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Don't forget the kids!

Make mocktails. When the three or four generations of our extended family gather, the little ones get excited shouting, "picnic party, picnic party." We'll paint faces, run around blowing bubbles, climb through nylon tunnels, splash in the pool, and dance to silly songs. A big mat or cloth is spread on the grass or the deck with platters of finger foods. The kids happily dive in for the feast.

String lights, candles in jars, patio heaters, and your favorite tunes all add to the comfort and contentment. Nothing is ever perfect. There will be spills, breaks, trampled flowers, bug bites, and burnt barbecue. But that's the splendor and unpredictability of partying in the garden. As Erasmus said, "No party is any fun unless seasoned with folly."

Enjoy the dazzling days and easy evenings of summer with a picnic or pool party. Kick off your shoes, slather on the sunscreen, don your sunglasses, and chill out. Summer is a time to slow down to appreciate being outside surrounded by nature.



Kids enjoy a picnic party on the deck with a patio heater for warmth, face painting, and finger foods.



Cynthia Brian preparing the meal including roasted nectarines for a casual picnic pool party.

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