

MAKE SUMMER COUNT: CRAFT YOUR SUMMER BUCKET LIST

Contributed by Heidi Roth, RDN, CHHC

We've been waiting all year for this - summer is finally here! Long, sunny days stretch out before us, full of possibility. Most of us have a few vague ideas about all the fun things we want to do this season. But, before we know it, it's September and we are asking ourselves what happened to the summer?! You don't want to get to Labor Day and think, I wish I had... That's where a summer bucket list comes in.

Why Create a Summer Bucket List?

Bucket lists not only help us plan for all the fun things we want to do, but they can also have significant benefits for our mood and well-being. Research consistently shows that anticipating positive events can boost happiness, spark stronger emotions than simply looking back, and contribute to better mental health. Having things to look forward to is a key contributor to psychological well-being. Bucket lists remind us that life is short, and we should live it to its fullest. As they say, "the best is yet to come!"

Tips for Crafting a Summer Bucket List

1. **Write it down somewhere visible**, like your kitchen fridge.
2. **Make it personal**. What sounds fun to you? It doesn't matter what everyone else is doing - this list is about your kind of summer joy.
3. **Remember, it's not a to-do list**. Nothing takes the fun out of summer faster than turning it into a list of "must-dos." Think of it as a collection of possibilities, not obligations. If you don't happen to do it this summer, there's always next summer!
4. **Research local events**. My town, and the neighboring towns, always have summer concerts booked where you can bring a picnic and enjoy live music. You might be surprised what's happening nearby!
5. **Be specific**. Rather than "go hiking," list the trail or location you'd like to go to. All-trails is a great app that can inspire you to try something new.
6. **Share and compare**. Who might join you? Friends, family, or maybe it's just you. Remember, what's fun for one person may not be fun for everyone, so get some input from everyone in your household!
7. **Include a mix of different activities**.
Think:
Indoor / Outdoor
Free / Splurge
Nighttime / Daytime
Adventure / Relaxing
Old favorites / Something new
8. **Fast forward to the end of summer**. What will you wish you'd done? Pick your top 3 items and start making them happen.
Ask yourself:
Who is involved?
When will it happen? (Weekend? Weekday?)
How will it happen? (Do you need to book anything? What's the budget?)



Inspiration to Get You Started

Go camping (or glamping!)	Visit a farmers' market	Go tubing on a river
Plan a one-on-one day with each of your kids	Try a new summer fruit or vegetable	Organize a summer-themed potluck
Go to a baseball game	Pick fresh berries	Host a themed party
Go ziplining	Play mini golf	Go thrifting
Jump into a lake	Go to a drive-in movie	Attend a local concert or event
Draw with sidewalk chalk	Spend a day at the beach	Visit a state park
Make homemade popsicles	Learn how to garden	Plant a window box with herbs
Go plogging - walking or jogging + picking up litter	Have a bonfire and roast s'mores	Take advantage of free museum days
Schedule a digital detox day	Try pickleball!	Watch fireworks
Try a new recipe, like watermelon gazpacho!	Host a game night with friends	Picnic at a local park
Volunteer at an animal shelter	Join a summer reading contest	Visit a food truck
Go on a roadtrip to a new town	Go on a sunrise hike or bike ride	Watch the sunset
Spend a night stargazing	Get or renew your library card	Plant a container garden

WATERMELON GAZPACHO RECIPE

4 cups cubed watermelon
 2 cups cubed tomatoes
 1 TB red onion, minced
 ½ cup peeled, seeded and cubed cucumber (leave skin on for English cucumber)
 ½ cup red or green pepper, cubed
 salt, to taste
 3-4 TB lime juice
 3 dashes Tabasco, or to taste
 1 TB extra-virgin olive oil

Place watermelon, tomatoes, onion, pepper and cucumber in food processor. Pulse until vegetables are finely chopped, but not pureed. Place vegetables in bowl and add lime juice, Tabasco, olive oil and ¾ tsp salt. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed. Serve very cold and enjoy! Will keep 3-4 days in the fridge.

What's on your summer bucket list?



Heidi Roth, RD, LDN is a Registered/Licensed Dietitian, Health Coach and nutrition expert with a passion for health and wellness. She graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a BS in Nutrition and Dietetics.

