

Basic Backpack Cooking Using 3 Methods: Cold, Quick Cook, Full Cook

Cold Cook Method uses ready ingredients or those ready with cold water. No Stove or fuel is needed. This is great for a few short days, but may end up being heavier and bulkier if used instead of stove/fuel due to types of foods/moisture in food. Also, try to choose the most compact foods that can keep (whole apple too bulky, dried apples ok).

Tuna Cranberry Walnut Pita

Tuna pouch mixed with cranberries, walnuts, and a couple drive-thru mayo packets. Eat on pita bread or tortillas. Great amount of protein, carbs, and fat, and some fiber, too.

Quick Cook Method uses foods that need very little heating up, mostly just to rehydrate and add comfort and flavor. You need hot water to dissolve hot cocoa but you don't need to cook it. Warm rehydrated potato flakes are way better than cold instant potatoes. An alcohol stove will work very well for quick heating of water if it isn't too cold out and takes up very little space and fuel. Requires no stove maintenance and is very easy to operate.

Schezuan Ramen Noodle Dinner

Ramen noodles heated in boiling water. Let sit 10 minutes, covered. Add seasoning packet, soy sauce, peanuts, one nut butter packet, and sugar to taste. Optional: add chicken, salmon, or tuna packet for protein. Has a lot of fat, carbs, and salt which can help you hike stronger-or not.

Full Cook Method uses foods that really need to be cooked and require more heating. With this method, you can reconstitute almost any food, even dried beans and corn. Also, you can fry and bake/steam foods. If you add too much water to a dish, you can cook some out. In winter, this method is recommended to help regulate body temperature.

Chicken Pot Pie or Chicken and Dumplings

Add four cups of water to one Lipton's veggie soup packet, four creamy chicken soup packets, dehydrated veggies of choice, and one packet of dehydrated milk (or enough bulk to make one quart). Cook for ten minutes on low. Add Chicken pack. Mix biscuit with water in separate bowl and gently plop on top of heated soup to form biscuit layer--or just make individual dumplings. Optional: Add Ranch dressing pack or grated parmesan cheese—keeps great--to biscuit mix prior to adding to the soup. Has a lot of salt, carbs, and some fat. Make sure to add dehydrated veggies for some fiber.

A few tips:

Plan your meals well in advance. Package all ingredients together for a particular meal. Write your menu down and packaged the last day's meal on bottom and first day's on top of your bear vault/bear bag.

Consider the nutritional value of every meal. Eat a balance of carbs, protein, and fat. Work on getting some fiber in everyday. Fruit and instant oats are great.

Add butter, sugar, and cheese to recipes to increase calories. Salami and jerky can be added to many recipes, too.

Save your drive-thru condiment packets. A packet of soy sauce or hot sauce can greatly improve a meal. Mayo and mustard packets don't need refrigeration.

Try to keep clean as you cook. There isn't a sink nearby to clean up with. And your water is scarce.

Rehydrate foods a few hours before you set-up camp. Have foods in an empty water bottle on the side of your pack.

Try to cook foods you like or just get yourself ravenously hungry enough to be able to lick your plate clean to eliminate food smell and waste.

The real challenge of backcountry cooking is keeping your clothes, dishes, and camp free from any splattered or dropped food.

Use only biodegradable soap for cleaning up and air dry your dishes if possible.

Gravel helps scrub the bottom of a burnt pan. Fill pan with a few rocks and soapy water. Put on lid and shake.

Dehydrate as much as you can ahead of time. Fruit, meat, veggies, pre-cooked rice, veggies, almost anything and everything.

Rely on variations of recipes that you know you like. Do not try anything too different (avoid recipes like "Cowboy Glop"). Use instant potatoes, foil pack meat, grits, bacon, cheese, quick cook noodles and rice in many different combinations.

Cruise the grocery store aisles for anything you need and don't pay for overpriced and tasteless specialty backpacking food.