

## Camping Food

Camping food doesn't have to be made up solely of bland freeze-dried dinners and trail mix. With a bit of planning, everyone can make great food in camp that packs light and tastes good.

Good camping food requires the right tools. You'll need a good camp stove, a set of cookware, and probably plenty of water. And you'll also need food. Since camping usually means some amount of hiking, the food you pack will have to be light. Any meat that isn't dehydrated tends to be extremely heavy, making most campers vegetarians whether they like it or not. Especially if you're out for more than a couple days, protein gets to be an issue if your diet doesn't contain any meat. Nuts and beans provide the easiest and lightest sources, with peanut butter often filling in a needed kick of protein at lunch or breakfast.

Though dinner usually takes up the most time and energy, breakfast and lunch are important meals while camping. Breakfast can easily be a cold meal, though it's often worth breaking out the stove for hot tea or coffee with your dried fruit or granola bar. Pita bread or tortillas make handy bases for lunch, as they allow for sandwiches and dips but still pack easily; they're light but don't crush like regular bread. Trail mix is a stand-by camping food favorite, as is dried fruit as they provide quick energy while on the move.

Finally, once you make it to camp you want a big dinner; something hearty and hot. Instant polenta or couscous, though a bit heavy, provides an excellent base for cheeses, dried vegetables, or other sauces, as both are hot and filling. Dried beans and barley make for hearty camping food, though be sure to find those which don't require much soaking or you'll be eating your beans for breakfast the next day. Black beans and rice make an excellent meal, especially if you can find a ready-made store mix which often packs its own kick. It's helpful to have a stove that can easily simmer food when putting together a camp meal; stoves like MSR's Whisperlight are notorious for having two settings: off and hi. Boiling water is easy, but simmering rice or beans for ten minutes can become a battle between keeping the stove lit and preventing your camping food from burning. However, it can be done.

A final touch to your camp kitchen is a small spice collection. Most outdoor retailers sell sets of small containers which are perfect for storing salt, pepper, dried basil, and some garlic powder. It's amazing how much flavor these spices can add to your camping food, even if it's just a dash of salt added to your dried vegetables. With a little work it's easy to make meals better-tasting and healthier than the freeze-dried astronaut meals.