



HOW-TO: HOST A PICNIC IN THE PARK



Toronto Alliance for
Better Parks

Version 2014

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WHY HOST A PICNIC IN THE PARK?

A picnic in the park can be a great way to celebrate a special occasion or meet new friends and neighbours. You may also want to plan a picnic as part of another event such as a park stewardship day or harvest festival. Picnics are easy, warm weather events to plan. Whether you intend to celebrate with a private group or host an open community picnic, food helps bring people together in public space.



DO I NEED A PERMIT FOR MY PICNIC?

Depending on the type of picnic you are having, and whether you want to reserve a designated picnic spot for use in the park, you may need a permit.

NO PERMIT NEEDED

If your picnic is a private picnic with less than 25 people and you are not using a designated picnic site like a picnic shelter or barbecue. For example, ten friends on a blanket.

SOCIAL GATHERING PERMIT NEEDED

If your picnic is a private picnic with more than 25 people and/or if you want to reserve a designated picnic spot. For example, a family gathering at a picnic shelter. See page 4.

SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT AND INSURANCE NEEDED

If your picnic is open to the public and advertised so that anyone can come, whether at a designated picnic spot or not. For example, a community picnic organized by a park friends group. See page 5.

HOW DO I RESERVE A BARBECUE, FIRE PIT, OR BAKE OVEN?

The City provides picnic shelters, barbecues, bake ovens and fire pits in many parks that can be permitted for public and private use. The permitting season for picnic facilities – shelters, barbecues – is from May 15th to October 30th and can be reserved from 10:00a.m. until 8:30p.m. Bake ovens and fire pits can be reserved all year. Visit (<http://bit.ly/TOparkreserve>) for more information.

PICNIC SHELTERS AND BARBECUES

Some picnic shelters have barbecues, which you are allowed to use with a permit. Only charcoal or briquettes are permitted to be used in permanently fixed barbecues – fuel is strictly prohibited. You are only allowed to bring your own portable barbecue if your permit allows.

SERVE A PICNIC SHELTER, FIRE PIT, OR BAKE OVEN?



**According to
the City,
popular picnic
spots are...**

Adams Park,
Centennial Park,
Downsview Dells Park,
Earl Bales Park, High Park,
Milliken District Park,
Morningside Park,
Toronto Islands, and
Wilket Creek Park.

FIRE PIT

Some parks have designated fire pits, which require a separate permit. Fees range from about \$25 to \$80 depending on the number of people. You need to purchase insurance of \$27 or \$54, depending on the number of people, through the City's provider for both public and private use. Visit (<http://bit.ly/TOparkfirepits>) for more information or call 416-392-8188.

For more on fire pits, see Park People's How-to: Host a Campfire in the Park guidebook.

BAKE OVENS

Some parks have bake ovens, which require a separate permit. Fees range from about \$12 to \$25 depending on the type of user. You need to purchase insurance of \$27 or \$54, depending on the number of people, through the City's provider for both public and private use. For more information visit (<http://bit.ly/TOparkpermits>) or contact the park with the bake oven directly:

Christie Pits Park:
416-392-0042

Dufferin Grove Park:
416-392-0913

Edithvale Park:
416-395-6164

Riverdale Farm:
416-392-8689

(Note: Staff are required to operate the oven at this site at all events.)

HOW DO I PLAN A PRIVATE PICNIC?



If you are planning a private picnic with more than 25 people and/or if you want to reserve a designated picnic site, you will need a Social Gathering Permit. You cannot advertise your event to the general public with a Social Gathering Permit.

OBTAINING A SOCIAL GATHERING PERMIT

- Permits can usually be obtained in one week or less.
- You do not need insurance for a social gathering permit.
- Permit costs \$80 for picnics with less than 200 people. The cost goes up for larger events.
- You can reserve a designated picnic site such as a picnic shelter or barbecue with your social gathering permit.
- Visit (<http://bit.ly/TOparkpicnics>) or call 416-392-8188.



HOW DO I PLAN AN OPEN COMMUNITY PICNIC?

If you are advertising your picnic as open to the public and welcoming anyone from your community to join, you will need a Special Event Permit, insurance, and contact with Toronto Public Health.

GETTING INSURANCE

- You are required to provide a minimum of \$2 million in liability insurance, naming the City of Toronto as additionally insured.
- The City can connect you with an insurance provider. You will not receive your permit until you have proof of insurance.

OBTAINING A SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT

- Special events in parks are typically hosted by organizations, however, some unincorporated community groups, such as park friends groups, have obtained these permits when one person has agreed to sign the application.
- Permits are non-refundable and non-transferrable, so you can't move the permit if your event is rained out.
- Permits require a minimum of six weeks to process, but try for two months.
- Your event must be open to the public, free, and cannot be for profit or promotion.
- Permit cost is \$80 for events with less than 200 people, plus a \$25 administration fee. The cost goes up for larger events.
- You will need to connect with a Toronto Public Health Inspector (416-338-7600). See page 8.
- Visit (<http://bit.ly/TOparkspecial>) or call 311 to be connected to the correct special event office for your district.

MAKING THE PERMIT PROCESS SIMPLE AND COST-EFFECTIVE

- Plan for less than 200 people to qualify for the minimum fee.
- Do not include amplified sound or serve alcohol.
- Use free-standing tents that are 10 x 10 feet or smaller, if any. Don't stake them into the ground.
- You will be responsible for trash clean-up during and after the event and will need to submit a waste management plan.
- There will be an extra fee for reserving a designated picnic site or fire pit.

GETTING THE PERMIT FEE REDUCED OR WAIVED

- Non-profit groups can apply to have permit fees reduced or waived by writing a request to the General Manager of Parks, Forestry & Recreation one month before your event. You must meet the requirements of the Reduction in Permit Fees Policy, such as demonstrating financial need and community benefit.

FINDING SPONSORS AND DONORS

- Sponsors and donors can help cover the costs of your event. Be sure to give potential sponsors enough time so that their logo can be included on event flyers and advertisements.
- For organizational support, contact Park People at **info@parkpeople.ca**. For financial support, contact local businesses, BIAs, grocery stores, restaurants, or local non-profits.

KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING AFTERWARDS

- A community picnic is a great way to start a local park friends group or find new volunteers for an already established one.
- Collect people's email addresses on the day of the picnic to follow-up with them on future park activities.
- Talk to people about what other events they would like to see in the park. A movie night? Nature walk? Community garden?



DO I NEED TO CONTACT TORONTO PUBLIC HEALTH?



If you are advertising your picnic as open to the public or are serving or selling food to the general public you are required to contact Toronto Public Health and fill out a *Temporary Food Establishment Application* as part of your Special Event Permit.

Toronto Public Health says that only food that is prepared in an inspected kitchen (a commercial kitchen or a community kitchen) can be served to the general public. If you are not buying prepared food or don't have access to this type of kitchen, they advise picnic goers to eat food they have prepared and brought themselves rather than share food.

Public health will allow some food preparation on site (generally cooking and serving of lower risk foods). Toronto Public Health advises you to use single-serving

dishes (paper plates) and single-use hand wipes for the food server's hygiene. A hand-washing station may also be required.

There are some foods that are considered lower risk foods that would keep your application more simple.

LOWER RISK FOODS

- ❧ Cold drinks or cold confections (ice cream) in its original packaging
- ❧ Fresh produce (whole fruits and vegetables)
- ❧ Pop corn, roasted nuts, or French fries
- ❧ Dry baked goods (bread, cookies, crackers, dry cakes)

CONSIDERATIONS FOR FOOD SAFETY

- ❧ What is the temperature outside? Will it be hard to keep food cold?
- ❧ Is the food pre-packaged or in sealed packaging?
- ❧ Was the food prepared in an inspected commercial kitchen?

HOW DO I GET THE WORD OUT?



It's important to let your community know about the event through many different avenues to make sure you get a good attendance. Remember that you can't advertise your event until your permit application has been approved.

ONCE YOU HAVE YOUR PERMIT, YOU CAN:

- Create flyers and leave them at local stores, schools, churches, libraries, and community and health centres.
- Use social media such as Twitter and Facebook.
- List the event in local newsletters, such as your local councillor's.
- Consider pairing your picnic with another event, such as children's activities, the launch of a community garden, the last day of school, or a movie in the park.
- Consider a draw at the event and get local businesses to donate items. If you are charging for your raffle tickets you may need to apply for a license through Gaming Services.

For more, visit [here](http://bit.ly/TOParkgaming) (<http://bit.ly/TOParkgaming>).



WHAT DO I DO ON EVENT DAY?

SET UP/TEAR DOWN

Make sure you have volunteers who are available to come before and stay after the event to help out with any set up and tear down.

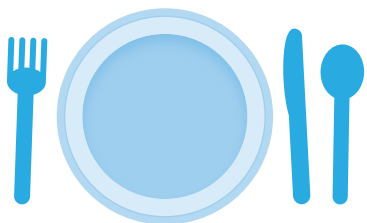
CLEAN UP THE PARK

Make sure the park is clean before and after your event.

Use the park's garbage bins, but bring your own garbage and recycling bags just in case.

SET UP AN INFORMATION TABLE

Have a table where people can leave their contact information to build a list of people who may want to hear about the next event or volunteer to help out in the park. This could be a table for an existing park friends group or a way to start up a new one.



COMMUNITY PICNIC EVENT PLANNING QUICK LIST

- ☐ 1. Find partners and sponsors
- ☐ 2. Apply for the required permit and reserve your site
- ☐ 3. Obtain insurance
- ☐ 4. Contact Toronto Public Health
- ☐ 5. Get the word out
- ☐ 6. Clean up before and afterwards
- ☐ 7. Enjoy!



TORONTO PARK PEOPLE is an independent charity that brings people and funding together to transform communities through better parks by:

CONNECTING a network of over 100 park friends groups

WORKING with funders to support innovative park projects

ORGANIZING activities that bring people together in parks

RESEARCHING challenges and opportunities in our parks

HIGHLIGHTING the importance of great city parks for strong neighbourhoods

BUILDING partnerships between communities and the City to improve parks

WCKITCHEN
FAMILY FOUNDATION

Made with the support
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Family Foundation

**park
people**

Charitable Registration Number:
84644-9437-RR0001

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We would like to thank City of Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation and Toronto Public Health staff for their work in reviewing this guidebook.

If you have a comment or suggestion for how this guidebook could be improved in the future please write to info@parkpeople.ca

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