

Pack a picnic basket

Neat places to enjoy a summer picnic



Leslie Klipsch

The Stone Fountain at Vander Veer Botanical Park is an iconic Davenport landmark enjoyed by many.

BY LESLIE KLIPSCH

Don't wait for Riverfront Pops to gather your picnic gear and enjoy a festive meal outdoors. The Quad-Cities offers all sorts of perfect places to picnic this summer. What follows are a few tried-and-true favorites unique to our area.

Lincoln Park

Spread over nearly two-dozen acres of lush grounds and lovely views overlooking the Mississippi River Valley, the century-old park offers plenty of pleasant places to spread out your blanket on an early summer evening. It also serves as a public performance space utilized by creative Quad-Citians and enjoyed by the masses.

For added entertainment, bring your basket to the Rock Island Park Board's Starlight Revue Concert Series. In June, Tuesday nights are filled with fun-seekers who can listen to live music, people watch and even learn to dance. This, along with the live outdoor theater performances provided by the Genesis Guild and the many other park activities and amenities, makes Lincoln Park a fantastic summertime destination. Lincoln Park is located at 11th Avenue and 38th Street, Rock Island. For more information and an up-to-

date schedule, visit the city of Rock Island's webpage at rigov.org.

Vander Veer Botanical Park

Located between Brady and Harrison streets just south of W. Central Park Avenue in Davenport, Vander Veer is a Quad-Cities favorite. The 33-acre park offers an abundance of scenic places to spread out a blanket and enjoy the beautifully landscaped central city oasis. Stroll the Grand Allée and the lovely and fragrant municipal rose garden, enjoy a summer breeze next to the lagoon, or delight by Stone Fountain before sprawling out and buttering your baguette.

This summer, Vander Veer is hosting a special Candy Land art installation. Park-goers will find large, colorful, wooden figures throughout the park, all inspired by the classic children's board game. Unpack your basket near Lord Lollipop or Queen Frostine for an especially sweet summer afternoon.

Faye's Field

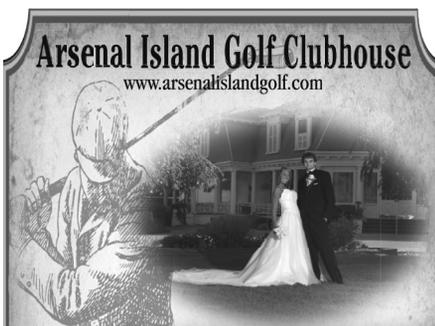
The great thing about picnicking is that all you really need is a blanket and a patch of grass in order to enjoy the simple outdoor experience. Though there is a plethora of public parks all over the Quad-Cities, sometimes a small field in the middle of the action

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Leslie Klipsch
Oliver, left, and Eli Klipsch enjoy the scenic trails for a post-picnic hike at Wild Cat Den State Park.

is the perfect place to unpack a basket and enjoy a meal al fresco.

Located at 18th Street and Learning Campus Drive in Bettendorf, Faye's Field is a unique "pocket park" situated right next to the Bettendorf Public Library and Family Museum. The small park includes several whimsical pieces of outdoor art, plus a rain garden with perennial plants, porous soils, and permeable pavers designed to keep rainfall on the site and reduce the amount entering the storm water system, an element which adds both beauty and an educational and environmentally conscious component to the recently established public green space.

If you're picnicking in a pinch, grab a panini to go at Dewey's Café, located

just steps away inside the Bettendorf Public Library.

Wild Cat Den State Park

Located approximately 15 miles west of Davenport, near Muscatine (1884 Wildcat Den Road, Muscatine), Wild Cat Den State Park is a great place to get away from the city and enjoy an afternoon in nature. Picnic facilities are plentiful and backdrops are beautiful.

In case you feel like stretching your legs after you lunch, Wild Cat Den has fantastic trails for even the most novice hikers. Picnickers can enjoy beautiful bluffs and great views, as well as natural wonders like Steamboat Rock and the Devil's Punch Bowl.

Also interesting are the Pine Creek Grist Mill and the Melpine Schoolhouse, both of which are located within the park and offer a fascinating glimpse of 200-year-old history. Wild Cat Den is a great place to unpack your potato salad and pop open your Pellegrino, with the added necessary luxury of a slowed-down, scenic Sunday drive.

Each month in The Gold Standard, Leslie Klipsch, a freelance writer and editor based in Davenport, shines a spotlight on the gems of the Quad-Cities area — for Gold Book readers. She enjoys reading, cooking, spending time with her husband and three young children and exploring all that the Quad-Cities has to offer.

