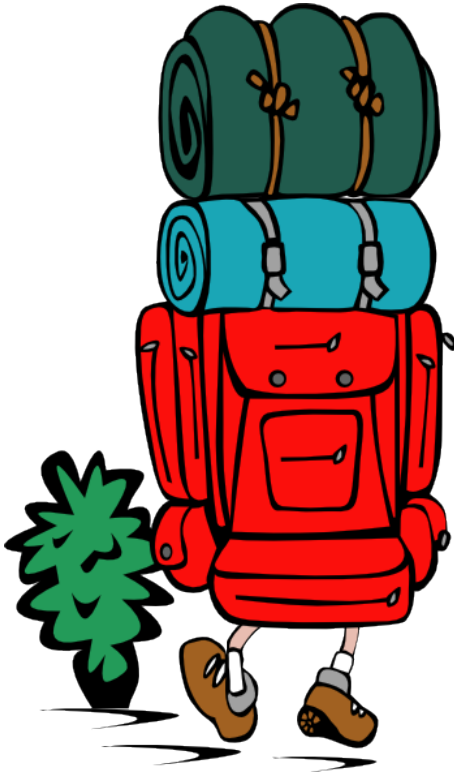


Boy Scout Trail Cooking 101 by Kimberly Cook



*"Not all those who wander
are lost." J.R.R. Tolkien*

When planning your trail menu, there are three important things to consider:

- nutrition and hydration
- health and food safety
- ease of transport, preparation and cleanup

Nutrition

Proper hydration is critical to keep your body from shutting down. Your body can go a longer time without food than without water. Pack a water bottle or water bladder and drink frequently while on the trail. If you start to experience signs of dehydration, which include nausea, lack of energy, dizziness, confusion and lack of perspiration, you should increase your rate of water consumption. Serious dehydration requires hospitalization and medical attention.

Backpackers use up a lot of calories and require a combination of protein and carbohydrates to give them the fuel they need to stay on the trail. Glucose is the fuel needed by your body when performing strenuous activity, such as climbing a steep portion of the trail, and carbohydrates are a major source of glucose. Complex carbohydrates, found in foods such as pasta, provide important nutrients (folic acid, vitamin A, and potassium). Avoid carbohydrates that do not provide nutrition, such as items containing refined sugar, corn syrup or other forms of sucrose.

Consuming carbohydrates at regular intervals during the day will give you the energy you need to tackle strenuous hiking and carrying a backpack. Also, make sure you eat an adequate amount of protein (at least 6 ounces of protein for most people) during the day, which will help repair muscles, digest food, and keep your nervous system and muscles working properly. Include an adequate amount of fiber in your diet to keep your digestive system working efficiently.

The goal for backpackers is 1) eat a sufficient number of carbohydrates at frequent intervals during period of strenuous activity to keep your body supplied with glucose, 2) eat a reasonable amount of protein and fats to help your muscles function effectively, and 3) hydrate continuously.

For a Scout age 12-15, caloric intake with moderate activity should be about 2200. On the trail, a Scout will need more calories because of the increase in level of activity. Daily, a Scout should plan his menu to include approximately 7 ounces of grains, 3 cups of vegetables, 2 cups of fruit, 3 cups of milk, and 6 ounces of protein.

Health and Food Safety

Whatever is packed must be stable without refrigeration or must be consumed before spoilage can occur. Backpackers should take into consideration the weather and expected high temperatures when planning how long your food will last before spoiling. Foods found on the shelf (not refrigerated) at the grocery store are shelf-stable and can be stored at any temperature. These also have a long shelf life, but be sure and check the expiration date to make sure what you buy is still safe to eat and of good quality. Some items that are not shelf-stable, such as butter and cheese, will survive easily for 1-2 days at cooler temperatures. Never take a chance with raw (not cured, canned, dried or freeze-dried) meat or eggs. Getting sick on the trail would be a high price to pay for cooking fresh meat and eggs.

Ingredients should be sturdy and not easily crushable. Dehydrated ingredients should be packed separately from ingredients containing moisture to prevent spoilage. Also, items that need to cook a longer time, such as dried beef jerky, should be packaged separately for ease of cooking. Breads such as tortillas, pita bread, and similar dense items work better than fresh bread. Firm vegetables such as carrots, cabbage or broccoli are good options, but freeze-dried vegetables are even better.

Don't forget to practice good hygiene, sanitizing your hands before food preparation or eating and always after going to the bathroom. Hand-to-mouth contamination is the most frequent cause of illness when backpacking. Washing cooking and eating utensils is important, especially if you are sharing cooking pots. This is a reason to make use of ZPFS bags and a cooking cozy to do your cooking--no cleanup and no danger of illness.

For drinking, only consume filtered, treated, or boiled water on the trail to avoid *giardiasis*, or traveler's diarrhea. Water treatment tablets are a lightweight and reliable solution, but make sure you follow the instructions for using water treatment tablets, as the waiting time is critical to ensure the water is safe to drink.

Ease of Transport, Preparation and Cleanup

Weight of your food and cooking equipment is a primary concern; so, carrying a minimal amount of water, packing a good water filter and making use of dried or dehydrated ingredients will make your pack lighter and your trail hiking easier. Hikers should avoid carrying extra water or ingredients that contain water. Verify in advance whether or not water will be available on the trail, and take advantage of

opportunities to refill your water supply. Remove extra food packaging and avoid heavy packaging, such as glass or metal.

Packing individual portions for most meals or breaking up ingredients for a single patrol meal into separate bags will enable the weight to be distributed evenly among patrol members' backpacks. Communicate clearly with the patrol how much water each patrol member will need for meal preparation and consumption, if water filtration will not be an option.

Pre-measure and prepare ingredients at home to minimize preparation time. Hikers are generally tired and hungry at the end of the day, and you won't feel much like chopping onions or peppers before cooking. Keep all ingredients for a particular meal together in one ZPFS bag, so you won't have to hunt through your backpack for the curry powder. Items that will be cooked together can be combined into one ZPFS bag if they are either all dry ingredients or all wet ingredients. Avoid putting wet ingredients with dry during transport, because spoilage can occur.

The following recipes are designed for the occasional backpacker who does not own a dehydrator. They feature ingredients that are usually available in grocery stores and only require a campfire or small backpacking stove and simple utensils for preparation. The instructions call for use of

General Instructions for Trail Cooking

The most important item to bring is your water bottle or bladder and a water filter. Check ahead of time to see if there will be a water source near your campsite. If not, you will need to pack in enough water for the number of days you will be camping. Don't forget to plan for the amount of water you will need for cooking.

If you are planning to cook, then you will need a way to heat water or produce heat. Jetboil® and WhisperLite® are two well-known brands of gas-fueled backpacking stoves. They use canisters containing a blend of propane/isobutane gas, which will maintain pressure at a variety of temperatures. These stoves will heat water quickly and easily. A Scout can easily cook for himself and his patrol with just a small stove. There are various sizes of these to suit the need. Scouts can easily share use of a single stove, so there is not usually a need for every Scout to have his own stove. Be sure to pack enough fuel. If your stove does not have its own ignition source, bring a matches or a lighter.

Scouts will need a dish and spoon/fork eating utensil, as well as any other utensils needed to prepare the recipes he selects. A silicone bowl makes a flexible and insulated eating dish. It is also possible to eat straight from the cooking bag, if you are not sharing with another person.

Most of the recipes in this book make use of Zipper Plastic Food Storage (ZPFS) bags, usually the quart size. If ZPFS bags are used for cooking (pouring boiling

water into them), it is necessary to buy the thickest plastic version of these. If you are unsure about the thickness, double-bag anything that will hold boiling water. Even if the bags are thick, if the bags have been rubbing up against equipment in your pack, these might leak. When using a ZPFS bag for cooking, it is better to double-bag rather than have hot cooking liquid running down your pants leg. Buying generic or off-brand bags is a bad idea, if these are not as thick as more expensive bags. Using ZPFS bags makes for quick cleanup and minimal dishwashing.

Another helpful device is a cooking cozy. This provides a stable support for your ZPFS bag, and insulation to maximize heat retention and cooking speed. On a cold-weather campout, it is surprising how fast a ZPFS bag and its contents will lose heat. See the appendix for instructions on how to construct one of these out of inexpensive (about \$1.50/cozy) reflective insulation material. They weight less than 2 ounces when empty, and can be washed, if necessary.

Premeasure and pack a single meal's ingredients together, as much as possible. That way you won't be scrambling around looking for a certain spice or bag of noodles when you are hungry and anxious to get your meal prepared. Avoid using pre-packaged meals, as these can be tasty, but expensive. Also, you will generally have a better product if you pack using fresher ingredients. Write the amount of liquid to be added on the outside of the bag and any other instructions with a Sharpie.

When planning you menu, take into account you will be hungrier than usual, because you will be exerting a lot of extra energy on the trail. Pack extra snacks, just in case you get hungry on the trail. A hungry hiker is an unhappy and slow hiker.

Remember "Leave No Trace" guidelines and drain dirty water (such as cooking liquid) at least 200 feet from the campsite or nearest water source. Use your leftover ZPFS bags to pack out all trash, including uneaten food. Of course, on a Boy Scout campout, there is rarely uneaten food.

Where to shop for Ingredients

There are many resources on the Internet for buying freeze-dried meat and vegetables. These are also many shelf-stable options in your local grocery store. Dried fruits and nuts are usually available in the fruit and produce section of the store. Foil pouch meats (including fish) are in the canned meat section. Pasta and rice mixes are found in the rice/beans section. Dried or powdered milk is usually found in the baking section. If you can't find an ingredient, ask the store personnel for help. Some items are found in surprising places; for instance, I found the potato starch in the Kosher food section. Minced dried garlic and onion can be substituted for fresh garlic and onion.

If you decide to be a serious trail cook, you might want to invest in a food dehydrator. These cost around \$100 for a basic model, and can be used to dry meat (jerky), fruits and vegetables.

Be Creative

Don't be afraid to experiment with basic recipes using ramen noodles or rice, adding ingredients and herbs/spices you like. Vary the type of protein you use (soy, chicken, fish, dried beef) in the recipe at home and see what tastes good. Throw in a handful of nuts for extra protein or a portion of dried fruit for extra flavor, texture and nutrition. Combine ingredients you like to see if you can come up with a new favorite recipe. Practice recipes at home to make sure they will turn out as expected on the campout. If you ruin the food or don't cook it properly, you and your patrol will be a group of unhappy campers.

Breakfast

The standards include:

- **Oatmeal:** *Don't forget to include some yummy add-ins, such as dried apples, raisins, dates, nuts, and granola. A sprinkle of cinnamon or dash of vanilla powder (flavored powdered coffee creamer or dried milk) can add sweetness, richness, texture and added nutrition.*
- **Grits:** *Add crushed goldfish crackers and bacon bits for extra flavor and protein. Buy the flavored brands of grits, or bring along your own Butter Buds® or other imitation flavorings.*
- **Bagels, Tortilla Wraps, Pita Bread, and Crackers:** *Spread these with peanut butter and/or Nutella for extra protein and calories. Peanut butter and Nutella can be stored in small zipper plastic food storage (ZPFS) bags. Clip the corner with nail clippers or small scissors and squeeze out right out onto the bagel for easy preparation and cleanup.*
- **Granola or Protein Bars:** *These are ideal for the hiker who wants to hit the trail early without spending a lot of time preparing breakfast.*
- **Pre-cooked Bacon strips**

Hearty Trail Oatmeal

Yield: single serving

- ½ cup old-fashioned oatmeal
- ¼ cup dried apples
- ¼ cup raisins
- ¼ cup granola
- 1 tsp white or brown sugar
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- 2 tsp. dried milk or vanilla flavored coffee creamer powder
- Pinch salt
- ¼ cup pecans, optional

Packing tips: Measure individual servings of oatmeal, dried milk, sugar, cinnamon, salt and store in zipper plastic food storage bags. Put fruit (one bag) and granola (one bag) in a separate smaller bags and seal inside oatmeal bag.

Preparation: Heat 1¼ cups hot water and oats in trail stove and bring to boil. Reduce heat and stir to prevent burning or overflow. Alternatively, put oatmeal in a freezer ZPFS bag and add boiling water. Let rest for 10 minutes in a cozy before eating. Add fruit and toppings and give a stir for one minute. Add granola on top right before serving.

Fruit Cream Cheese Rollups

Yield: single serving

- 1 large flour tortilla

- 1 single serving container strawberry cream cheese
- 1/4 cup freeze-dried strawberries, blueberries or other fruit of your choice.

Packing tips: Wrap the tortilla in foil. Store strawberries in zipper plastic food storage bag with cream cheese container.

Preparation: Spread the tortilla with the cream cheese; top with the strawberries; roll and eat.

Peanut Butter Crunch Wrap

Yield: single serving

- 1 large flour tortilla or pita bread
- 1 single serving container peanut butter or other nut butter
- 1/4 cup granola

Packing tips: Hikers can prepare this ahead of time and store in foil, or you can wrap bread in foil and pack granola in ZPFS bag to assemble at camp.

Preparation: Spread peanut butter or other spread on bread; sprinkle with granola; roll and eat.

Buffalo Bacon & Cheese Bagel

Yield: single serving

- 1/4 cup cream cheese
- dried bacon bits
- 1/8 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 1/2 tsp buffalo sauce or 1 tsp red pepper jelly, optional
- bagel / split

Packing tips: Mix cream cheese, bacon bits, cheddar cheese and hot sauce/jelly (optional) ahead of time and store in small plastic container with lid or ZPFS bag, or pack items individually in ZPFS bags and mix before spreading.

Preparation: Spread cheese mixture on bagel and eat.

Don't Forget to Drink Your Breakfast

Yield: 1 serving

- 1 individual vanilla (or flavor of your choice) instant breakfast drink mix
- 1/4 cup powdered milk
- water (use the amount specified in instant breakfast instructions)

Packing tips: Combine powdered milk and instant breakfast in ZPFS bag.

Preparation: Mix and drink. To combine the water and drink mix, you may want to knead the bag, but make sure the zipper is tightly closed.

Raisin Crunch Breakfast Noodles

- 1 pkg Ramen noodles (discard seasoning packet)

- 1 tbsp butter or Butter Buds equivalent
- ½ cup raisins
- ¼ cup almonds or pecans
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 tbsp cinnamon
- 1 ½ cups water

Packing tips: Pack all ingredients, except water, in quart-size ZPFS bag.

Preparation: Pour 1 ½ cups hot water in bag and let rest in cozy for 5 minutes. Puncture hole in bag to allow unabsorbed water to drain, if desired, and pour remaining contents of the bag in your eating bowl. Always drain cooking liquid at least 200 feet from campsite and water sources.

Lunch and Snacks

"Grab 'n Go" cold lunches are popular on the trail, so ideas are given below for simple items and snacks that can be prepared ahead of time and eaten at a quick stop or at intervals along the trail.

No-Bake Peanut Butter Energy Bars

Yield: 16 bars

- 1 cup peanut butter
- 3/4 cup honey
- 3 cups (quick or old-fashioned) oatmeal

At home: Combine the peanut butter and honey in a medium saucepan and warm over low heat. Stir constantly until mixed thoroughly. Remove from heat and add in the oatmeal and any optional items. Press into a 9×9 inch ungreased pan and let cool. Cut into bars and store in ZPFS bags. No need to refrigerate.

Wraps

- cream cheese or sliced cheese of your choice and pepperoni or salami
- peanut butter and banana, honey or jelly
- tuna, mayonnaise
- chicken salad
- cream cheese and hummus
- cream cheese and salmon

Helpful wrap hints:

- For cream cheese, hummus, salmon, tuna, mayonnaise, and chicken salad, use individual serve packets for safe storage and easy transport.)
- Save unused mayonnaise, relish and mustard packets from fast food restaurants to use on campouts. Once opened, these can be used up in a single meal and will not spoil as long as they are unopened.

Incredible Edible Granola

- 3 cups old-fashioned rolled oats (not instant)
- 3/4 sweetened shredded coconut (optional)
- 1/4 cup dark or light brown sugar
- 1/4 cup maple syrup or honey (or combine the two to make a total 1/4 cup mixture)
- 1/4 cup cooking oil
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 2 cups mixed nuts (nuts of your choice; mix and match to suit your taste--I like pecans and slivered almonds)
- 1 cup dried fruit (optional)

Preparation at home: Combine sugar and rolled oats. Combine syrup/honey, cooking oil, salt and cinnamon. Add syrup/honey mixture to oat mixture and stir with large spoon or use your hands to mix until thoroughly combined. Spread on a large aluminum baking sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes. Stir. If you like your nuts toasted, sprinkle nuts over top of granola and cook for 5 more minutes. Remove from oven when medium brown, but be careful not to burn. Let cool, then stir in fruit, if desired. Other ingredients, such as chocolate chips, can be added once granola is cool. Store in an air-tight container for up to 2 weeks or longer. This makes a great add-in for cereal, wraps or a great breakfast treat. You will never waste money buying store-bought granola again!

Dinner

At the end of the trail day, hikers are usually ready for a warm, hearty meal, packed with protein and enough carbohydrates to replenish the calories that were burned during the day. It is a good idea to provide a dessert for hikers who might need a little something extra after the main meal.

Beef Curry Noodle Bowl

Yield: 2 servings

- 6 oz package beef Ramen noodles, crumbled
- 1/2 cup chipped or dried beef
- 1/2 cup dried vegetable mix
- 1 tsp mild curry powder
- 1/8 tsp black pepper (or to taste)
- 1 tsp granulated garlic
- flavor packet from beef Ramen noodles
- 1/4 cup raisins

Packing tips: Curry powder and garlic can be combined with dried vegetable mix in a single ZPFS bag. Chipped beef can remain in original package (if plastic) or removed to ZPFS bag if original package is a can or jar. Place raisins in a separate ZPFS bag.

Preparation: Heat 2 cups water to boil and add Ramen noodles, dried beef, dried vegetables, and spices (including flavor packet). Remove from heat. When noodles are cooked and vegetables rehydrated, add raisins and stir.

Note: Can serve with raw carrots and ranch dressing dip.

Chipped Beef Gravy and Biscuits

Yield: 4 servings

- 1 package (2.75 oz) white gravy mix, such as Pioneer brand
- 1 package (4.5 oz.) chipped beef, such as Armor Star brand
- 1/2 cup powdered milk
- 4 large biscuits

Packing Tips: Pack biscuits frozen, but also pack near top of pack to prevent crumbling.

Preparation: Combine powdered milk and white gravy mix and add water per package instructions. Stir in chipped beef. Add more water until the consistency is creamy. Pour over thawed biscuits and eat.

Pizza Rice

Yield: single serving

- 1/3 cup instant rice
- 10 pepperoni slices
- 2 mozzarella cheese sticks
- 1 tablespoon tomato powder
- 1 teaspoon dried tomatoes
- 1 teaspoon dried mushrooms
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/4 teaspoon dried basil
- pinch red pepper flakes

Packing tips: combine all of the dry ingredients in a ZPFS quart-size bag (heavy duty, not the thin variety). Place the (wrapped) cheese sticks and pepperoni in a second bag.

Preparation: Place the bag in a cozy. Add enough hot water to cover. Let stand 5-10 minutes. Cut up the cheese and stir into the rice along with the pepperoni. Makes 1 serving.

Not Your Grandma's Chicken 'n Stuffing

Yield: 2 servings

- 1 1/2 cups Stove Top Stuffing
- 1 tsp. granulated or minced dried garlic
- 1 tsp. minced onion (dried)
- 1 tsp. dried rosemary
- 1/3 cup dried cranberries
- 2 tbsp. butter
- 2 tbsp. chopped pecans
- 7 oz. foil pouch (shelf-stable) chicken or freeze-dried chicken
- 3/4 cups hot water

Packing Tips: Pack butter with stuffing, cranberries, and pecans in ZPFS bag. Pre-measure and put remaining ingredients, except chicken in separate bag. Do not remove chicken from store packaging.

Preparation: Add chicken to stuffing bag. Add 3/4 cup boiling water to bag and knead or stir to mix. Let mixture rest for 10 minutes in cozy before serving.

Mom's Best Chicken and Rice

Yield: 2 servings

- 1 cup instant rice
- 1/2 pkg mushroom soup mix (save the other half for another use)
- 1/2 pkg onion soup mix (save the other half for another use)
- 7 oz. foil pouch cooked chicken
- 2 cups hot water

Packing Tips: Measure and combine rice and soup mixes in quart-size ZPFS bag. Put this bag along with foil chicken pouch (unopened) in a gallon-size ZPFS bag, so they won't get separated.

Preparation: Open foil chicken pouch and add to dry ingredient pouch. Pour 2 cups of hot water in dry ingredient ZPFS bag and let rest in cozy for 10-15 minutes, or until rice absorbs all the water. If desired, you can puncture a hole in the bag to allow excess moisture to drain. Always drain cooking liquid at least 200 feet away from the campsite and water sources to avoid attracting unwelcome critters.

Dessert

Graham Cracker Yummy

- 1 sleeve graham crackers
- 1/4 cup diced toasted pecans
- 2 Tbsp powdered sugar
- 3/4 cup chocolate chips
- 3 Tbsp dry milk

Packing Tips: Crush the graham crackers into crumbs, pack in a quart-size ZPFS bag with the pecans and sugar. Put the chocolate chips and milk in a quart-size ZPFS bag.

Preparation: Add 1/4 cup hot water to the chocolate bag. Bring a small pot of water to a gentle simmer (warm). Turn off the heat. Dip the tightly sealed chocolate bag until the chocolate mixture is completely immersed in the water. This will melt the chocolate. Take care not to burn your hands or touch the bag directly to the pot surface. When chocolate mixture is melted, add the graham cracker crumb bag to the chocolate bag and knead to mix thoroughly. This is best eaten warm or you can let it cool and break into chunks for snacking later.

Rice Pudding

- 2/3 cup instant rice
- 1/3 cup raisins
- 1/3 cup brown sugar
- 3 Tbsp dry milk
- 1 tsp potato starch
- 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 cup boiling water

Packing Tips: Pack all dry ingredients in quart-size ZPFS bag.

Preparation: Heat one cup of water to boiling. Add to contents of bag, stir or knead well and let rest in bag cozy for 10 minutes. Stir and eat.