

Tips for Food Packing and Cooking Methods for Canoe Tripping

Ceyana Canoe Club (April 2022)

Waterproof and Animal Proof Containers Tips

There are a variety of waterproof/animal proof containers that you can use to pack your food: barrels with barrel backpack harness, dry bags, canvas portage packs, bear bins/bags and wanigans in various sizes available to make and to purchase. What you choose depends on the type of trip you are taking and also on your budget, if you will need to portage gear, if you are in bear country etc. A sturdy pail with snap-on lid or the handy screw-on lid available at camping stores is an inexpensive way to waterproof your food, but not necessarily make it bear proof. Commercially made bearproof canisters and bags are available to purchase. If you take a cooler, be sure to use a strap to keep it closed tight if you upset your boat.

Food Organization Tips:

Prepack and label individual meals, use heavy duty freezer bags with zip lock closures inside various coloured and labelled stuff sacks and then into the dry bags for breakfasts, lunches, dinners, snacks and beverages or labeled day 1, day 2 etc.

Use Nalgene bottles to reduce damage and leakage for liquid items such as oil or squeeze tubes for PB.

Organize these stuff sacks into dry bags/barrels starting with food for last day of trip, so that the food for your first day is on top.

Pack food away from fuel and stove so if there are leakages or fumes it does not affect your food.

At your campsite, secure your food and toiletries away from animals like mice and bears in animal proof containers such as bear canister. Or hang a waterproof dry bag out of reach to animals using strong rope such as climbing rope. Never cook or eat in your tent, or leave food or snacks in your tent. Cook and eat very far from your tent, 200 metres away. In bear country, consider putting the clothes you wore when you cooked the food into your food dry bag/barrel and store it safely far away from your tent area.

Garbage – PACK IT OUT:

Plan ahead and be prepared, try to minimize your garbage. **PACK OUT YOUR GARBAGE.** Bring an animal proof bag to keep your garbage in and keep it separate from your other gear in your canoe.

Drinking Water:

If you are not assured of drinking water availability, bring a water filtration system and 10 Litre sealed container(s) to store your filtered drinking water. If you bring drinking water with you, plan on 6-8 litres per person per day for drinking and for cooking.

Menus Planning Tips:

Consider 3200 to 4500 calories per person per day, depending on level of activity. Backpacking cookbooks contains practical menus and recipes.

Use a spreadsheet to plan and organize your menu. Keep it simple, plan meals you know that you and your family already love to eat. Be sure to include crunchy foods to complement one pot meals of soft foods. For instance, a crunchy coleslaw to go with a stew, or add nuts and seeds to a soft meal. Take along a paper copy of your menu to help you keep track of your daily plan.

On longer trips, the weight of the food becomes critical. Consider calories per weight that different foods offer. Foods without moisture are lightweight, such as freeze dried and dehydrated foods, and they have indefinite shelf life and are odour free. Store-bought, freeze-dried camping meals and dehydrated foods offer great options. Consult backpacking cookbooks for DIY meal ideas and advice. Bring extra spices if you are depending on a lot of dehydrated meals, as some may be bland.

Pack extra food in case you get wind bound and have to stay out longer than planned.

Cooking Methods:

There are many different ways to cook your meals and what you choose depends again on the type and length of trip you have planned. Some factors to consider are: the size of your group, the quantity and weight of your fuel needs, if you need to portage, consideration of having a minimal impact on the environment, amount of time you prefer to spend cooking. Remember after a long tiring day, you may prefer easily prepared meals to minimize time cooking effort and save on fuel too. Save a wind-bound day or lay-over day for complicated meals or baking bread and desserts.

Backpacking Stoves: some are designed for high heat, others can simmer. Look for a stove designed to burn at low output, if your usual menu involves simmering foods. Some require liquid fuels, others fuel canisters. You can take along a folding backpack bake oven which are lightweight and handy for baking.

Stove boxes that burn wood for fuel: These days you can purchase a variety of stove boxes that use wood as fuel. There are small lightweight folding backpack stoves that use twigs for fuel, to heavy minimal impact fireboxes that burn large pieces of wood. If you know you will have a ready supply of wood on your trip, this may be a good option. Dutch ovens and folding baking ovens can be used over coals for baking anything from lasagna to bread and desserts!

Two Burner Coleman-style Stove: If you have a large group and do not have to portage, this may be an option to consider. These stoves use liquid fuel or propane canisters. A 1-pound propane canister usually lasts a family a weekend, whereas a 5 lb propane tank usually lasts a week if cooking simple meals twice per day.

Be sure to release fuel pressure before packing it. Pack a stove repair kit. NEVER use a stove in a tent or nearby a tent. Use a windscreen or windbreak and your stove will be more fuel efficient. Never leave your stove unattended.

Simple menu ideas and Tips:

--Dehydrated veggies and boullian cube and quick rice/noodles makes a quick dinner. For protein add nuts, can of ham or tuna, powdered eggs or dehydrated vegetable protein.

--Wraps do not take up much space and can be used to make quick meals from breakfast to dinner.

--Trail Mix, energy bars, dried fruit, granola bars, jerky make nice snacks.

--Powdered foods are convenient and lightweight, and can be reconstituted quickly with water.

Examples are powdered milk, eggs, cheese and PB.

--If you bring fresh fruit and vegetables, wrap individually in newspaper or paper towel to reduce spoilage. Choose firm fruits such as apples, grapefruit, oranges and firm vegetables such as carrots, cabbage.

--Electrolyte drink crystals are handy for hot days or in case someone becomes ill.

--A hot drink or light soup before dinner can be an important way to rehydrate.

Food Quantities:

pasta 85 to 110 grams/person/meal;

rice, lentils, rolled oats, pancake mix, grains, trail mix: ½ cup/person/meal

granola 1 cup/person/meal

powdered potatoes ¼ cup/person/meal

1/3 cup milk powder makes 1 cup milk

Kitchen Cleanliness:

--Always wash hands when preparing food.

--Keep a clean kitchen. Scrape food waste off dishes into garbage bag. Scrub dishes and pots in hot water and rinse properly then hang dishes in mesh bag to air dry. Do not wash dishes in any natural water sources such as a lake or river.

--grey water should be dispersed at least 50 metres away from any water source and camping area. Do not put garbage or leftover food into outhouses.

LEAVE NO TRACE

Follow Leave No Trace principles when travelling on the backcountry, particularly:

-Plan Ahead and Be Prepared;

-Pack it in, pack it out;

-Properly dispose of what you cannot pack out;

-Minimize the impact and use of fire.

Resource Websites:

Canadian Canoe Routes: <https://www.myccr.com/>

Mountain Equipment Coop <https://www.mec.ca>

Leave No Trace Canada <https://leavenotrace.ca>

Books:

Another Fork In The Trail – Vegetarian and Vegan Recipes for the backcountry by Laurie Ann March

NOLS Cookery, National Outdoor Leadership School, Edited by Claudia Pearson

Simple Foods For The Pack by Vikki Kinmount and Claudia Axcell

Wild Country Companion – The Ultimate Guide To No-Trace Outdoor Recreation and Wilderness Safety
by Will Harmon