

# Exporting picnic hampers to Europe

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The European market for picnic baskets is growing, as European consumers are connecting with nature. This market offers good opportunities, as Europe imports most of its picnic baskets. There is potential in producing both complete picnic baskets and separate components. Most sets are assembled in China, often using baskets from other developing country manufacturers. The quality of the materials and the contents add value to your picnic baskets.

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## 1. Product description

Picnic baskets, or hampers, are designed to carry food and tableware for eating outdoors. In home decoration, they can be found under different categories: “Party / Seasonal”, “Garden / Outdoor Dining”, “Kitchenware / Dining”, or (less often) under “Storage”. In the market, they function as food-related gifts.

The main element is the woven basket, traditionally from willow, but now also from a variety of natural fibres such as rattan. It is often divided into various compartments holding tableware. The baskets are designed to protect the tableware inside during transportation. The tableware, especially plates and cutlery, is attached to the inside of the basket or lid with leather, synthetic or textile straps.

Picnic baskets usually include tableware for two or four persons. Basic tableware items for picnic baskets include plates, cutlery and glasses or cups. This can be extended with items like salt and peppershakers, corkscrews and napkins. Some picnic baskets also include cooler bags, a cutting board, a thermos, smaller sized baskets or a picnic blanket. The exact content depends on the basket’s size and exclusivity.

### Tip:

- For more information about the separate components of picnic baskets, see our studies on [baskets and boxes](#), [dinnerware](#), [cutlery](#) and [glassware](#).

## **Quality**

### **Functionality**

Picnic baskets first and foremost need to be functional, providing comfort, ease and convenience. The weight and size of the basket need to make it manageable to carry. The tableware must be complete and of sound quality. Basic tableware contents for four persons consist of four plates, four glasses/cups, and four spoons, knives and forks. Other tableware is optional.

### **Material**

Picnic baskets are usually made of bamboo, rattan, cane or synthetic wickerwork. Inside, they are lined with textile or plastics. Low-end tableware for picnics is often made of synthetics like melamine or metal (cutlery). High-end tableware is made of ceramics (plates and cups), high quality metal (cutlery) and glass (glasses).

### **Design**

Convenience is an important value for picnic baskets, as consumers want to avoid carrying heavy loads. The basket needs to be light but sturdy, with straps or proper handles for easy transport. Styles can vary from geometrical and boxy to organic and curvy, depending on consumer taste and whether a sense of nostalgia is being expressed. The picnic basket is part of a huge tradition of early-twentieth-century glamorous life in the European (read: British) countryside.

### **Durability**

As picnic baskets are meant for transport, their quality is related to their durability as well. They need to protect their contents from movement, especially fragile items like ceramic or glass tableware. The tableware itself should be durable as well.

### **Labelling**

- Information on the outer packaging of picnic baskets should correspond to the packing list sent to the importer.
- External packaging labels for picnic baskets should include the producer, consignee, material, quantity, size, volume, country of origin and caution signs. They should also show the number of pieces, bale/box identification, total number of bales or boxes and net and gross weight.
- EAN or barcodes on the product label are common in Europe.
- Your buyer will specify what information they need on the product labels or on the item itself, such as logos or “made in...” information. This is part of the order specifications.
- Use the English language for labelling, unless your buyer indicates otherwise.

### **Packaging**

#### **Importer specification**

You should pack picnic baskets according to the importer’s instructions. They have their own specific requirements for the use of packaging materials, filling boxes, palletisation and stowing containers. Always ask for the importer’s order specifications. These are part of the purchase order.

#### **Damage prevention**

Properly packaging picnic baskets minimises the risk of damage by shocks. How an item is packaged for export depends on how easily it can be damaged. Packaging should ensure the items inside a cardboard box cannot damage each other. It should also prevent damage to the boxes when they are stacked inside the container. Packaging therefore usually consists of outer and inner cardboard boxes filled with protective materials like bubble wrap or paper.

## Dimensions and weight

Packaging must be of easy-to-handle dimensions and weight. Standards are often related to labour regulations at the point of destination, specified by the buyer. Boxes are usually palletised for air or sea transport. Make maximum use of pallet space.

## Cost reduction

Nesting or stacking picnic baskets inside the container reduces costs. While packing has to provide maximum protection, you must also avoid using excess materials or shipping “air”. Waste removal is a cost to buyers.

## Material

Importers are increasingly banning wooden crating and packaging due to their unsustainability and high material and disposal costs. Economical and sustainable packaging materials are becoming more popular. Using biodegradable packing materials can be a market opportunity. For some buyers, it can even be a demand.

## Consumer packaging

At retail level, picnic baskets are usually supplied without any packaging. This allows consumers to try the item out and feel the material.

## 2. Which European markets offer opportunities for exporters of picnic baskets?

There are no specific trade figures for picnic baskets as complete products. For statistics on the trade in the components of picnic baskets, see our studies on [baskets and boxes](#), [dinnerware](#), [cutlery](#) and [glassware](#).

According to industry experts, picnics are on the rise. France and the United Kingdom are known for their strong picnicking traditions. The average Brit picnics three times per year. Picnicking is not just something for warmer countries like Italy. Scandinavian countries like Sweden and Finland also share a fondness of outdoor eating.

Preferences for the contents of picnic baskets may vary across European countries. For example, French picnickers like to drink their wine from proper stemware (wineglasses).

Popular picnicking occasions and events also differ per country, but are generally in spring and summer. The United Kingdom celebrates [National Picnic Week](#) in June, while the most popular day for picnicking in France is Bastille Day (July 14th). Picnicking is an Easter tradition in Italy, whereas in Finland picnicking is a key part of May Day (May 1st) celebrations.

According to industry sources, Europe imports most of its picnic baskets. China is its main supplier. Vietnam, Thailand, India, Indonesia and possibly Myanmar are potential future suppliers. These countries can produce the baskets, but need to build up an industry for the contents. Chinese suppliers already use low-cost suppliers from these countries to produce the baskets, especially from Thailand.

The contents are generally produced and added to the baskets in China. They may also be assembled in Europe, depending on the exact contents and the level of exclusivity.

### Tips:

- As picnic hampers are a complex product, you probably need to cooperate with other industries to create a picnic hamper that meets European quality requirements.
- Study your options to either supply baskets to Chinese producers, or assemble your own picnic baskets with contents.

## What is the effect of real private consumption expenditure on European demand?

- Private consumption expenditure is an important indicator for the European home decoration market. The sector is closely linked to economic conditions. When money is tight, consumers postpone buying non-essential items until they have enough disposable income.
- Between 2017 and 2019, European private consumption expenditure is expected to increase, so consumption of decorative products is likely to rise. Especially in emerging markets, consumers will have more money available to spend on decorating the home. Consumers in mature markets already spend a fair amount of money on decoration, so growth in their consumption will be moderate.

## 3. What trends offer opportunities on the European market for picnic baskets?

### Outdoor living

As part of the wellness trend, European consumers are increasingly trying to spend time outdoors, both in their own gardens as well as in communal spaces, such as parks or beaches. The aim is to create a better balance between work and leisure, as well as feel closer to nature and breathe some fresh air. A picnic also means quality time: time to socialise with friends and family, sharing meals and stories. As such, a casual picnic fits in well with this trend to relax and recharge your batteries.

#### Tips:

- Team up with makers of tableware to offer a one-stop shop for the importer. Working with local makers is generally easier, but importing may be a cheaper option.
- Follow the developments in the food market, especially those related to trends in “eating outside” and “food as a gift”, which will influence the use of content of picnic baskets and tools.
- Consider the need for convenience in picnicking and make your baskets easily portable, for instance with the help of shoulder straps or trolley wheels.

### Diversification

Picnic baskets are a relatively small product category due to their dependence on season, (leisure) time and weather. These factors are not always favourable in north-western Europe, where the picnic basket is most popular. This is driving innovations to extend the use or function of picnic baskets beyond picnics.

Examples of diversification range from food baskets for consumer or corporate gifting, to picnic baskets for dogs (!) or bicycle baskets. In mid-market, the nostalgic aspect of picnicking has been discovered and used to create a vintage look in the living room. Faux luggage and picnic hampers are very much part of that. In such an environment, functionality is less important than style.

#### Tips:

- Determine your possibilities to diversify your offer, for example with food or gift baskets. These products mainly focus on the food items, with the picnic basket serving as exclusive packaging. This allows you to innovate in terms of shape, material, colour or decoration. These products also offer opportunities for the corporate gift market, where companies give food baskets to employees (for Christmas) or business contacts.
- Consider expanding your product range to include baskets for individual food items. Wine bottles in

particular are now also wrapped in wicker containers, often positioned as gifts for men.

- Look for different uses altogether, such as picnic baskets for dogs and for indoor use.
- If you already supply general basketry to outdoor and indoor segments, consider extending your product offer to include picnic or food baskets. An existing basket often just needs a slight modification for the picnic market. You can also market a basket as multifunctional, used as a general storage item as well as for picnics or food gifts.

## Interest in sustainability is increasing

Sustainability is not currently a direct urgent demand from picnic basket buyers. However, consumers value the contact with nature. Therefore it is fitting to use natural materials.

The opportunity for the sustainable production of picnic baskets lies in material innovations, such as the use of renewable, untreated, biodegradable or recycled materials. Such forms of environmental sustainability add value to your product, as do socially responsible values like fair trade or other forms of ethical production.

### Tips:

- Consider sustainable production of your picnic ware. Use sustainable materials and production processes.
- Clearly communicate your green values.
- For more information, see our special study on [sustainability](#).

For more information, see our study about [trends for Home Decoration & Home Textiles](#).

## 4. With which requirements must picnic baskets comply to be allowed on the European market?

### With which legal and non-legal requirements must your product comply?

#### General product safety

The European Union's [General Product Safety Directive](#) applies to all consumer products, including picnic baskets. It states that all products marketed in Europe must be safe to use.

### Tips:

- Read more about the [General Product Safety Directive](#).
- Use your common sense to ensure normal use of your product does not cause any danger.
- The [RAPEX database](#) lists products that the European Union has rejected at the border or withdrawn from the market. Check the database for similar products for an idea of what issues may arise.

## Packaging legislation

Europe has specific [packaging and packaging waste legislation](#). It for instance restricts the use of certain heavy metals. Europe also has [requirements for wood packaging materials](#) (WPM) used for transport, such as packing cases, boxes, crates, drums, (box) pallets and dunnage.

### Tip:

- Read more in the [overview of EU rules on wood packaging material](#).

## Restricted chemicals: REACH

The [REACH](#) regulation lists restricted chemicals in products that are marketed in Europe. For example, REACH restricts the use of:

- lead in the paints and glazing of ceramics
- cadmium compounds in various applications
- arsenic and creosotes as wood preservatives.

### Tip:

- The European Chemical Agency provides useful information and tips on REACH. See for instance [REACH Annex XVII](#) for a list of all restricted chemicals. Also check out the [Information on REACH for companies established outside Europe](#) and the [Questions & Answers on REACH](#).

## Food contact materials

The [Food Contact Materials](#) regulation states that home decoration products like kitchenware and tableware must not negatively affect consumer health or food quality. It also contains rules on labelling food contact materials.

### Tips:

- Read more on the [legislation for Food Contact Materials](#).
- Also see the [European Food Safety Authority \(EFSA\)](#) for more information on [Food Contact Materials](#).

## Wildlife Trade Regulations

The [Wildlife Trade Regulations](#) restricts the international trade in specimens of wild animals, plants and derived wildlife products. This is the European Union's strict implementation of the [Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species \(CITES\)](#).

### Tips:

- For more information, see the [Reference Guide to the Wildlife Trade Regulations](#).
- For more information on CITES permits, you can contact your [National CITES Management Authority](#).

## What additional requirements do buyers often have?

## Sustainability

Social and environmental sustainability make your products stand out on the European market, such as using sustainable raw materials and production processes. European buyers increasingly demand the following certification schemes:

- **Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI)**: European retailers developed this initiative to improve social conditions in sourcing countries. They expect their suppliers to comply with the BSCI Code of Conduct. To prove compliance, the importer can request an audit of your production process. Once a company has been audited, it is included in a database for all BSCI participants.
- **Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI)**: This initiative is an alliance of companies, trade unions and voluntary organisations. It aims to improve the working lives of people across the globe who make or grow consumer goods.

You can use standards such as [ISO 14001](#) and [SA 8000](#) to read up on sustainable options. However, only niche market buyers demand compliance with such standards.

### Tips:

- Optimise your sustainability performance. Reading up on the issues included in the initiatives will give you an idea of what to focus on.
- Buyers appreciate a good story. If you can show that you value your company's environmental and/or social performance, this may be a competitive advantage. Consider a self-assessment like the [BSCI Self-Assessment for Producers](#), or a code of conduct such as the [BSCI Code of Conduct](#) or the [ETI base code](#).
- For more information, see our special study on [Sustainability in the Home Sector](#).

## What are the requirements for niche markets?

### Fair trade

The concept of fair trade supports fair pricing and improved social conditions for producers and their communities. Especially when the production of your picnic baskets is labour-intensive, fair-trade certification can give you a competitive advantage.

Common fair-trade certifications are from:

- [World Fair Trade Organisation \(WFTO\)](#)
- [Fairtrade International](#)
- [Fair For Life](#).

### Tips:

- Ask buyers what they are looking for. Especially in the fair-trade sector, you can use the story behind your product for marketing purposes.
- Check the [ITC Standards map database](#) for more information on voluntary standards and their requirements, including fair production.

## Crystalline Silica in ceramics

[Respirable crystalline silica](#) (RCS) can cause lung cancer through inhalation. The ceramics industry mostly uses

crystalline silica in the form of quartz and cristobalite. Although European legislation cannot regulate working conditions in non-European countries, European buyers care about worker safety. They may demand good handling of crystalline silica during production.

### Tip:

- See the [European Network on Silica](#) for more information in various languages. For instance the [Agreement on Workers Health Protection through the Good Handling and Use of Crystalline Silica and Products containing it](#), a [Good Practice Guide](#) and the European national [Occupational Exposure Limits](#).

For more information, see our study about [buyer requirements for Home Decoration & Home Textiles](#).

## 5. What competition do you face on the European picnic basket market?

The competition for picnic baskets does not differ significantly from the sector in general. Refer to our [10 tips for doing business with European buyers](#).

## 6. Which channels can you use to put picnic baskets on the European market?

The market channels and segments for picnic baskets are similar to those for the sector in general.

### Market channels

Picnic baskets consist of various elements, produced in different industries. This makes the supply chain in the country of origin more elaborate than for other home products, often involving collaborations between a number of manufacturers. In the market, there is no difference in marketing between picnic basket and other products for the home.

Figure 2: Supply chain for picnic baskets

In the European market, picnic baskets are commonly distributed both offline and online through garden centres, DIY outlets and general home decor retailers.

### E-commerce

E-commerce in home decoration is increasing and can help you reach a broader range of customers. Retailers often combine online and offline channels. Consumers research and purchase products online, shopping around and comparing prices on home decoration items. To supply e-commerce retailers you must be able to work with individual packing and labelling, as well as limited minimum orders.

### Tips:

- See our special study about [E-commerce in Home Decoration & Home Textiles](#) for more information.
- Target online business-to-consumer retailers if you can meet the additional requirements.



## Trade fairs

The following trade fairs are useful sources for finding trading partners in Europe.

- [Ambiente](#), Frankfurt, February
- [Maison et Objet](#), Paris, January (main event) and September
- [Spoga + gafa](#), Cologne, August (specifically for the garden)
- [Spring Fair](#), Birmingham, February

## Market segments

Design differences across market segments are limited. The main differences are in the textile lining, quality, material type and range of tableware options.

There is no low-end market for picnic baskets, although there is a healthy top end due to associations of picnicking with glamorous life. In this high-end segment picnic baskets contain a broader range of products, often including more luxurious (tableware) items. Examples are picnic blankets, cooler bags, a thermos, as well as wine glasses and ceramic crockery instead of melamine cups and plates.

Since picnic baskets are composite products, containing the basket and its contents, industries need to be fairly sophisticated to play a meaningful role in this category. With China dominating the lower sections of the market, ranging from mid-low to mid-mid, your best options are in the mid-high to premium segments. Especially if you already specialise in basketry.

## 7. What are the end-market prices for picnic baskets?

Prices depend on size and content. Picnic baskets are fairly exclusive items, catering for the needs of a slightly more elevated consumer. Hence, there are no real low-end examples with typical mass features such as limited durability, two-for-one pricing and 100% synthetic materials. Picnic baskets start from the mid-market and have a healthy upper end for the more glamorous consumer.

Table 2 gives an overview of the prices of picnic baskets in the middle and high market segments.

Table 2: Indicative consumer prices of picnic baskets

	Middle-end	High-end
Picnic baskets	€50–150	€150 and over

Consumer prices depend on the value perception by the consumer in a particular segment. This is influenced by your marketing mix: product benefits, promotion (brand or not, communication of product benefits), points of sale (reseller positioning), and a matching price. For consumers shopping at a garden centre, price expectations are different from those at a premium department store.

Shipping, import and handling add 25% to the price of your picnic baskets. Wholesalers account for a further 100% markup. Finally, retailers may add another 100–150% to the price.


### Tips:

- The value perception of your product in the chosen segment determines its price. The quality and price of your picnic baskets must match what is expected in your chosen target segment. To determine your price, study consumer prices in your target segment and adjust your cost accordingly.
- Understand your segment. Offer a correct marketing mix to meet consumer expectations. Adapt your


business model to your position in the market.

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