

[Brandywine Table]

Picnics and Perseverance

ONE LOCAL BUSINESS FINDS NEW TASTY POSSIBILITIES AMID THE CHALLENGES OF THE PANDEMIC.

Alyssa Thayer

SPRING IS A TIME TO CELEBRATE MAKING IT through yet another daunting Pennsylvania winter, as well as the growth and ingenuity we've found along the way. The past year has been an especially ruthless game of evolution and adaptation and nowhere is this more apparent than in the restaurant industry.

"I knew it was never coming back," says George McLoughlin, founder, and owner of **Tasty Table Market and Catering** in Berwyn. "I would have closed my doors if I hadn't had this passion and dream."

On any given (pre-pandemic) day, Tasty Table puts out 600–800 meals, 93% of which are for corporate catering partnerships. This time of year they would also be layering on weekend weddings and graduations.

When the pandemic hit in March 2020, Corporate America emptied their offices, some going completely remote, others lowering their office capacity significantly. Overnight, Tasty Table saw their business drop 70–80%.

Many business owners would have been paralyzed in fear, but George's M.O. is "always keep moving" and that's exactly what he did. After seeing the writing on the wall, he made the bold decision to pivot his business model, and turn his expansive kitchen



Tasty owner George McLoughlin says one of the best parts of this new business model is getting to try something exciting.

warehouse into a boutique retail market and cafe. In June of 2020, he took a Sawzall to one of the walls to start making space for the new plan.

After extensive renovations inside and out, they rebranded to add "market" to their name and opened their doors to the community. Their new space includes an open kitchen, deli and grab-and-go cases for prepared foods, and indoor and outdoor seating.

The silver lining of the whole transition for George has been getting to wake up every day excited. "We are doing something new, something we haven't been doing for the last 20 years," he says.

Now that the weather has turned the corner, it's finally time for picnics and dining al fresco. George and his team are ready with all their warm-weather favorites, including Asian noodle salad and fried chicken and pickle sandwiches. They are even doing mountain and shore bags—an insulated cooler bag filled with an assortment of sweet and savory goodies to take on the road.

Though this certainly wouldn't have been how we drew it up, just like Tasty Table, we've all had to grow and adapt to accommodate the demands of our new normal. Here's to finding fun and, of course, delicious ways to get outside and celebrate our strength and perseverance. Who's up for a picnic?



Tasty Table turned their large industrial kitchen space into a customer-facing market and cafe.



After months of renovations inside and out, Tasty Table held a grand reopening in March 2021.

Roasted Beet Salad

Although commonly used on menus in cooler months, roasted beets can be the perfect addition to any spring and summer menu when served chilled and tossed with a bright citrus zest.



2 lb. beets, washed and stems cut off (any variety will work, but we recommend a combination of red and golden)
¼ C. olive oil
2 shallots, sliced thinly
2 lemons, zested
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lay whole beets onto a parchment paper-covered cookie sheet and roast for 90 minutes or until fork-tender.

While beets are roasting, prepare shallots. Add 1 tablespoon of oil to a sauté pan over medium heat. Add shallots. Stir every few minutes, until shallots are soft and starting to brown.

Pull cooked beets from oven and cool. Once cool enough to handle, slice beets into wedges. Add beets, sautéed shallots, olive oil, citrus zest, and salt and pepper into a large bowl and toss to mix.

Served at room temperature or chilled.

Serves 4–6.

Heirloom Tomato Salad

Fresh pops of color and flavor make this the most refreshing side to any outdoor dining experience. Plus, the added brininess of the olives tips this dish in a Mediterranean direction, which is always welcomed.

4 C. heirloom grape or cherry tomatoes, halved
½ C. Kalamata olives
¼ C. fresh basil, chopped
¼ C. extra virgin olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients and toss until well mixed. Can be made up to 24 hours in advance.

Picnics Perfected

In our opinion, picnics are one of the best ways to enjoy a little al fresco time! The key is to keep them simple and delicious—that means effortless to transport, temperature tolerant, and easy to consume. That may sound limiting, but we assure you it's not. Here are a few tips and tricks to get you started:

- 1. Hand-held** – Anything you can pick up and devour is picnic approved. That includes wraps, calzones, hand pies and more. And don't forget dessert—cookies, brownies and pastries all fall into this category.
- 2. Smaller Subs** – Instead of trying to manage a huge hoagie, pack a selection of petite sliders. They are fun to eat and easy to share!
- 3. Temp. Tolerant** – The whole point of a picnic is to relax and unwind, so having to worry about food temperature is not ideal. Find foods that are OK to enjoy at room temperature and won't spoil easily on a warm day.
- 4. Somethin' on a Stick** – Kabobs are fun to make and eat. Cook your food right on a skewer satay style, or prepare and then skewer up. The latter works great for any cold salad: antipasto kabob anyone?
- 5. Be Chill** – Many dishes are just as good (or better) cold as they are warm. Tasty Table suggests trying dishes such as Asian noodle salad or sesame chicken tenders when you want to eat heat-free.
- 6. Nothing Like Noshing** – Sometimes the best dinners are the kind you can graze your way through. Pack an assortment of chips and dips (like the tzatziki recipe in this article) and a small charcuterie selection, and presto it's a picnic!



Serve with a hunk of fresh crusty bread to soak up all those extra juices—because is it even a picnic without a baguette?

Serves 6.

*Upgrade the dish to a Caprese with the addition of small fresh mozzarella balls.

Pineapple Shrimp Kebobs

Bold jerk spices dance playfully with the sweetness of pineapple and the freshness of peppers to bring out the best flavors in this portable entrée. Assemble into kabobs to make them picnic-perfect, or leave them off and toss over fresh green leaf lettuce as a salad.



- 4 Tb. olive oil
- 1 red pepper, cut into 1" squares
- 1 green pepper, cut into 1" squares
- 1 lb., 16–20 count shrimp, cooked and peeled (thawed if purchased frozen)
- 1 pineapple, sliced into 1" thick triangle wedges
- 2 Tb. jerk seasoning (see homemade version below)

Saute peppers and shrimp in cast iron skillet on medium-high heat with 2 tablespoons oil. Cook for 10 minutes until seared on all sides. Add pineapple, jerk seasoning, salt and pepper and stir for another 3–5 minutes until pineapple is lightly brown.

Let mixture cool and assemble onto skewers. Refrigerate until ready to eat.

*Will last 2 hours without refrigeration.

Serves 4–6.

Homemade Jerk Seasoning

- 1 Tb. onion powder
- 1 Tb. garlic powder
- 2 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 2 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. black pepper
- 2 tsp. dried thyme
- 2 tsp. brown sugar
- 1 tsp. allspice
- 1 tsp. dry parsley
- 1 tsp. paprika

- 1 tsp. hot pepper flakes
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1 tsp. ground clove

Mix all ingredients and store in an air-tight container.

Makes ½ cup. Adapted from *ChiliPepperMadness.com*.

Sliced Turkey Slider

This simple, yet universally loved sammie holds up to travel and heat. It's the red pepper aioli that ties the whole thing together, so we made sure to snag the recipe for you!



- 9 brioche slider buns (Tasty Table recommends Le Bus Bakery)
- 9, 1-oz. slices of Havarti cheese
- 9, 2-oz. slices of oven-roasted turkey
- 3 medium-size ripe tomatoes
- ½ cup red pepper aioli, recipe below

Slather aioli onto bread and layer on one slice each of cheese, turkey and tomato.

Serves 6.

Serving Calculator: Suggest 1.5 per person, the below recipe is for 6 guests.

Homemade Red Pepper Aioli

- 2 whole roasted red peppers
- ⅔ C. fresh basil leaves
- 2 tsp. lemon juice
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1½ C. mayo
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground pepper

Blend all ingredients in food processor until smooth and creamy.

TIP: Leave the Greens—although a little lettuce on a club or slider is delicious, we like to leave that off for picnics—it tends to wilt fairly quickly.

Makes 2½ cups. Adapted from *Allrecipes.com*.

Homemade Tzatziki

Cool, herbaceous and light, this yogurt-based dip is the perfect pick for any warm-weather meal. Although traditionally served as an accompaniment to gyros or roast lamb, it is perfectly delicious on its own!



- ½ C. cucumber, finely grated
- 1 C. whole milk Greek yogurt
- 1 lemon, juiced
- ½ T. extra virgin olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 Tb. fresh dill (mint works well too)
- Salt to taste
- Olives and parsley to garnish

Gently squeeze grated cucumber between cloth or paper towels to get the extra moisture out. Add cucumber to a mixing bowl with yogurt, lemon juice, olive oil, garlic, dill and mix well.

Transfer to a serving dish or container and top with olives and parsley. Serve with grilled pita triangles.

Makes 1½ cups. ♦

Alyssa Thayer found her love of food at an early age, frolicking around her mother's organic farm and eating her weight in berries and snap peas each summer. She is a self-proclaimed urban farm girl, whose mission is to bring inspired ideas to life, passionate people together, and good food to every table.



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