Hawaii was the theme for this picnic at last year's competition.

Picnics part of spirited competition of polo weekend

In the past 26 years, picnics have become just as prominent as ponies at the annual Polo for Heart tournament. But this isn't your average picnic.

No, polo picnickers are a festive but fiercely competitive bunch who arrive at the playing field toting baskets brimming with gourmet foodstuff, delectables and the finest wine. Their goal is to win over a group of judges charged with choosing the most spirited feast this side of Richmond Hill.

"We're continually amazed at the incredibly inventive food displays that our picnickers come up with year after year," says Barbara Trull, one of this year's judges.

"When we see them drive onto the field with tables, chairs and awnings sticking out of their sunroofs and trunks, we never know what to expect. And then, when they finally unpack and set up their fantastic family feasts, it's a real 'wow' moment."

Some families spend the afternoon trying to outdo each other by staging the most elaborate or unique picnics. Picnics are scored for creativity, colour coordination, food and attire. A new first and second place winner is chosen every day of the three-day fundraising polo tournament.

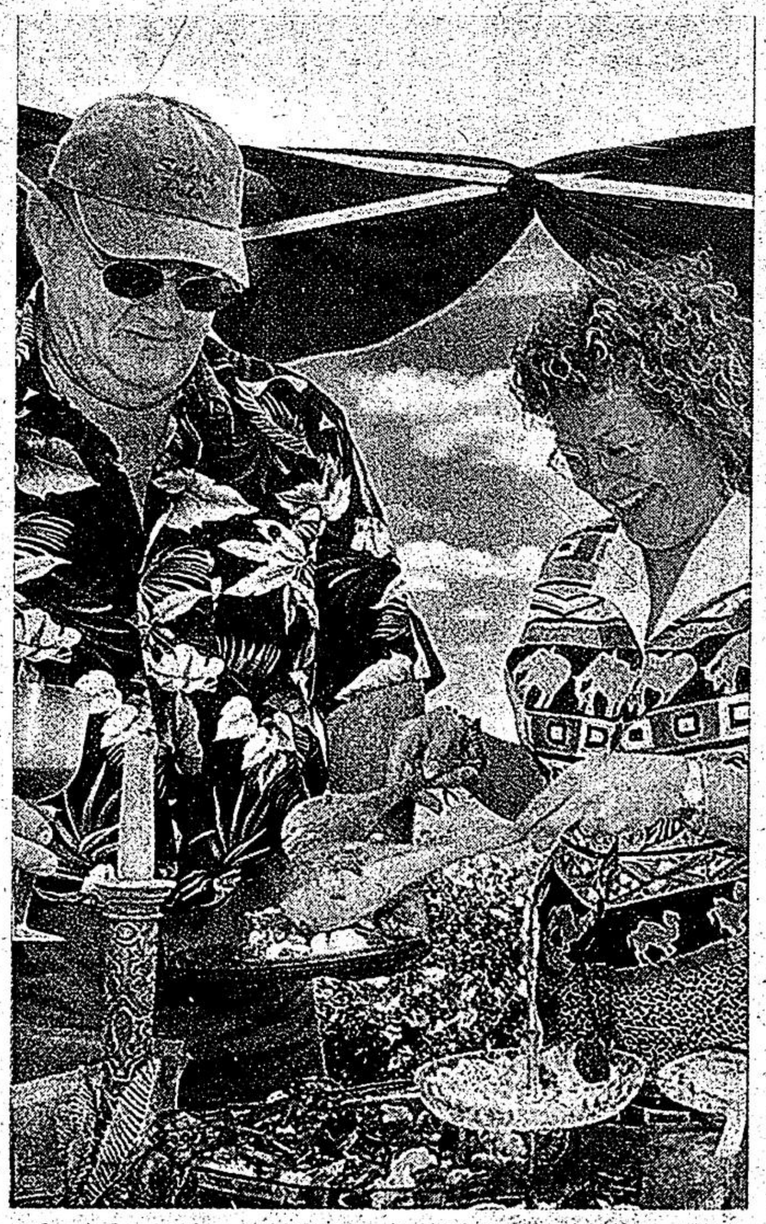
Past winners have based their picnics on colours, nationalities, and their favourite activities. One family set up a Tuscan-style feast complete with mussels, exotic meats and salads. Another mounted an entire black-and-white theme, colour-coordinated right down to the place settings, tablecloths and the family clothing. They even brought in their pet Dalmatian dogs and served up white rice, sushi and black olives.

Ms Trull says it takes painstaking planning to perfect a captivating picnic. Serious participants haul out English tea pots, fine china, crystal glasses, linen, silver candelabras and great sun umbrellas.

They make sure to pack food that will last in the sun, including delicacies such as smoked salmon and brie cheese served with white wine spritzers.

"With an abundance of elegant food, exceptional wine, brilliant weather and outstanding polo, there's really no better way to spend an afternoon in the country," says Ms. Trull.

For those who don't put together a gourmet picnic, the Aurora Lions Club will be serving up robust country fare each day.



When planning your picnic menu, it's important to consider foods that will endure the heat, even if you do bring a canopy.

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