of a cookie person), but I do strive to be the ideal guest.

I reached out to my dietitian pals to see what they typically bring to a barbecue. Here's what I found:

1. Grain Salad

"Grain salads packed with fresh and [flavorful summer veggies](#) are a go-to when attending potluck cookouts because they're portable, affordable and loaded with nutrients. I use the same formula each time and customize based on what I have on hand. Simply toss together the following: cooked grain (pasta, [quinoa](#) or barley), beans (chickpeas or white beans), summer veggies (tomatoes, squash or corn), cheese (crumbled feta or cubed cheddar), fresh herbs and vinaigrette (olive oil and balsamic vinegar)."

– *Holley Grainger, registered dietitian nutritionist and culinary nutrition consultant*

2. Chickpea Salad

"I'll make a Mediterranean roasted pepper chickpea salad. It's a super healthy side dish or vegetarian entree that's way lower in sugar than baked beans and is filled with satisfying fiber and veggies. I whisk together the juice of one lemon, 3 tablespoons of olive oil, a big spoonful of capers and a couple of cloves of minced garlic. Then I drizzle it over a can of rinsed, drained chickpeas, a pint of halved grape tomatoes and a sliced roasted red pepper (fresh or jarred)."

– *Karen Ansel, registered dietitian nutritionist and co-author of "The Calendar Diet: A Month By Month Guide to Losing Weight While Living Your Life"*

3. Caprese Salad

"I love tomato and mozzarella salad as part of a barbecue. It's a healthy side dish that tastes delicious, especially when you drizzle it with a little olive oil and balsamic vinegar. Tomatoes are one of my 'Top 10 Beauty Foods,' as they boast the antioxidant lycopene, which may help [protect against sunburn](#) during hot summer days."

– *Lisa Drayer, registered dietitian nutritionist and author of "The Beauty Diet"*

4. Hummus and Crudités

"I love taking a hummus and crudité platter to barbecues because it's a healthy option that most people like. Plus, it's easy to make my own hummus: I just combine rinsed and drained

canned chickpeas, black beans or white beans with a squeeze of lemon juice, tahini, garlic, salt and pepper in a food processor until smooth. It feels special since it is homemade, but it's still very easy and portable."

– Sarah-Jane Bedwell, registered dietitian nutritionist and author of *"Schedule Me Skinny: Plan to Lose Weight and Keep it Off in Just 30 Minutes a Week"*

5. Kabobs

"I like to take chicken and vegetable kabobs when I go to a barbecue. Picnics tend to have a lot of sides and snacks, but finding lean protein picks can be hard to come by. Kabobs are easy to eat, don't take long to cook and, by bringing my own lean protein, I'm assured to have something I like."

– Heather Mangieri, registered dietitian nutritionist, sports dietitian in Pittsburgh and spokeswoman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

6. Eggplant

"As a chef, A *lot* is expected of me at cookouts, so I aim to please! I love bringing something that I can prepare and even do a mini grill-side demo of for everyone. My favorite is bringing eggplant and preparing it two ways: as "steaks" – so there's a [vegetarian](#) offering – and as grilled baba ghanoush (eggplant dip) to share a taste of my Lebanese heritage."

– Jackie Newgent, registered dietitian nutritionist, chef and author of *"The With or Without Meat Cookbook"*

7. Egg Salad

"When we go to a barbecue, we often bring our healthy egg salad cucumber sandwiches or egg salad celery strips that are made with [Greek yogurt](#) instead of mayo. We bring these because our friends really love the egg salad and actually appreciate that we bring something a bit healthier for them to eat. We also bring these because they are finger foods and are typically well-received!"

– Lyssie Lakatos and Tammy Lakatos Shames, registered dietitian nutritionists, co-owners of *NutritionTwins.com* and authors of *"The Nutrition Twins' Veggie Cure"*

8. Slaw

"My go-to barbecue dish is a great slaw. There are so many healthy varieties, but my favorite is a classic Asian slaw made with red and white cabbage, carrots and a dressing of rice wine vinegar, olive oil, lime juice, sea salt and pepper, and topped with a little cilantro and toasted

sesame seeds. Not only is it easy to make (you can assemble it in a few minutes), but I also love the texture, color and the fact that it's perfect to pair with any meat or vegetarian dish. "

– *Stephanie Middleberg, registered dietitian nutritionist and owner of Middleberg Nutrition in New York City*

9. Salad – and Prosecco

"I bring something [plant-based](#) that I know people are going to like so that they not only have something on the healthier side to eat, but so they also realize healthy eating really does taste good! My go-to is usually a salad – either sugar snap pea salad with toasted sesame oil, corn, bean and avocado salad, or wild rice citrus salad. Oh, and I almost always bring a bottle of good Prosecco!"

– *Andrea Giancoli, registered dietitian nutritionist and nutrition communications consultant in Hermosa Beach, California*



Keri Gans, MS, RDN, CDN, is a registered dietitian/nutritionist, media personality, spokesperson, and author of [The Small Change Diet](#). Gans's expert nutrition advice has been featured in Glamour, Fitness, Health, Self and Shape, and on national television and radio, including The Dr. Oz Show, Good Morning America, ABC News, Primetime, and Sirius/XM Dr. Radio.

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