

Food for Hiking & Backpacking



How to Plan, Package
and Cook.

Troop 180

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What to Eat?

- **Anything you want!** (Well... Almost.) IF you have time and are willing to carry it in, cook it, and carry it out. Know the trade-offs.
 - Are you willing to carry the food... the fuel, and the packaging?
 - Will you take the time to prepare in advance?
 - Will you have time to cook it on the trail and clean up afterwards. Leave-No-Trace?
 - Always have Plan B... no cook option. Stoves Fail, Weather or fatigue can interfere with cooking plans?

What You NEED...

- Your calorie needs will vary with conditions and the season.
 - Normally an average adult needs about 2000 cal/day. (About 1lb of food/day)
 - On a summer hike/backpack of 8-10 miles with 2000ft elevation the same adult may need 2500 to 3500 cal/day
 - On Winter hike of 8-10 miles with 2000 ft elevation he may need 3500-4500 cal/day (About 2lb+ of food per day)

Calorie Content

- Carbohydrates (Rice, Pasta, sugar, etc)
 - 4 Cal/gm (~115 Cal/oz) [2.2lb = 4000cal]
 - Fiber (part of unrefined grains, etc)
 - 0Cal/gm (~0 Cal/oz)
- Proteins (lean meats, fish, etc)
 - 4 Cal/gm (~115 Cal/oz) [2.2lb = 4000cal]
- Fats (butter, cheese, fatty meats/hard sausage, etc)
 - 9 Cal/gm (255 Cal/oz) [1lb = 4000cal]

Nutritional Needs

- Balance your food choices to keep yourself comfortable and safe:
 - High fat means less weight.. Right??
 - **Well Yes, BUT: Too much fat can upset stomachs or make some people uncomfortable over a period of time, as can too little fiber.**
 - Watch the Candy and Processed Carbohydrates.
 - **They provide quick energy, but it doesn't last and can cause constipation if overdone.**
 - **Better to have long term energy & warmth provided by slowly digested foods, like natural grains, proteins, fruits and vegetables.**
 - What about Vitamins and Minerals?
 - **Electrolytes to replace sweat losses...**
 - **Otherwise, don't worry about it! Going 3-10 days without a good balance of vitamins will not hurt anyone!**

How long is your trip?

- 1-3 days (2-6 lb)
 - Fresh/Frozen foods, Foil Dinners, Pre-prepared & boil in bag meals, Quick Rice & Pastas, dehydrated fruits & veggies, whole grain cereals & nuts (gorp), granola (cliff) bars, packaged meats, even canned foods if necessary... almost anything.
- 3-5 days (6-10 lb)
 - Frozen foods, Pre-prepared/Boil in bag, Quick Rice & Pastas, vacuum packaged meats, hard sausages and cheeses, whole grain cereals & nuts (gorp), granola (cliff) bars, dehydrated or freeze dried ingredients. Powdered sauce mixes and gravy mixes
- 5-10+ day (10-20 lb+)
 - Work in some Variety! Reduce weight by dehydrating & getting freeze dried ingredients.
 - Dehydrated Foods, Quick Rice & Pastas, hard sausages and cheeses, dehydrated fruits & veggies, prepackaged freeze dried meals & ingredients.

Packing Foods

- Remove bulky store packaging and repack in light, sturdy containers and plastic bags for single/double servings.
 - Share the food load among your group, Enjoy the camaraderie of sharing a well earned meal.
 - Spare water bottles make good dry-goods containers: They are rugged, can be used to mix ingredients and are multi-use.
- Freeze meats and pre-prepared meals in single/double serving sizes. Wrap them in newspaper & plastic bags.
- Oil, Condiments, Herbs & spices in small containers and/or in plastic bags for extra spill protection. (label them!)
- Put crackers, sandwiches, soft fruit, etc. in hard plastic containers to prevent crushing and seal in plastic bags (or eat mush and crumbs... or worse, have a mess in your pack that will attract animals!)
- Pack it all in a single stuff sack or container for hanging away from animals. Have a spare sack for trash.

Choosing Foods for Breakfast

- Choose for quick preparation & easy cleanup. You will often be in a hurry to get on the trail to beat weather, especially in high mountains.
- Basic Carbs get the fires burning in the cold mornings...
 - Choose foods that can be served hot or cold in case you can't, or don't want to cook. (Granola instead of oatmeal.)

Breakfast Food Ideas...

- Granola/GrapeNuts/Kashi (~120 cal/oz)
 - FreezeDried berries/fruit for flavor.
- Powdered Eggs/Whole fat powdered milk
- Dried fruit (low calorie density, ~60/oz)
- MaltoMeal, Oatmeal, or Quick Rice (with dried Fruit & brown sugar)
- Bread/Bagels to make French toast (brown sugar and warm water make a good syrup substitute.) [Watch out for freezing bagels...]

Choosing Foods for Lunch

- Can you walk and chew your food at the same time? (In winter and at altitude, stopping can mean getting very cold.)
- Hydration, Hydration, Hydration!!!
 - Avoid the Hazardous H's (Heat Exhaustion, Heatstroke, Hyponatremia and Hypothermia)
 - Drink frequently with added Electrolytes. (& sometimes added calories)
- Sandwiches and Candy bars are good but can get mushed or melted.
- If stopping to cook, dinner rules apply.

Some Lunch Ideas...

- Gorp, Dehydrated Fruits, Nuts, M&Ms
- Protein bars, Cliff Bars, Granola bars
- Beef Jerky, Hard Sausages and Hard Cheeses
- Sandwiches: PB&J, PB&banana, etc (short trips)
- If stopping to cook... Foil dinners, Boil in bag meals offer quick easy preparation and cleanup. (short trips)
- Electrolyte tablets to add to drinking water in Summer, or Cytomax or Gatorade powders are light, convenient and add quick energy.

Choosing Foods for Dinner

- Choose for easy cooking and cleanup. Consider your fuel usage. (Raw beans are light and calorie dense, but use LOTS of time & fuel to cook.)
- Make the first meal out a GREAT one. It may be a few days before you eat this good again...
- Frozen meals (boil in bag) can keep for up to 2-3 days (or more in fall & winter conditions.)
 - They are relatively heavy due to water content.
 - They are more like home cooking and VERY easy cleanup.
- In winter eat higher fat content. It will help you stay warmer at night by providing lots of slow burning calories.

Some Dinner Ideas...

- First couple days (weight permitting)
 - Stews/chilies and some casseroles make great boil in bag meals.
 - Some items don't freeze well or keep if they thaw: Seafood, potatoes, eggs, lettuce
 - Others are great: cooked meats & sauces, beans, zucchini, tomato, onion, corn, rice
 - Prepackaged meats & tuna in pouches with Quick Pasta, Rice or Potato buds with powdered sauce mixes.
- Extended days:
 - Potato Buds, Quick Rice or Pasta; Dehydrated veggies & fruits
 - Hard Sausages, dried meats, vacuum packaged meats & fish, Hard Cheeses.
 - Powdered sauce mixes and gravy mixes.

Summary

- Be Creative – If you are, You can eat almost anything you could want!
- Group cooking & eating is half the fun...
- Consider packaging, cooking & cleanup carefully.
- Balance your time out on the trail against time preparing in advance and the weight you need to carry.
- Eat for warmth and comfort.