

# JENISON BOY SCOUT TROOP 354

## BACKPACKING MEALS ...lightweight fuel!

When you're backpacking, you carry *everything* you own including all your food. Water weighs almost 2-pounds per quart so you want to carry the lightest dry food you can find. But it also has to be nutritious. Tasty would be good, too. While you can find lightweight, nutritious, and delicious "trail foods" in any outdoor store (Galyan's, Gander Mountain, The Outpost, Bill & Paul's), they're somewhat pricey.

Before choosing food, look at your restrictions:

- On most trails, you have only a small one-burner stove that can cook one pot at a time;
- You must carry whatever fuel it burns; don't simmer beans for 40-minutes at dinner and think you'll have fuel for pancakes in the morning;
- You must carry your trash out of the woods with you, so don't haul individually wrapped items;
- Check the weather forecast; if it's going above 40-degrees, you *cannot* bring anything that needs refrigeration; if it's going below freezing you *cannot* bring lettuce and the like.

Also, consider that you will be doing a *lot* of exercise. A full day of hiking with a pack on your back, up hills and down, under a hot sun will probably cause you to burn upwards of 4,000 calories. Therefore, your normal 1,200-2000 calorie diet will leave you weaker each day. You want carbohydrates: pasta, rice, potatoes, and nuts. You want the sugars and minerals (but remember that water weight!), so you will carry dried fruits: raisins, apricot, apple and banana chips. Do not, as one group of our Scouts learned in the Porcupine Mountains State Park, think that lightweight Ramen noodle "bricks" will keep you going for days on end.

### GORP IS NOT GROSS

You will not want to stop and prepare a meal constantly, so you carry "trail mix" which most people call "gorp". (Good Ol' Raisins and Peanuts, according to some). Mix in a few M&Ms and dried fruit to have a tasty snack for that 10am/2pm trail break. You can find this stuff everywhere these days. Some penny pinchers go to Sam's Club looking for bags of ingredients to mix, but unless you're making several pounds of gorp, it's as cost effective (and certainly more efficient) just to buy it pre-made for around \$2 or \$3 per pound. A half-pound would last a weekend (36 hour) hike, no problem. Toss some granola or "energy" bars into your fanny pack, too. *GatorAde* comes powdered.

### DRIED FOODS IN EVERY GROCERY STORE

If you look carefully when you shop, you will find more backpacking food than you imagined. The easiest is quick-cooking pasta like macaroni, spaghetti, flat noodles, and cous-cous. Toss a bouillon cube into your noodles or cover with gravy made from powder and they become almost tasty! Add re-hydrated meat/veggies and you have a 1-pot meal! Flavored instant rice cooks up quickly. Stove Top Stuffing is another quick-cooking filler. Hungry Jack is just one brand of instant potato that comes in many different flavors. Wrap food in tortillas; use "instant salsa". You can find many "food kits", too:

noodles with dried flavorings, vegetables, mushrooms, and meat. Potato soup mixes make flavorful "mashed potatoes" when you use less water.

You can buy dried meat (jerky) and munch on it along with your meal or you can find dehydrated meats (or make your own; small dried turkey chunks rehydrate very nicely in a half-pint container during your afternoon hike). Don't overlook the canned meats: tuna, chicken, Spam. (Of course, that means you also have to carry the empty can away with you.) If your budget is high, pre-cooked bacon lasts almost forever. So does your basic old-time salt-cured ham. On Isle Royal a few years ago, one "food team" carried a bag of flavored *falafel* for 8 days so that, on the last night when everyone else was down to tasteless macaroni, these guys could make a paste that fried into "hamburgers". You should have seen the envy on other faces when they poured the gravy over it! Creativity is A Good Thing!

Breakfast? Pancake mix, powdered egg mix, Instant Breakfast, Tang, granola or even cereal (milk from powder, of course). In any weather, you just cannot beat flavored instant oatmeal; throw in a handful of raisins, dried cherries or cranberries! Remember the hot chocolate. Adults might want tea. Coffee comes in "singles" like tea these days, too.

Lunch: bagels travel well in your pack. So do lightly leavened crackers ("pilot biscuits"). Pack crackers that are more fragile in Gladware or a Pringles Chips can. Your favorite peanut butter packaged in a squeeze tube (2 for \$1 at the Dollar Store) may look downright disgusting as you lay a lump on the bread, but it tastes as good as at home when you squeeze jelly next to it. Soup mixes abound in the store (and many can be made into dinner). Ramen "bricks" travel well to make a nice hot soup on a cold hike.

Remember dessert! Pudding is great. Crumble up Oreo cookies to sprinkle on top of pistachio pudding to make "Grasshopper Pie". Muffin mix (with fruit!) is perfect if you make it up with just water and powdered milk. You can cook for the next day if you *fry* it over a low heat as a "bannock bread". Or fry corn bread mix. With a small campfire, if you have the extra oil, make funnel cake donuts. With a small campfire and a little ingenuity, you can *bake*!

Milk in recipes must be *dried powdered milk*. Look for "water only" mixes. Pancakes are fine without butter (and you remembered a small plastic bottle of syrup or honey, right?). Be sure to bring small containers of salt, pepper and whatever other spices you like (a 35mm film can works well). Bring a little (2 ounce) plastic bottle of vegetable oil for the fry pan.

### PACK IT IN - PACK IT OUT

Aside from weight in your backpack, the next consideration is space. Leave all that cardboard packaging at home. As you design your one-pot meals, put all ingredients that will be mixed together in the pot in one small zip-style bag. Be sure to squeeze out the air. *Write the directions on the bag in indelible marker!* Put all bags from the same meal into a bigger bag. *WRITE DIRECTIONS ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE BIG BAG!* You will find many uses for quart, gallon and 2-gallon size bags (the big ones are perfect for keeping spare clothes dry, even in a canoe). Put your trash in the first meal's big bag and bring it home with you.

### SANITATION

Remember the soap, wash cloth, and towel. A small container of waterless hand cleaner makes your food preparation germ free.