

50-miler backpacking food guide

by Marion Clark (May, 2021)



Background

Since my children joined the troop we've clocked up four backpacking and canoeing 50-milers. I've been involved in meal planning for all of them apart from Boundary Waters, which was catered for us (sweet deal!). I thought I'd share some of my experience in the hope that it'll help you plan food for our upcoming adventure in Lassen National Park.

The main thing to bear in mind with backpacking is that **you** carry the food, there's no assistance from a canoe! As a result, good food choices for the trail are compact (can fit into a bear can), calorie dense (your body needs extra replenishment for its efforts) and convenient (minimal preparation/ cooking/ washing up time).

Practice!

Start meal planning now for the practice hikes leading up to the summer trip. See how much you need to eat, what you like to eat, what's comfortable for you to prepare/cook, and when you like to eat most. Personally, I prefer a good-sized breakfast and dinner but a light lunch. Too much food mid-hike makes it hard for me to restart as my body focuses on digestion rather than powering me up a slope! It's important to learn what works for you and to make adjustments accordingly.

Let's get going

Here are some ideas, most of which have been tried and tested on Troop 260. The main difference is found in the dinner section where this is the first time we've looked at dehydrated food kits.

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks/other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oatmeal (warm) Use sachets not cardboard cups to save space. I use 2 sachets and add some dried fruit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Granola (cold & instant) With water and	Carbohydrate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tortilla wraps Pita bread Crispbreads (these are low in bulk and therefore bearcan friendly). They also have a lower moisture content to bread so they don't sweat in the heat and get moldy- no one wants	Backpacking dinner (2 portions typically feed one hungry backpacker). Some brands include: Backpacker Pantry, Peak Refuel, Mountain House, Good To Go. (FYI, Good to Go meals are all gluten-free and most	Snacks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oat bars Muesli bars Protein bars These are great to pad out a lunch and/or keep you feeling full until lunch/dinner. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jerky Dried fruit Trail mix (no nuts)

<p>optional milk powder</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eggs <p>You could use powdered egg or rehydrate bag meals like Peak Refuel's Breakfast skillet</p>	<p>that.</p> <p>Toppings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunbutter & jelly (decant into a small screw top tub) • chicken/tuna sachets <p>Starkist makes "no draining" ones, which reduces package weight and size. They come in a variety of flavours like teriyaki chicken, ranch tuna and of course, plain. They vary between \$1-2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salami • Cheese <p>Can get a little sweaty in the heat but it still tastes ok! Use a hard cheese.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun-dried tomatoes (oh là là) 	<p>are vegetarian, in case this is relevant to your needs).</p> <p>Dessert</p> <p>The above brands also do desserts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cookie 	<p>Customize your ideal mix! For example: yogurt raisins, M&Ms, roasted pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, dried fruit (cranberries, raisins, apple rings, apricots, dates), mini marshmallows (Harris), jelly beans (Mr.G), Swedish Fish (Mr. Davis)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cuties <p>Drinks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gatorade sachets • Rehydration sachets • Tea/coffee/cocoa/hot cider/miso soup sachets
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My take on the above menu

Seeing a list of options, while useful, can be difficult to imagine in real life. For that reason, here's a sneak peak at my **personal menu** for the trip.

Side note: I value ease and convenience over a widely varying menu. This makes it straightforward for me to plan and keep track of what I'm eating and when. Also, I know what utensils to bring and can predict how much fuel to carry.

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks/other
<p>Half of my breakfasts will be 2 x oat sachets plus raisins, sunflower seeds and brown sugar; Half will be granola, powdered milk and water</p>	<p>Trader Joe's Norwegian Crispbread (2 or 3 a day). I love these as they are compact, dry (no chance of mold!) and loaded with tasty seeds.</p>	<p>Backpacking meal (serves 2)</p> <p>I may bring a couple of desserts, but I don't want/need one every day. I'm a fan of Backpackers</p>	<p>Daily, I'll have a protein bar. I like One Bars which come in lots of appealing flavours such as birthday cake, glazed maple donut and lemon</p>

<p>Chai tea and powdered milk. (I often drink coffee at home but, for some unknown reason, I much prefer tea on a hike).</p>	<p>They pack a punch with each small crispbread being 130 calories. TJs has a gluten-free and regular version.</p>	<p>Pantry Creme Brûlée. Peppermint and/or chamomile tea bags</p>	<p>meringue pie. They are low in sugar (1g) and high in protein (20g), which I like. They're about 230 calories each.</p> <p>I'll also have a couple of snack zip-locks with trail mix for a wee bit of variety.</p> <p>Daily rehydration electrolyte sachets. I like Dr. Price (Amazon), but there are heaps out there for you to try.</p> <p>Peppermints - Donald's got me hooked on them! I used to be partial to the occasional Hi-chew.</p>
<p>400-500 calories</p>	<p>Toppings: Sunbutter and raspberry jam decanted into a screw top tub. (lots of calories).I could eat this all week :-) but I may add a Sunkist Tuna sachet (70 calories) for variety on one or two of the days.</p> <p>I might bring a few cuties to keep scurvy at bay.</p>	<p>The dinner will be about 650 calories and the Creme Brûlée is 310 for a single portion, but I may bring a double :-)</p>	

Unsure how to manage food distribution over the week? Don't trust yourself to ration your tasty treats over the week ;-)?

Label/use a sharpie to give a day to food items; put snacks into separate daily snack-sized ziplocks instead of eating from one large bag.

General things to consider

Beyond calories and flavours there are other things to consider like: preservation of food during high summer heat/ cooking equipment / cooking time and, consequently, necessary amount of fuel.

Other supplies:

- **Stove and gas canister.** Depending on the stove you may need a separate form of ignition.
- **Food receptacle.** I'm only going to bring my insulated mug which has a handy lid to keep things warm and a measurement scale up the side to use for my dehydrated meals.
If inclined, you can check it out on Amazon: GSI Outdoors Infinity Backpacker Mug (\$10-15, depending on colour choice)
- **Cutlery.** I'm bringing my long handled titanium spork and spoon set because they work really well with the deep dehydrated meal bags and they're really lightweight. I like my food on my spoon and in my mouth not half way up my wrist! These can be found on Amazon for about \$6 each.
- **Washing-up kit.** Depending on what you plan to cook, you may need one.
- **Water filtration/purifier.** Clean water is essential for drinking and cooking.

This is not a definitive list, just me sharing ideas to help you. If you discover something new that works well, whether it's a food item or piece of equipment, please share it with the troop. It's important to build our knowledge and experience together!

Add your ideas here! Remember to explain why you are making that recommendation e.g. lightweight.

Your name	Food	Equipment	Where to buy/cost