

## THE BACKPACKER'S MINI GUIDE TO EATING ON THE TRAIL

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Karin Manning

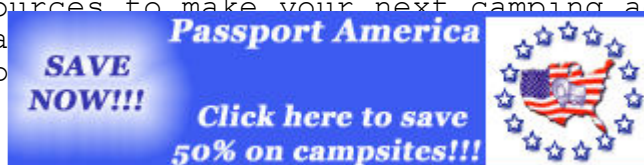
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## The Backpacker's Mini Guide To Eating On The Trail

**[For access to the best and \*most popular\* camping food and cookware for your backcountry needs click here](#)**

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

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FROZEN "ZIPLOCED" BEEF OR BOLOGNA MAY BE USED. AVOID POULTRY AND FISH

### **Drinks:**

FREEZE-DRIED COFFEE, CREAMER PACKETS, TEA BAGS, KOOL-AID PREMIXED WITH SUGAR IN ZIP-LOCS, 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 Bisquik, 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 gravies 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). 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).

Go to the 'Natural Foods' section of the supermarket or go to the old hippies' food COOP if your city has them and you will find:

- Bins with dehydrated veggie flakes, onion flakes dehydrated soup base, TVP etc. Make your own soup. They look pricey but compare with Knorr's or Lipton's.
- Highly recommended DEHYDRATED REFRIED BEANS they are even good 'raw'.
- On the shelf you find boxed goodies like rice pilaf, couscous and Highly recommended POLENTA (Italian corn bread cooks up in fry pan)
- For bread try tortillas and pita -- hint sandwich them between plates or pot lids to improve integrity.
- Compressed mincemeat in mylar 'juice boxes' -- I found some in the discount cart haven't tried it yet but looks like lots o'calories in dense pack
- Go to the Oriental (Chinese) grocery store -- all sorts of dehydrated

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marvels and mysteries. Good source for quick noodles, ramen-type soups. Also plastic wrapped condiments eg a 3oz bag of "hot mango pickles" were a big hit on day 6 of a canoe trip last summer.

- In the East Asian (Indian) grocery store we found mylar bagged main dishes eg chickpea curries, spinach with cream cheese. With liquid sauce so little heavy, but very tasty and quick -- good over rice.
- I like mozzarella cheese, less fat doesn't separate and weep like colby or mild cheddar in a hot food pack.
- Add some Tang [or better generic Tang] to dried fruit when you reconstitute it. Which led to the serendipitous discovery of HOT TANG -- hits the spot on a frosty Minnesota morn!

Some of the above are a bit spicy and exotic and may not appeal to white bread palates.

There is another delicious meal item that has not been mentioned here and that is something called falafel.

It is a dry mix that you add water to and then fry it. Very popular in the Middle East it was carried by people traveling through the desert because it is kept dry until you prepare it and it is so easy to make. It is very good with pita bread, just put a few of the falafel balls in the pita pocket and add whatever veggies and sauce you wish.

Falafel is a very good source of protein as it is made mainly from chick peas and spices. If you have never had it, try it at home.

Lentils and rice. Boil the lentils and rice in salted water (I use "Minute Rice" to speed things up a bit. Drain. Add cumin to taste (we like lots).

Variations: add bits of dehydrated or preserved meat - whatever you have available (hard salami left over from lunch, beef jerky, "chipped beef", whatever); add dehydrated veggies (peas are nice)

Couscous is one of the best meals: a nice change from pasta or rice, and yet it cooks in 5-10 minutes. It can usually be found in the Middle East section of the grocery store. I like to add a Lipton soup mix or bouillon cube plus some dried veggies to it.

Always carry a bottle of squeeze parkay and dehydrated milk.

Lipton Noodle dinners

Instant Mashed Potatoes with instant soup

Pop Tarts

Gorp w/ M+M's

Chicken Stew w/ bisquick dumplings

Also try the soft flour tortillas. They survive packing very well. We fill them with Fantastic Foods dehydrated black bean dip and some grated cheese. The bean dip is available in bulk at some stores, the COOP in Hanover NH for one. They also make a refried bean dip, but the black bean is better

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Indian Fry Bread  
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Eggs On A Raft  
Breakfast Rollups  
Brighten-Up Hobo Breakfast  
Campfire Hash  
Huevos Rancheros  
Kentucky Scramble  
Nacho Dip Texas Style  
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**Happy Camping!**

**Karin Manning**

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