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Camping Food That Works for You

By Nick Smith

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Even though winter – with all its snow, wind, and cold – is definitely upon us, it's never too early to start thinking about camping this spring or summer. And for those outdoor enthusiasts who won't wait for the snow to melt before setting out this winter, there is no better time than now to review a few useful tips to remember when planning your camp menu.

Consider the duration of your trip. Plan on eating about as much while you're camping as you eat when you're at home. If you're car camping and you have the extra space, it might not hurt to take a little extra food; but if you're packing it in, every ounce counts, especially on long hikes. Be sure not to under pack your camping food - the only thing longer than a 20-miler is a 20-miler when you're hungry. Starving your body while doing rigorous exercise, like hiking, could have adverse affects on your health.

Plan a camping food menu that you're willing to eat. Camping food for many people has come to mean granola, oatmeal, and granola. I like them as much as the next guy, but I'm not willing to ruin my week in the woods by packing food I don't like. There are many companies now offering a huge selection of dishes, most of them very tasty, which just require water - everything from roast beef and potatoes to tuna casserole. Don't discount instant oatmeal and granola as tasty options. Just remember, just because you're leaving civilization behind doesn't mean you shouldn't eat what you like.

Nutrition, nutrition, nutrition. You're number one priority when you're camping should be to have a good time and enjoy nature - something that is difficult to do when you're sick and exhausted. Be sure to take camping food with you that will keep you well fed and your energy level up. Energy bars and gels don't usually weigh a lot and pack a serious nutrition punch, making them great for the trail. If you don't cook a lot at home and don't plan to while you're camping, do yourself a favor and eat more than candy bars and licorice. Just about anyone can boil water, so just about anyone can take some prepared camping foods on their trip and eat well.

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Switch things up. If you've had the same thing for lunch for the last 20 years, ignore this paragraph. For the rest of us, variety is important when planning for camping food. Put small amounts of different seasonings in plastic baggies - lemon pepper trout is delicious. Even if you're going to eat oatmeal three meals a day for a week, at the very least take different flavors of oatmeal.

The price is right. It is possible to eat well when you're camping on a tight budget. Instant oatmeal, granola bars, and pancake mix don't usually cost very much and fill you up. Hamburger helper makes for a pretty nutritious, economic camping meal - you'll need to make sure you have all the ingredients. Substitute powder milk for regular milk, and be sure to add enough water to make the milk and the recipe.

Go high tech. Prices on freeze dried and packaged camping food are becoming very reasonable. For less than what you would pay for it in a restaurant, you can have your favorite dishes - and I doubt

the restaurant can compete with the view you'll have when you're camping or hiking. It may be a little more expensive than doing it on your own, but what prepackaged camping foods save you in time, energy, and taste more than makes up for the money.

Get out and enjoy the great outdoors. Whether you're camping, hiking, fishing, or just hanging out in the woods for the day, with a little planning and by following these tips, I'm confident you and your palate will have the experience of a lifetime.

Nick Smith is a client account specialist with

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Introducing Your Kids To The Joys Of Camping

By Gabriel Adams

Taking your kids camping the first time can be a daunting task, if you're not well prepared. But a well prepared camping trip with your kids can be a great joy for everyone involved. Here are a few considerations and preparations you should make before leaving home.

First of all, choose an easily accessible location. You may want to choose a camping spot that is accessible by vehicle if your kids are relatively young. If you want to hike in to the camping spot, keep the distance pretty short. Also, remember that younger kids may not be able to carry all of their gear and food in, so you'll end up with one very heavy pack if you're not careful.

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Here are a few tips for minimizing the amount of stuff you have to take in, if you're hiking to your camping spot.

First, choose a spot with easy access to water. That way you can take in dehydrated foods, and use the water at the camping spot to cook your food with. That will save you a lot of weight.

Also, try taking one or two larger tents to hold everyone, rather than several smaller tents.

A camp fire is another consideration. Campfires and s'mores are a must when you take your kids camping. Be sure you choose a location that allows campfires, and that has a readily available water supply to put the fire out.

When you take your kids camping, be sure that they have the same essentials that you take camping: extra clothing, a coat or rain jacket, food, water, a tent, a sleeping bag, a sleeping pad, etc.

One last thing: before you go camping be sure you give your kids a few basic safety instructions, such as safety with fire, snakes, bears (if applicable), etc. Safety first!

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