

Backpacking Cookery

When you're backpacking, it's best to keep the weight of your pack as light as possible. Water is heavy so I like to pack meals that require minimal cleanup. I choose meals made up from easily available supermarket foods that require no cooking. I just add boiling water to the heavy duty freezer bag that I pack my meals in and then eat out the same bag. I only have a spoon to wash. The Walmart 1 quart heavy duty freezer bag works well for a one portion meal. Remember that you must pack all trash out with you. Never, never, never burn plastics in a campfire. Incomplete combustion of chlorinated hydrocarbons will result in the production of dioxin/furans which are very toxic.

Breakfast:

I usually enjoy hot oatmeal for breakfast but there's also instant grits and cream of wheat for variety. I pack up my own oatmeal using Quick Oats and fruits and nuts. Take advantage of grocery store products such as instant coffee, tea bags, hot chocolate, hot cider mix and chicken or beef boullion. Lemonade, instant tea and fruit drink mixes are great for making treated water taste better.

Snacks and Lunch:

Plan to supplement your meals with frequent snacks such as granola bars, nuts, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, dried fruits, cheese sticks, trail mix and summer sausage. Protein bars work well but avoid chocolate or anything that will melt or be a sticky mess. Pita bread and tortillas are less likely than other breads to compress and are great for a quick sandwich. I like to mix peanut butter and jelly at home to carry in a small plastic container for an easy lunch. The shelf stable foil packages of tuna and tuna salad also work well with pita bread. Hard boiled eggs are good lunch items but don't forget to bring a few packets of salt.

Dinner in Camp:

Plan meals around lightweight carbohydrates such as instant rice, ramen noodles, instant mashed potatoes, packaged stuffing mix and couscous that can be quickly rehydrated with minimal cooking and cleanup. If you have a food dehydrator, you can cook and dry vegetables and meats to add to you meals but they usually require some cooking to rehydrate. Rely on foil packets of shelf-stable tuna, salmon, chicken and ham for your proteins. A 3.5 oz package is usually the perfect size for one person. Hard-boiled eggs, nuts, pumpkin seeds, summer sausage, pepperoni sausage and reduced fat cheese (such as Cabot 50% reduced fat) are also excellent proteins. For a creamy texture, add a package of Lipton Cup-A-Soup Creamy Mushroom or Cream of Chicken Soup to your carb meals. A teaspoon of chicken or turkey gravy mix also works well. Add the spices of your choice to give the dish a bit of personality. Be creative; don't be afraid to experiment. Onion and garlic powder, cumin, red pepper flakes, taco seasoning mix, curry powder, and thyme are just a few of my favorites. Top the finished product with a handful of French's Dried Onion Rings or nuts. Try out different combinations at home well before your trip so the meals you carry with you will be flavorful and sufficient to provide the calories you need for your experience. Here are a few of our favorite combinations:

Ramen Noodle Tuna Casserole

Use a 1 quart size freezer bag (Walmart brand works well) and add:
1 pkg ramen Noodles (flavor packet removed) noodles broken
1 pkg Campbell Cup A Soup (Cream of Chicken or Mushroom flavor)
onion powder to taste
garlic powder to taste
~ 1/8 tsp red pepper flakes or to taste

In camp, add:
1 2.5 to 3 oz pkg tuna in water
1 C boiling water (more if you prefer a soupier casserole)

Seal bag and place in a cozy or extra clothing for 5 minutes to rehydrate.
Add French Fried onion rings and eat.

Note: A little bland for our taste; next time we'll add a little Taco seasoning to the mix.

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Ramen Noodles and Chicken Casserole

Use a 1 quart size freezer bag (Walmart brand works well) and add:
1 pkg Creamy Chicken Ramen Noodles including flavor packet (noodles broken)
onion powder to taste
garlic powder to taste
~ 1/8 tsp red pepper flakes or to taste

In camp, add:
1 pkg chicken in water
1 C boiling water (more if you prefer a soupier product)

Seal bag and place in a cozy or extra clothing for 5 minutes to rehydrate.
Add French Fried onion rings or a handful of cashews and eat.

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Chicken and Rice Casserole

Use a 1 quart size freezer bag (Walmart brand works well) and add:
1/2 C instant rice
1 pkg Campbell Cup A Soup (Cream of Chicken or Mushroom flavor)
onion powder to taste
garlic powder to taste
dried thyme to taste
~ 1/8 tsp red pepper flakes or to taste

In camp, add:

1/2 of an ~ 7 oz pkg chicken in water
3/4 C boiling water

Seal bag and place in a cozy or between extra clothing for 5 min.
Add French Fried onion rings or a handful of cashews and eat.

3/5/15: We initially used 3/4 C instant rice and it was too much.
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Curried Chicken and Rice

Use a 1 quart size freezer bag (Walmart brand works well) and add:
1/2 C instant rice
1 pkg Campbell Cup A Soup (Cream of Chicken or Mushroom flavor)
onion powder to taste
garlic powder to taste
~ 1/2 tsp curry powder
~ 1/8 tsp red pepper flakes or to taste
handful of dried cranberries

In camp, add:

1/2 of an ~ 7 oz pkg chicken in water
3/4 C boiling water

Seal bag and place in a cozy or between extra clothing for 5 min.
Add cashews and eat.

3/5/15: Excellent! Used 3/4 C instant rice and it was too much so we will reduce the rice to 1/2 C in the future.
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Couscous with Chicken

Use a 1 quart size freezer bag (Walmart brand works well) and add:
1/2 of a 5.9 oz box of Near East Couscous (Parmesan is good)
1/2 of the flavor packet in couscous box
onion powder to taste
garlic powder to taste
~ 1/8 tsp red pepper flakes or to taste
handful of dried cranberries

In camp, add:

1/2 of an ~ 7 oz pkg chicken in water
5/8 C boiling water

Seal bag and place in a cozy or between extra clothing for 5 min.
Fluff couscous. Add walnuts and eat.

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Oatmeal with Fruit

Place in a 1 quart size freezer bag (Walmart brand works well):

1/2 C Quick Oatmeal (Oatmeal or store brand both work well)

~ 1 tsp brown sugar (or to taste)

~ 1/4 C instant dry milk

1 tsp plain coffee creamer (optional: it makes a creamier oatmeal)

dash or two of cinnamon

dried cranberries or raisins

nuts (walnuts or pecan are great)

In camp, add:

~ 3/4 to 1 C boiling water (more if you like a souper oatmeal)

Seal bag and place in a cozy or between extra clothing for 5 min.

Add more water as needed to make the right consistency. Eat!

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Homemade Trail Mix #1:

1/2 C dried cranberries

1/2 C toasted sunflower seeds

1/2 C semi-sweet chocolate morsels

Mix and enjoy.

Homemade Trail Mix #2:

1/2 C raisins

1/2 C toasted walnuts (or pecans, etc)

1/2 C semi-sweet chocolate morsels

Mix and enjoy.

Homemade Trail Mix #3 (my favorite):

1/2 dried cranberries

1/2 C toasted walnuts

Mix and enjoy.