

# Troop 278 Ahwatukee

## Backpacking Food Guidelines

**Troop 278 Rule:** For overnight backpacking trips you must cook “real food” – no ‘just add boiling water’ menu’s are allowed. This means you can’t use ‘Mountain House’ or similar meals for a single overnight backpack trip.

For a multi-day backpacking trip such meals are acceptable - though not required - for all but the 24 hours (dinner 1<sup>st</sup> day and breakfast second day). Parents when you accompany the troop on a backpacking trip we ask you to follow these guidelines & also to cook communally.

Why? – we require this so the boys actually experience the intended Boy Scout patrol group cooking where they plan, provision and cook together. We also do this so they can enjoy great food in the outdoors, think more about their food options and typically pay less than buying ‘just add water’ food.

Why then change after 24 hours on a trip? Keeping real food fresh becomes challenging after 24 hours – especially in our climate so we make concessions – however even then there are still some fresh food options...

OK so if you are forcing me to really cook – what can I cook...?

On many campouts you will see adults creating quite elaborate meals in the back country. Scouts can certainly replicate this – though I suggest you try a dry run before you go so you know what ingredients, quantities, cooking methods, equipment and helpers (utensils, oil, condiments etc) you will need. Pay attention to the great food you see & smell on campouts – ask questions – tuck the ideas away & plan ahead for your next trip

For a first time out what are the best options? Well there are no firm rules – it depends what you like, and usually you’ll be part of a more experienced cooking patrol - but here are some good starter ideas. In general for backpacking: avoid things with lots of water or with heavy packaging – cans are out & wet foods are not ideal. If you can buy the same thing dehydrated, dried, or freeze dried consider that...

There is no reason to skip real meat for dinner or breakfast (you’ll thank me on this one). It’s easy to buy pre-cooked packaged chicken/beef and freeze it overnight then store it wrapped in foil inside your cooking pans. Though it won’t stay frozen – it will stay cool enough under most conditions – anyway its cooked & sealed!. Similarly pre-cooked/partly-cooked bacon or even overnight frozen fresh bacon works in much the same way.



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You can make your own partly pre-cooked bacon in the microwave and this can reduce weight, cooking time & cost significantly. Pre-cooked frozen chicken is available in bulk packages (e.g. Costco) at much lower expense – just carefully repackage into zip-locks.

What do you eat it with? Well I like the dried pasta mixes ('Pasta Sides'), flavored rice ('Fiesta Sides') or mashed potato packets you can buy at the supermarket. These take 5-7 minutes on the stove and with rice or pasta you can even just mix in the chicken and herbs/condiments for added flavor for an easy single pot meal. Depending what I'm cooking I also like to take freeze dried mushrooms and/or peppers and re-hydrate them in a zip-lock bag prior to cooking.



Whilst you could make your own similar mixes the pasta & rice would usually take much longer to cook and these packets are quite inexpensive. Photos in the margins here are for general reference only – many different brands exist and are similar – these are just what my local grocery carries and that I buy - as general reference examples.



For desert consider fresh fruit (banana, apple), dehydrated fruit to chew on or add to a cake mix for cobbler or dip them in warm chocolate sauce - or for a change try some ultra lightweight freeze dried ice cream.



For drinks bring Crystal Light or Gatorade packets, Tang, Hot Chocolate, Tea or Coffee (bags) all using on site (or nearby) water supply.

For breakfast I like to do a cooked meal with sausages/bacon and on occasion even eggs. I also feel its worth carrying some fresh onion & peppers for this (also available dehydrated) – however even just the pre-cooked bacon can perk up your morning if you combine it with bagels (toasted over the fire) w/ cream cheese or some oatmeal with fruit.



What about snacks? – there usually isn't time to cook outside main mealtimes – so select food to eat while on the move. GORP is a longtime favorite ('Good Old Raisins & Peanuts') or make up your own favorite mixes - avoid chocolate chips since they will melt! Candy to share is good – it won't last long! Granola bars or other similar are also good – but don't bring too many.



For trail lunches I like to make bagel sandwiches because they are much tougher than sandwich bread and stand up to being buried in your pack better. For a few hours in your pack wrapped in foil anything in your sandwiches will probably survive OK – but avoid anything too wet or your sandwiches will be soggy. Small salami's or similar last well for several days and are tasty, Fresh fruit you will eat within a few hours of departure is only a temporary weight in my book!



Some Dinner Ideas/Examples: (get creative with your own ideas...)

- Chicken Fettuccini Alfredo with mushrooms
- Steak Fajitas with Mexican Rice w/ corn served on toasted tortillas
- Grilled Chicken with Garlic Mashed Potato and Green Beans
- Southwestern Chicken with Penne Pasta and Roasted Bell Peppers
- Chorizo Sausage with Peppers and Spanish Rice
- Teriyaki Chicken with Fried Rice
- Steak Fingers with Loaded Baked Potatoes & Peas
- Chicken Tacos with Rice & Beans in toasted corn tortilla tacos

