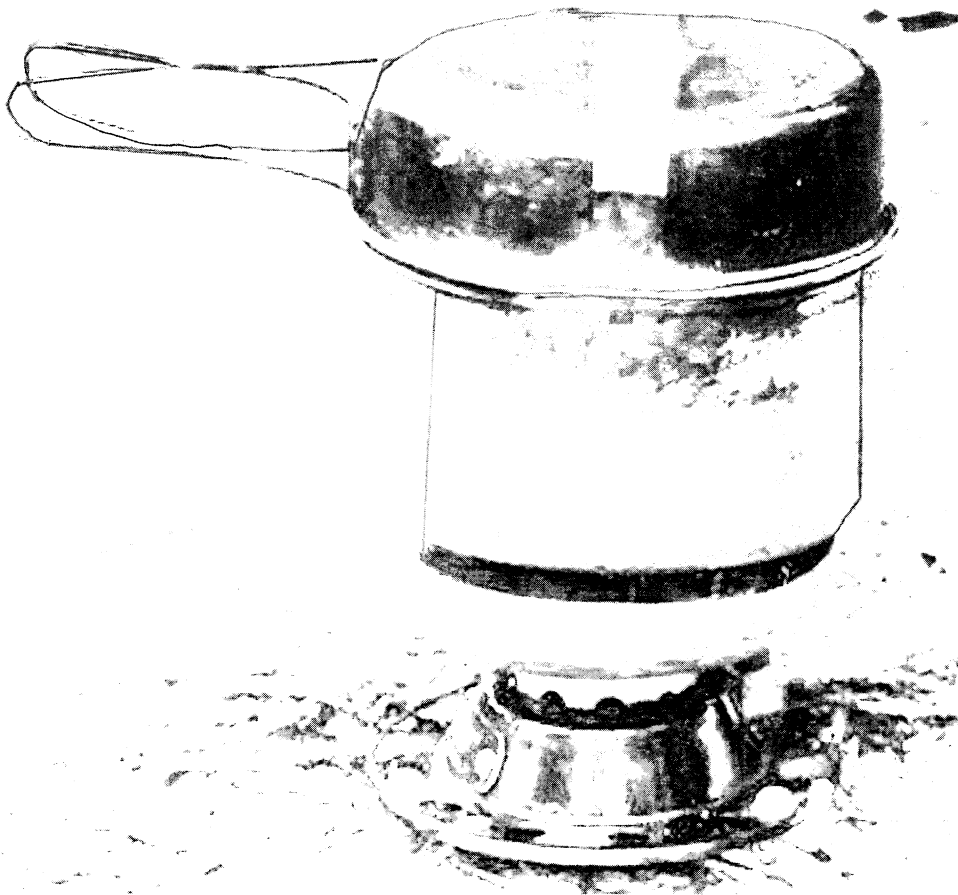


# Cooking and Provisioning for Backpacking

Culled from the experience of the Scouts and Adult Leaders of Troop 11, Litchfield, NH;

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There is plenty to read about Traditional Scout cooking, this presentation will focus on Back packing cooking, where meals must be prepared easily at the end of a long day and provisions must be carried long and hard.

You are planning the menu for a backpacking trip. So why not just purchase a pile of Mountain house or Backpacker's Pantry pouches. These are handy as they only require boiling water to prepare, are very light, well packaged and have the shelf life of a tent peg. So what's the problem here?

- 1) They are not very appetizing.
- 2) They are quite pricey for what you get.
- 3) Most of them are VERY salty, For example a Coleman soup pack has 125% of your daily value of sodium per serving, and you will probably want 2 servings, and that's just one meal.

So what are our needs?

- 1) Nutrition.
- 2) Light weight.
- 3) Good shelf life.
- 4) Ease of preparation (and minimal use of fuel).
- 5) FLAVOR!

Where does all the weight come from? Packaging such as glass and cans are extremely heavy, even paper and cardboard can add up. However the main source of weight is water content, hence all the dried foods. So what does that leave us with? Well, next time you are in the grocery store have a good look around. Staples such as fruit, vegetables, bread, meat, eggs and dairy products will not keep. However anything not refrigerated or packed in glass or cans is fair game! And remember, it's better to carry extra food than to go hungry!! Also check boiling times for all items, rice and noodles can have 20-25 minute boil times, avoid this as it uses too much fuel.

Here are some menu suggestions:

Breakfast, the most important meal of the day.

Oatmeal, The Classic, easy to fix, lots of nutrition, also lots of fiber.

Bagels, with PBJ

Granola

Breakfast, continued

Cocoa/coffee

Precooked Bacon, available in ziplock packages

Dried Fruit

Eggs are OK for first breakfast, but difficult to safely carry.

### Lunches:

All lunches will be cold (no stove use) as usually we have miles to go.

PBJ, The Classic, Be creative; make a PBJ with some granola bars!

Tuna salad or Chicken salad sandwiches, with mayo and relish packets from the deli aisle

Bacon-cheese or sausage-cheese sandwiches for those who can't have nuts.

Dried Fruit

Granola bars

Biscottis!! These little Italian cookies keep well, and are very tasty!

### Dinners:

What's for dinner? On your first night out you are able to bring fresh (frozen) meals, so use your imagination, home-made stew, chili, or what have you. Just freeze your entrée, and it will be ready to heat by the time you get to your campsite that evening. Meatball subs have become a tradition, frozen meatballs and sauce packed in 2 layers of ziplock bags, some sub rolls, and some provolone cheese.

Some tasty suggestions:

Tortellini or Gnocchi and a pack of pizza sauce or dressing packs from the salad bar at the grocery

Bagged Tuna or Chicken and stuffing

Asian side meals (noodles) with cashews, Rice, cous cous, and quinoa can make a nice goulash with the addition of cheese and bacon or sausage, or some red onion. And of course, biscotti for dessert

### **Some other miscellaneous considerations:**

Provide 2 trail bars per person per day, good for on the go snacking and also good for hardship meals

**A must have:** Several pieces of dried fruit per person per day, dried figs, apricots and prunes work well, stand up well to the pack, keep well, much lighter than fresh! (1 pound of dried fruit would be enough for 2 people for 5 days, vs 10 apples that would weight 3-1/2 pounds, and there are no cores to be carry out)

**Another must have:** Gatorade or similar sport drink, enough powder to make 1 liter per person per day.

**On the subject of Bread:** Bread for backpacking must be able to stand up to the jostling of the pack and must last the trip without going stale. This is an instance where preservatives are our friend. Get everything from the bread aisle, bakery bread is good for the first day only. What works: Bagels, Wraps, Tortillas, Pita bread, Scones, English muffins. Most commercial items are good for 3 days in a pack. Why not have Bagels for breakfast every day? Simple, too much bulk! Hardtacks are a good plan for the last days of a long trip but must be stored properly.

***Ramen noodles by themselves are not an adequate meal and are considered contraband and will be confiscated and fed to starving IT students***

A good number of messmates is two or three to a pot and stove. The following menu and compilation is for 3 messmates for 5 days, it's been used for the Troop 11 5-day trip for many years and has been fairly well debugged. As regards fuel usage, for this menu count on 2 8 oz isopropane cartridges (the large cartridge) with a 4 oz cartridge in reserve. For white gas stoves, a 20 oz bottle should get you through, with another bottle in reserve. These figures for fuel are a bit generous, as not every scout will be careful with stove time.

<b>Suggested menu/shopping list for 3 for 5 days</b>		
Item	Quantity	Check
Monday Breakfast: Tilton Diner	About \$15	
Monday Lunch		
Peanut butter, jelly, Smoked cheese, sausage		
Bagels	1 per	
Misc. trail bars, snacks, dried fruit		
Monday Supper:		
<b>Note: Monday is the day for fresh food!</b>		

Meatballs (frozen in cooking sack)	4 per	
Sub rolls	1 per	
Sliced provolone cheese	¼ lb	
Bakery treat (fig square or similar)	1 per	
Tuesday Breakfast		
Oatmeal	2 per	
Cocoa	1 per	
<i>Why not have Bagels for breakfast every day? Simple, too much bulk!</i>		
Tuesday Lunch		
Peanut butter, jelly, Smoked cheese, sausage		
Bagels	1 per	
Misc. trail bars, snacks, dried fruit		
Tuesday Supper		
Couscous	3 boxes	
Smoked cheese	1 bar	
bacon	1 pouch	
Biscotti	2 per	
Wednesday Breakfast		
Oatmeal	2 per	
Cocoa	1 per	
Wednesday Lunch		
Peanut butter, jelly, Smoked cheese, sausage		
Bagels	1 per	
Misc. trail bars, snacks, dried fruit		
Wednesday Supper		
Stuffing	2 bags	
Chicken	3 pouches	
Biscotti	2 per	
Thursday Breakfast		
Oatmeal	2 per	
Cocoa	1 per	
<b>Note: Thursday is when the bagels start to get stale. Good day to start using alternate (hardtacks, scones, wraps, granola bars).</b>		
Thursday Lunch		
Peanut butter, jelly, Smoked cheese, sausage		
Wraps, scones or hardtacks	2 per	
Misc. trail bars, snacks, dried fruit		
Thursday Supper		

Tortellini	2 bags	
Pesto for tortellini, and some olive oil		
Biscotti	2 per	
Friday Breakfast		
Oatmeal	2 per	
Cocoa	1 per	
Friday Lunch		
Peanut butter, jelly, Smoked cheese, sausage		
Friday Supper: Tilton Diner	About \$20	
<b>COMPILATION</b>		
Breakfast (4X)		
Oatmeal	24 pouches	
Coca	12	
Lunch (5X)		
Bagels (lunch for 1st 3 days) 3 x 3 x 3	9	
Hardtacks, wraps or similar (lunch for last 2 days, 2 per)	12	
Peanut butter (for 4 lunches)	1 lb jar (plastic)	
Jelly	1 lb jar (plastic)	
Gatorade 1 liter/day	1 lb jar (plastic)	
Dried Fruit (Dried apricots, pineapple or prunes work well)	1 lb dried	
Trail bars	30	
jerky	2 bags	
Smoked cheese	5 bars	
Summer sausage	5 bars	
Supper (4X)		
Meatballs	12	
Sub rolls	3	
Sliced provolone cheese	¼ lb	
Bakery treat	3	
Stuffing	2 bags	
Chicken	3 bags	
Couscous	3 boxes	
Vacuum packed pre-cooked bacon	1 pack	
Tortellini	2 bags	
Pesto for tortellini	1 pouch	

Olive oil for tortellini	4 tablespoons	
Biscotti	30	

Treats: Hardtack, jerky and other subjects.

### **Hardtack**

This recipe was lifted from the pages of Backpacker magazine and has served me well. It's a newer version, the traditional recipe for hardtack, or "sea biscuits" was simply water and flour. Very filling, keeps very well and surprisingly tasty.

- \*1-1/2 cups of milk
- \*4 cups of flour
- \*4 tablespoons butter (or olive oil)
- \*3 teaspoons brown sugar
- \*1-1/2 teaspoon salt
- \*Cinnamon

Mix the ingredients and roll out to about ½ inch thick. Cut into biscuits with a drinking glass or similar utensil. Since there is no yeast involved you can cut the biscuits, ball up and roll out and cut the remaining dough till it's gone. Dust with cinnamon and bake at 400 degrees, for 20- 30 minutes, the underside of the biscuit should be brown.

Let the biscuits cool and dry for 4 hours or so before you bag them, in order to keep condensation out of the storage bag. Try to bake them not more than a week from your trip.

**Smoked cheese and Meat sticks:** Smoked cheese will last a week in a pack as is, but once its cut it should be used that day. Our practice is for each patrol to share a stick of cheese and sausage with everyone each day.

### **Jerky:**

Commercially available jerky is very salty and expensive, it's not hard to make your own. Buy a steak, marinate, freeze, cut into thin strips while still frozen, dry at 160 degrees F for about 8 hours. A warming drawer set at high will do the job. It's done when the meat cracks when bent. Dry any

grease or fat off with a towel, try to make it not more than a week from your trip.

### **Cookware:**

Black non-stick aluminum pans are inexpensive, conduct heat well and clean easily. Uncoated pans can get the "black ring" pretty quickly. Titanium, although very light is not preferable as the thermal conductivity of the metal is very low, it's very easy to burn your meals and have a black ring of burned food. As a reference, Aluminum has a thermal conductivity factor of 205, Titanium is at 22, and Stainless steel is at 16.

### **Packaging:**

All provisions should be stripped down to the least amount of packaging. If you need the recipe on the box just cut out that portion. Better yet, memorize it. Zip lock bags are our friend. Avoid rigid containers.

### **Storage:**

Most AMC backcountry campsites now have bear boxes, basically a heavy gauge steel job site box. This is a good thing as the spruce trees that make up the majority of the trees at the sites are notoriously difficult to make a decent bear bag setup. Be considerate of others using the box and don't store dishes, stoves or fuel in the box. Of course you will need to store some trash in your storage bag, so keep it neat. Bear canisters are another alternative if you aren't staying at established sites. They are heavy, awkward, expensive and don't set well in a pack. But they are also a requirement in some Parks.