

Camping Food

A Whole Bunch of Suggestions to Help You Eat Better in the Great Outdoors

Here are bunch of camp food suggestions from some of the good folks on the Scouts-L Youth Groups Discussion List.

Minute Rice and Other Good Things

To add to Ronalds suggestions; Minute Rice now has a long grain and wild rice mix that was a hit on our last outing. I am a big fan of Ziplock Freezer bags, put the mix in the Ziplock bag and add boiling water. The bags are strong enough to not melt or break. I usually use two, just in case but have never had one fail.

On the subject of bag cooking, check out your local health food store for dehydrated refried beans. Rehydrate in the bag, squeeze onto a tortilla, add cheese and salsa and you have a crowd pleasing fast lunch entree.

Tomato powder has many uses, you can get tomato bouillon in the Mexican food section of Wal-Mart Supercenters.

-- Thanks to Greg Gough, SM Troop 201, Ozark, MO

Some Backpacking Suggestions

Backpacking chow can be really good if you just think about it. The old standby with me is Ramen noodles. Take a package or two of Ramen (more if you're feeding more people) and prepare according to directions. Add a can of boned chicken, tuna, or whatever to the noodles to heat. Add chopped scallions, green pepper, dried and reconstituted mushrooms, sun-dried tomatoes, slivered carrots, or any other backpackable veggie (one that won't get crushed easily and will keep a day or two out of the fridge).

The Ramen noodles also don't require draining, as the water you use becomes the soup when you add the seasoning packet. Have Koolaid or instant iced tea with this, some dried fruit, pita bread and margarine out of a squeeze bottle, and you've got a fine high-carbo meal that will stick with you the next day during the next 10 miles.

I've also tried the spaghetti sauce out of an envelope, not a jar. This is pretty good, too, although a bit bland. The package directions call for 2 1/4 cups water, a couple tablespoons of oil, and a small can of tomato paste. Bring this to a boil, add the packet of spices, and simmer 15 minutes. Add to it whatever else you want in the way of veggies. I add summer sausage here, since summer sausage keeps without refrigeration as long as you don't open the packet. Angel hair pasta works well, too, since it only takes 2-3 minutes to cook. And add some spices to jazz up the sauce.

Any of you tried making a backpacking DO? I saw this at a roundtable a couple of months ago. Buy a 9" pie pan, and 2 8" cake pans. Bolt the pie pan back-to-back to one of the cake pans by drilling holes and using short bolts. The pie pan becomes the lid to the DO, and the cake pan on top is where you put the coals when you are baking. The second cake pan is where the food goes. Set the contraption on some rocks and put coals underneath, and coals on top, and you've got a small but serviceable backcountry DO--works great on brownies, biscuits, etc.

Breakfasts in the back country are usually of the Poptart/bagel/dried fruit/coffee/cocoa variety, although we make pancakes once in a while with the pancake flour that only requires adding water. Instant dehydrated syrup is about the only item I need to buy at a specialty camp food store these days.

Lunches are invariably of the trail variety--i.e., no cooking. Deviled ham or chicken, pita bread, cheese, dried fruit again, maybe a carrot stick, Koolaid, etc. Some of my guys even eat Vienna sausages (urrrrrpp....)

There are also a ton of DO cookbooks around, and I think one is available through someone on this list.

-- Thanks to Pete Farnham, SM, Troop 113, GW District, NCAC, Alexandria, VA

Meal Planning

One thing we have used to help them think up ideas is the one-pot-meal planner table. Write on the board 4 column headings:

Meat/Protein ----- Starch ----- Sauce ----- Vegetable

Begin with the first column. Ask the Scouts to list all of the meat or other protein foods they can think of. Chicken, beef, cheese, eggs, etc.

Then go to the second column, list the starches: bread, pasta, rice, potato, stuffing mix, etc.

The third column: tomato sauce, gravy, soy, teriyaki, cream, etc.

Finally, the vegetables: you get the idea (somehow spinach never makes it up there).

Now, let's plan a one-pot meal: take one item from each column and put them all in one pot.

Now some preparation might be needed for some components, and some items might need special cooking techniques, but that's how you can teach them to begin planning and cooking real meals. By picking your foods carefully, you can create some interesting backpack meals as well.

When we started this about 5 years ago, we saw a lot of macaroni & cheese and spaghetti. We seldom see either any more, and in fact, one time the Patrol Leader changed the menu because he wanted mac/cheese and his patrol revolted, refusing even to eat it. The last few camporees, our patrols have consistently received honorable mentions in the cooking competitions.

If you don't raise the expectations, you won't ever see your Scouts really learn to cook.

-- Thanks to Alan R. Houser ** Scoutmaster, Berkeley Troop 24 **

Sausage for Backpacking

Read a number of people had tried Landjaeger sausage for their backpacking outing & commented how well it kept, but most could not remember they had gotten it, "Just somewhere in Wisconsin." I have an address that hopefully will help: Ruef's Meat Market, 538 First Street, New Glarus, WI 53574. (608) 527-2554 - They do ship. They make it themselves using the "old recipe" It truley is a Swiss sausage using both beef & pork, never needs refrigeration, so makes the perfect backpacking snack & better tasting than dried jerky. No, I don't own the company, just learned about it as my son was learning about the Swiss people, while earning his American Cultures Merit badge. No doubt a few "Wisconsin" bragging rights from me also! Hope it helps

-- Thanks to Cindy, Troop 760, Horicon

Here's a Few Quick Guidelines for Planning Camping Menus

First of all think of the planned activities and adjust the menu accordingly. Choosing dishes that can be prepared with the gear that will be available, keeping in mind trash disposal

facilities, is the first step. Of course you can be more exotic with meals prepared on a car camping trip vs. backpacking. The other main concern is any special dietary requirements for the individuals participating.

The main nutritional item to worry about is energy. Carbohydrates, proteins and fats are the primary energy sources to consider. Carbos and proteins are about equal, but fats carry about 2.25 times the calories per pound. On most typical Scouting trips that would not be important but I've read of climbers on extreme mountaineering treks who took 70% of their daily caloric intake as margarine (yuck). Carbos are easier to digest and "come on line" faster than fats which often take a few hours become available.

Energy requirements increase with activity, of course, but one should also take cold weather and water sports into account. In both cases the body burns a lot of fuel just keeping warm. Now a few of Dan's rules of thumb for menu planning:

1. Remember the 13th point of the Scout Law: "A Scout is hungry."
2. For high activity outings like backpacking in mild weather figure figure 4 oz (110 or so grams) of DRY carbos per person per meal. That would include rice, dehydrated potatoes, oatmeal, or pasta. Include anything like spaghetti sauce that accompanies the bulk carbos as a condiment. You can cut back slightly with meals that have extra fat like macaroni and cheese, but not too much. Bulk is important particularly for the evening meal.
3. If a protein source is to be the main course of the meal again figure about 4 oz of cooked meat or dry beans/peas as a portion. For a trail lunch a total of 4 oz of summer sausage or luncheon meat and cheese along with bread or crackers make a good portion.
4. Meals should be planned around the "core" entry but just like buying a car it's the extras that make it enjoyable. Most boys like sweets and including candy or a few cookies on the menu. When backpacking the guys I've camped with really enjoy a cup of hot soup or bullion as a prelude to dinner. As soon as a campsite is selected fire up the stove and get some water boiling. A quick hot drink perks everybody up while camp is being set up. Point #4 makes the difference on how enjoyable camp meals can be. And remember the lesson I learned when I took a crew backpacking for a week for only \$34 each (including gas for a 6 hr drive each way).

DON'T PLAN OATMEAL FOR BREAKFAST EVERY DAY.

Even oatmeal fans don't like it THAT well.

As for the cost, who plans the menu, and who buys the food:

I feel the cost of the outing should be what that outing costs. Our troop usually charges a dollar or two for gas and the patrols buy their own food from a menu that is planned by them and approved by one of the adult leaders. That approval hinges primarily on whether the menu is safe for the Scouts and the environment we'll be in, not whether it sounds good (or even tolerable) to the adult. Usually the adults function as their own patrol for meals and supervise the Scouts from afar as much as safety will allow. Therefore, what the guys plan, buy, eat and cook is pretty much their choice. I would counsel a patrol not to cook pork chops on a hobo stove. I would be willing to let them bring "toaster pastry" and bug juice for winter campout breakfast. Scouting, after all, is supposed to be a learning experience.

-- Thanks to Dan O'Canna

Recipes

CAMPER'S STEW

Brown 1 lb. ground beef in a pan; pour off grease. Add 2 cans of vegetable soup and 1-2 cans of water (depending on how much gravy you want). Cook until the liquid boils. Serve with bread and butter. (Serves 3 - 4 Scouts or 2 Scouters)

VARIATIONS:

Dice an onion and brown with the ground beef.

Add a package of beef gravy mix to make a more thicker gravy.

If made in a **DUTCH OVEN**, take a can of refrigerator biscuits and place over the top of the stew while it simmers; cover and add hot coals to the lid; continue to cook until the biscuits are golden brown. **ENJOY!!!**

-- Thanks to Mike Lardie, Barbarossa District Committee Member, Transatlantic Council

One Pot Chicken Surprise

My favorite is the one pot Chicken surprise. I start with a Sweet Sue whole chicken in a can. I put the entire contents (broth too) into a pot and start fishing for bones... the boys love to help here. Towards the end I always announce that there are four bones left... if some one finds a fifth I marvel at what a unique specimen we have. I then set the pot to cooking over a medium flame, and mix in a fairly thick slurry of Bisquick and water. You may add veggies at this point and just let it simmer until the broth thickens. No refrigeration needed here, and it was a favorite in my canoeing post....

-- Thanks to Pete

A Novel Way to Cook a Haut Dawg

A hot dog cooking idea that I'd never heard of before: Have each camper bring an empty carton of milk, 1-quart or 1/2 gallon. Place hot dog in bun. Wrap in tin foil. Put in milk carton, and place carton in fire circle or other safe burn spot. Light top of carton. By the time the carton is burnt to ground, **THE HOT DOG IS COOKED!!**

I have not tried this, but the Ranger said it worked and the dawg was nicely cooked, and the bun was lightly toasted. Sounds like a perfect 'just before leaving' meal -- **NO CLEAN-UP!!**

-- Thanks to Molly Orchardo

Corny Corn Bread Casserole

1 can cream corn

1 can regular corn

8 oz sour cream

1 stick margarine, melted

onion flakes

1 egg

1 package Jiffy corn bread muffin mix

Mix all together and pour into greased pan. Bake 350 to 375 degree oven until done.

depending on size of pan determine length of baking time.

Notes:

Mom makes this in a deep casserole dish and bakes for an hour or so.

When I did this in the dutch oven, I skipped the onion flakes and didn't melt the butter first. It baked for about 40 minutes with 6 coals on the bottom and 20 on top.

A favorite with the boys, won 2nd place in the 1996 Wabuha District camporee cookoff. The boys judged adult division cooking, how did I win feeding them vegetables?

-- Thanks to Bill Randall, ASM Troop 7, Cedar Falls, IA

Foil Dinner Meatballs

Needed:

Heavy duty foil

Frozen meatballs

Canned potatoes

Cream of chicken soup

Place several meatballs on foil, add some potatoes (you may want to slice them first), and a spoon full of soup. Fold packet to seal well and place on coals (never on flames). Turn after about 10 minutes. NOTE: if possible get someone to donate welding gloves to the troop for the turning. Using tongs to flip the packets can often cause the foil to tear.