
Food Ideas for Backpackers

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When they put together meal plans for patrols heading out on a seven day excursion at Daymar Adventure Centre and Canoe Base near Englehart, Ont., staff have more than the Scouts' immediate health and welfare in mind. The menu is designed to help them learn new skills and practise old. It gives them opportunities to try different cooking styles and techniques and to taste new foods.

A daily menu includes, on one side, a food list and duty roster for each meal and, on the other, recipes and tips. As the days go by, the meal sheets include fewer and fewer details, increasing the challenge and opening up creative approaches for adventuresome cooks.

The emphasis is on lightweight foods available at a supermarket - dried and powdered ingredients, a few small tins, no bottles. Foods you can eat without cooking (hard sausage, cheese, fruit leather) are always a good idea, particularly for days when you face a tough trip and could reach your destination very late and very tired.

From the Supermarket

This list of appropriate supermarket foods offers a good guide for menu planning. The heavier or bulkier possibilities are more suitable for canoeing than hiking, so choose wisely.

Drinks

- Tea (with sugar, creamer)
- Coffee (with sugar, creamer)
- Herbal tea
- Hot chocolate
- Powdered milk
- Sterilized milk
- Powdered drinks (juice, jello powder)
- Fruit juice boxes
- Powdered spiced cider
- Powdered egg nog
- Boxed milk shakes

Nibblers

You can add many of these things to other dishes or use them to make your own GORP.

- jujubes
- dried apricot

- nibs
- raisins
- jelly beans
- cherries
- cashews
- walnuts
- BBQ peanuts
- granola
- prunes
- chocolate chips
- dates
- butterscotch chips
- licorice
- peanuts
- banana chips
- corn nuts
- fruit roll ups
- beef jerky
- crackers
- sturdy cookies
- sunflower seeds
- coconut
- trail mix
- chocolate bars
- granola bars
- pepperoni sticks
- fruit leather
- lifesavers

Breakfast

- Cold cereal: Choose hearty types that won't crumble too easily: granola, All Bran, Bran Buds, Grape Nuts.
- Instant (one minute porridge) and quick cooking cereals (five minute porridge). These are great with nibblers added. Try dried apple and cinnamon, for example.
- Toasted English muffins or compact bread (rye, pumpernickel, bagels) with honey, margarine, squeezable jam, peanut butter, chocolate spread
- Pancake mix (just add water)
- Pancake syrup (in plastic container). Or make your own on site. Melt margarine in a small pot over low heat, add brown sugar and stir until it dissolves. You can add a bit of water to get the consistency the way you like it.
- Bacon: Buy in a chunk; it keeps longer. Bacon will become moldy in warm, damp weather. Protect it before you start by washing the meat thoroughly with a vinegar soaked cloth. Wrap it in aluminum foil and keep it in the centre of your pack.
- Singular sausages (see recipe)
- Eggs (fresh for early in the trip; powdered for baking)
- Cheese
- Instant hashed browns

- Powdered or sterilized milk for cereal
- Brown sugar for cereal
- Rice cakes
- Instant breakfast mix
- Granola bars

A Day 2 Daymar breakfast sample:

- granola with milk,
- bannock from the previous night's bake-up, with
- peanut butter and jam,
- boiled egg,
- tea and coffee.

Use the One Minute Boil for eggs. Boil them one minute, remove from heat and cover pot. Let stand three minutes for soft eggs, five minutes for hard.

Lunch

- Cheese (bars, sliced, squeeze, cream)
- "Sturdy" crackers
- Compact bread
- English muffins
- Pita bread
- Peanut butter, jam, honey, chocolate spread, margarine
- Tinned meats, fish, and spreads
- Hard smoked meats (pepperoni, polish sausage). Protect from sun by wrapping first in cheesecloth, then in foil, and they will keep well.
- Meat sticks
- Powdered soup mixes (fortify with real meat early in the trip). These mixes also add colour and flavour to rice at supertime. Instant rice or noodle mixes (e. g. Rice-a-roni)
- Beef jerky
- Fresh produce: Apples, oranges, carrots, celery, radishes, and cucumber are heavy, but travel well.

A Day 3 Daymar lunch sample:

- Fill pita bread with tinned chicken or ham,
- leftover slaw,
- banana chips.
- Serve with juice.

Supper

- Powdered soup mixes
- Pasta (noodles, macaroni, spaghetti) Chow mein noodles
- Cheese and cream cheese Beef cubes
- Noodle and sauce mix

- Boil-in-the-bag meals
- Powdered mashed potatoes
- Instant hashed browns
- Scalloped potatoes
- Salad dressing mix
- Sauce and seasoning mixes (spaghetti, taco, chili, sloppy joe)
- Hamburger helper
- Tuna helper
- Rice mixes
- Stove top stuffing
- Dip mixes
- Fresh produce
- Fresh meat for the first day. Freeze it before you leave.
- Dried vegetables (mushrooms, onions, peas, beans, carrots, etc.)
- Tinned meats (ham, chicken, turkey)
- Brownie mix
- Snacking cake mix
- Pudding mix
- No bake cheesecake mix
- Cookies
- Fruit cake
- Frosting mix Jello

A Daymar Day 3 supper sample: Curry in a Hurry (for 10).

- 3 tins tuna
- 2 tbsp chicken soup base
- 2/3 cup cream of celery soup mix
- 1/2 cup dry onion
- 1/2 cup dry mushrooms (rinsed)
- 2 tbsp dry bell peppers
- 6 cups rice
- 4 cups dried fruits
- 2 cups cold water
- 1 1/2 cup cold milk
- curry powder

Prepare rice (you need 12 cups water and your biggest pot). Put dried fruits in a pot with just enough water to cover and let stew while rice is cooking. This makes an excellent chutney side dish for the curry.

Add cream of celery soup mix to cold water and milk and stir well. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly, reduce heat and simmer three minutes, adding onions, peppers, chicken soup base and mushrooms. Add tuna, liquid and all. Add curry powder to taste (about 3 teaspoons is perfect). Serve over rice.

Odds and Ends

- bacon bits

- vegetable shortening salt
- pepper
- croutons
- spices, seasoning
- popcorn
- salad oil
- vinegar
- ketchup
- relish
- mustard

Recipes to Make Ahead

Singular Sausages

These will keep for several days without refrigeration.

- 2.5 kg ground beef
- 5 tsp tender quick curing salt
- 2 tsp coarsely ground pepper
- 2 tsp garlic salt
- 2 tsp mustard salt
- 1 tsp hickory-smoked salt

Mix together spices. Crumble meat and, with the hands, thoroughly mix in spices. Cover and refrigerate for 24 hours. Mix again and refrigerate another 24 hours. On the third day, shape into five rolls about 38 mm in diameter. Place 50 mm apart on a metal rack and bake at 150 degrees F (65 degrees C) for 8 hours, turning every 2 hours.

Trail-Proof Peanut Butter Super Cookies

- 1 cup margarine
- 1 cup chunky peanut butter
- 1 3/4 cups brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 2 cups granola or quick oatmeal, or
- 1 cup raisins and 1 cup chopped roasted peanuts

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Cream together 1 cup margarine and 1 cup chunky peanut butter. Beat in 1 3/4 cups brown sugar, 2 beaten eggs, and 1/4 tsp vanilla extract. Mix in 2 cups whole wheat flour and 2 tsp baking powder. Stir in 2 cups granola or quick oatmeal, or 1 cup raisins and 1 cup chopped roasted peanuts. Drop by huge spoonfuls onto a greased cookie sheet and flatten with a fork. Bake 10 to 12 minutes. Makes 18 large cookies.

Sherpa Tea

Mix together

- 2 cups instant dry milk,
- 1/3 cup sugar, and
- 2 tablespoons instant tea powder.

At camp, stir 2 to 3 tablespoons of mix into a cup of hot water. Add a dab of margarine.

Basic Baking Mix

The quantities given make enough basic mix for eight people. Turn it into any number of delicious delectables during evening bake-ups.

Mix together

- 4 cups white flour,
- 2 cups whole wheat flour,
- 1/2 cup bran,
- 1 teaspoon salt,
- 2 tablespoons baking powder,
- 2/3 cups shortening,
- 2/3 cups milk powder.

Then try some of these "basic" recipes. If the Scouts are young and relatively inexperienced in camp cooking, hold some practice cooking sessions before you go so that they can test out planned recipes in easy conditions under supervision.

Basic Bannock: Add approximately 1 cup water to basic mix and stir until moist but not sticky. Shape as you like and bake in a pan in a reflector oven. Good for breakfast.

Basic Blueberry Pancakes (serves 10): Mix powdered egg into basic mix. To 6 cups basic mix, slowly add about 3 cups water or enough to make a batter-like mixture. Stir in wild or freeze-dried blueberries to taste. Dollop onto a hot griddle and watch for holes to appear. When slightly dry around the edges, flip and brown the other side.

Basic Cinnamon Buns: Add about 1 cup water to 6 cups basic mix to get a bread dough consistency as for bannock. Flour a work surface and roll or press out dough to about 12 mm thick. Mix together 3 tbsp margarine, 3 tsp cinnamon, 3/4 cup brown sugar, and 1/4 cup raisins. Spread the mixture over the surface of the dough and roll it up. Slice into rounds about 25 mm thick, place on a greased baking pan, and bake in the reflector oven.

Basic Date Nut Cake: Mix together basic mix, brown sugar, egg powder, chopped dates, orange peel, and chopped nuts. Add enough cold water and oil to form a moist sticky dough. Pour into greased baking pans. For extra flavour, sprinkle orange drink crystals on top, then bake in the reflector oven.

You can also use basic mix to make the crust for individual supper pizzas cooked in a reflector oven. As well as dough, you need spaghetti sauce mix, hard pepperoni, dried onions, mushrooms and bell peppers, hard cheese and Parmesan cheese.

John Curtis is the summer program director at Daymar Adventure Centre and Canoe Base. The article is based in part on resources he offered during a session on dried foods at a fall Scouters' conference in Hamilton Region, and in part on supplementary information he provided. Many thanks.
