

# Troop 4

## Backpacking Food Ideas

Oatmeal might just be king of the trail – it's good for you, easy to prepare, and lightweight. For best results, put individual servings into baggies. Add desired amount of sugar, cinnamon etc to each bag. Same goes for instant hot cereals, mashed potatoes, rice and other inexpensive dehydrated foods like couscous, lentils, instant grits, Chinese noodles, hash browns, refried beans, and chili. Visit one of our local grocery stores and browse in their bulk section for a good selection – you can buy as much or as little as you want. REI has a good selection of dehydrated meals and online stores as well.

Check out the cooking times for anything you bring. Some packaged products require more than 20 minutes; stick to preparation times of 10 minutes or less to cut down on fuel usage and hassle.

Make your own trail mix (aka GORP- Good Old Raisins and Peanuts) with M&M's, mixed nuts and raisins. Separate into a daily allotment in baggies so you don't overeat on it during any single day. It's great stuff, but real boring by day 3 or 4. So mix it up with some pretzels, other nuts, crackers, sesame sticks, malt balls, dried fruit, cheese, etc for longer trips.

For a warming breakfast, take along a few flow-through coffee and tea bags, instant coffee packets, spiced cider packs or hot chocolate.

You have lots of powdered soup options to choose from – dump the containers and repackage in baggies.

Look for tuna fish in foil pouches. The packets cost more, but weigh less than a can.

Bread is OK for a few days, but prone to crushing. Try tortillas instead.

Peanut butter is great on backpacking trips – take it out of the jar and put in a baggie. Cut one corner off so you can squeeze it onto your bread without using a knife, then store that cut bag into another baggie.

Some hard sausages and cheeses will keep for several days on the trail; keep well-sealed in your pack and eat first.

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### **Breakfast Backpacking Foods**

- MaltOMeal® (add raisins for more bulk)
- rice (add raisins and dried milk)
- granola (with dried milk)
- fruit cocktail (small cans)
- pancakes (need small pan, spatula, low-heat option on stove, lots of fuel, syrup in small container)

**Lunch Backpacking Foods** (many of these items are great for quick no-cook breakfasts)

- bagels (cream cheese)
- Pita bread
- Logan Bread
- granola bars
- candy bars
- dried fruit
- GORP (nuts, M&M's raisins, yogurt peanuts, crackers, dried fruit, etc)
- Pringles
- crackers (the dense kinds at health food stores)
- Wheat Thins
- Cheeses (string cheese, blocks of mozzarella, etc)
- Tuna (sold in pouches now)
- lunch meat

**Dinner Backpacking Foods**

- Cup O Soup
- Cup Noodles/Ramen
- Lipton Rice or Noodles
- vegetable soup
- potatoes and gravy (3-5 minute gravy mix)
- potatoes and peas
- couscous with dried veggies
- ramen with dried veggies
- spaghetti with dried veggies (use 6oz can of tomato paste to make sauce)
- burritos (tortillas, refried beans, cheese, peppers, salsa, onions)
- canned soups, etc (if you don't mind the weight)

**Liquids**

- hot cocoa (add marshmallows)
- apple cider
- teas
- powdered lemonade or Crystal Lite (masks bad-tasting and/or iodine-treated water)
- Powdered gatorade

**Readily Available Backpacking Food**

Most of the foods listed here may be purchased at any well stocked grocery store. In general, the cost differential between these and specialty backpacking foods is substantial. The drawback is that these items are sometimes a bit weightier than freeze-dried specialties. Most of these foods require water in their preparation. However, items like noodles or spaghetti that require large amounts of water have not been included. Any "noodle-type" dishes included here were chosen only if they use very little water. Keep in mind that almost everything in this list needs to be repacked. Heavy-duty Zip-Loc type bags are usually the obvious choice. Exceptions to this last will be noted.

THIS LIST IS ONLY A STARTING-POINT. ADD TO IT!

TRAIL MIX:

SUNFLOWER SEED (HULLED), BLANCHED PEANUTS, SHREDDED COCONUT OR CHIPS, BANANA CHIPS, RAISINS, CHOCOLATE CHIPS OR M&M'S

The foregoing foods may be mixed to taste. When making a batch keep in mind that sugars are for quick energy and proteins/fats are for the long haul. Balance the mix in a 50-50 proportion of quick and "long" energy sources. Avoid salty or excessively sweet mixes because they will unnecessarily increase water consumption.

QUICK SNACKS:

GRANOLA BARS, FRUIT ROLL-UPS, HARD CANDIES, FRUIT SWIRL BARS, TOOTSIE ROLLS, CARAMELS, "HARD" COOKIES LIKE GINGER SNAPS (make sure hard cookies aren't too spicy – they'll cause thirst.)

FRUITS:

APPLES AND ORANGES (heavy but provide liquid, vitamin C, fructose and fiber)

DRIED FRUITS LIKE APPLES, FIGS, APRICOTS, PEACHES AND RAISINS ARE BETTER FOR LONG TRIPS. Dried fruit can be soaked in water for puddings or pies.

STARCHES:

INSTANT MASHED POTATOES, STOVETOP TYPE SCALLOPED POTATO MIXES OR

LIPTON'S NOODLES AND SAUCE MIXES (the foregoing starches often need dried milk and margarine),

RAMEN NOODLES, INSTANT OATMEAL MIX OR INSTANT CREAM OF WHEAT.

MEATS:

(For excursions of several days)

HARD SAUSAGES (LIKE SUMMER SAUSAGE), COUNTRY HAM, JERKY. CANNED MEATS (Work well but the cans must be packed out.)

(For short excursions -one day- or to be use on the first day)

SMOKED AND POLISH SAUSAGES IN BLISTER PACKS. BLISTER PACKED OR FROZEN "ZIPLOCKED" BEEF OR BOLOGNA MAY BE USED. AVOID POULTRY AND FISH

DRINKS:

FREEZE-DRIED COFFEE, CREAMER PACKETS, TEA BAGS, INSTANT COCOA, CUP-A-SOUP.

BASICS:

DRIED MILK, SQUEEZE MARGARINE, BISQUIK, SUGAR, SALT AND PEPPER

OPTIONAL:

DRIED ONIONS, PEANUT BUTTER, GRAPENUTS, INSTANT PUDDING MIX, MEDIUM TO HARD CHEESE (LIKE CHEDDAR), "SQUEEZE" CHEESE (If you must have bread, don't want to fool with Bisquit, and don't mind the weight, take BAGELS. They are heavy but they don't crush easily.) CRACKERS also work and are light but require a rigid container.

Don't forget the backpackers staple food – rice. It is good for breakfast, lunch, and/or dinner. It can be combined with fruit, meats, spices, veggies and gravys for nearly endless variety. Instant works best for fuel economy.

We have also had good success using the store brand instant tea mix (with lemon or citrus flavoring) and the other electrolyte drink mixes. It tastes ok luke warm (canteen temp) or hot.

On short trips or for that special reward, you might consider the room temp milk packages similar to the juice boxes. Also, take along a small amount of vegetable shortening for pancakes and baking.

BTW, doctor your dried milk by mixing in dried coffee "creamer" at a ratio of 2 part milk to 1 part creamer. The result is more like real milk.

You can also use hamburger or hotdog buns (they are sturdier than bread) or English muffins (makes a pretty good peanut butter and jelly sandwich).

**Produce aisle.** Apples, oranges, and crunchy baby carrots make mouths happy at lunch and snack times. Cucumbers and bell peppers travel well and combine with hummus to make a great pita sandwich. Bags of ready-made salad complete with dressing are good for the first night's dinner. Garlic, shallots, and small onions give any dish a welcome kick. Hit bulk bins for trail mix, candy (chocolate-covered espresso beans or gummy bears), and dried fruit (mangos, blueberries, and pineapples).

**Cereal aisle.** Instant oatmeal makes for easy packing, but if you want more variety, look for the individual cups of hot cereals from Fantastic Foods (Banana Nut Barley or Cranberry Orange Oatmeal) and Health Valley (Terrific 10-Grain!). Pick up zipper-lock bags in the paper and plastics aisle for repackaging. Granola, fruit, and grain bars come eight to a box, which is enough for two breakfasts and two snacks for two people. Choose something that tastes good but can stand up to the rigors of pack life, such as Nature Valley or Quaker Chewy granola bars. Fruit leathers are usually on the same shelf.

**Snack, candy, cookie, cracker aisle.** Most major cookie and snack-mix makers have jumped on the resealable packaging bandwagon. I like the taste of Pepperidge Farm cookies best, but have found that Nabisco Fig Newtons suffer the least damage while packed. Cheese-on-wheat and similar sandwich crackers serve as snacks or lunch supplements. Grab gum, hard candies, and a bag of M&M's (repackage in zipper-lock bags). Hershey and Nestle both make delicious little candy balls in resealable bags.

**Beverage aisle.** Powdered sports drinks are usually located in the juice aisle, but you may have to settle for flavored drink mixes. Avoid the unsweetened mixes so you don't have to lug extra sugar. Flow-through coffee and tea bags, instant coffee (Maxwell House Sanka sells a box of 20 individual packets), and hot chocolate will give you a morning caffeine boost. Cocoa lovers can choose from tubs (repackage in zipper-lock bags), cartons of 8 to 12 packets, or single-serving envelopes of gourmet cocoa. Instant spiced cider usually resides next to the cocoa. Packaged dried fruits are often in this aisle. Ocean Spray Craisins, Dole CinnaRaisins, and all Sun-Maid dried-fruit bags reseal between snacks.

**Baking aisle.** Instant dinners often require butter or oil. Hain is the only brand of olive oil that I've found in a plastic 12-ounce bottle. Replace butter in instant dinners with Crisco shortening for 50 percent less fat and less risk of melting in your pack. Look for foil-wrapped Crisco sticks in plastic containers. Powdered milk for granola, coffee, or instant dinners is found in this aisle. The larger box (without a spout) contains trail-handly 1-quart packets.

**Rice and pasta aisle.** If you're willing to pack along butter and powdered milk, just about any instant rice, noodle, or grain dinner is fair game. Otherwise, choose instant dinners that come with sauce in squeeze packets. Rag? Express! is a prime candidate for spaghetti lovers. Mac and cheese fans should seek out "deluxe" versions (Kraft makes a tasty one), which usually feature the squeeze-packet sauce (look for the picture on the front of the box). Lipton pastas and rices call for milk and butter, but are edible without either. Near East's boxed selections (just add olive oil and water) can help you break out of the same old carbs. My favorites are Creative Grains Roasted Pecan and Garlic, Tomato Lentil Couscous, and Couscous with Toasted Pine Nuts. Look for instant hummus and dried refried beans in this or the soup aisle.

**Soup aisle.** Cream soups need milk, but broth soups from Lipton, Knorr, and Wyler's cook up quickly with just water. Individual cups from Fantastic, The Spice Hunter, Nile Spice, and Health Valley go beyond the norm with flavors like Creole Vegetable Couscous, Creamy Asparagus Soup, Kasba Curry, and Corn Chowder with Tomatoes. Potato fanatics should snag the individual cups of instant potatoes, which, unlike the large boxes, already have milk and butter added. Canned meats and fish usually sit near the end of this aisle. Look for StarKist tuna

in 3- and 7-ounce foil pouches. The packets cost more, but weigh less than a can. Meat lovers should consider Libby's processed meats and Spam, which don't require a can opener.

**Dairy and bread aisle.** You'll find tortillas and pitas near the cheese. Kraft and Helluva Good brand cheeses come in resealable packaging, and Laughing Cow makes small, individually waxed cheese pieces. Individually wrapped string cheeses travel well. Peanut butter, jelly, and honey in plastic containers, plus Honey Sweet powdered honey, bread, and bagels are often opposite the dairy section.

**Deli case.** Near the deli, a stand-alone cooler houses imported cheeses, plus hummus and other meatless lunch spreads in plastic containers. Dry sausage, hard salami, jerky, and pepperoni are usually close by.