



Meal Strategies for Backpacking – Troop 75 Style

This is a revised copy of some information that I have prepared for first-time hikers in order to help with meal planning.

Breakfast: Everyone will be on their own for breakfast. Most of the boys are ready to hit the trail after eating a couple of Pop-Tarts or granola bars with some water to wash it all down. Oatmeal packets are favored by others, and there is usually some hot water available on any given morning. (I like to add a little powdered milk to make the oatmeal richer). In the past, I have prepared scrambled eggs from powdered mix, boiling the egg mixture in a plastic bag. Drinks may include hot tea, instant coffee, hot chocolate or hot cider/apple juice. The decision whether or not to heat water is personal, and as I've said, there is usually a supply of it each morning. Be advised however, that if you decide to sleep later than the rest of the group and you want a hot breakfast, you may be the one who ends up carrying the pot, stove and fuel that day. Don't expect others to wait for you to eat breakfast so they can pack up and carry the cooking gear!

Lunch: Lunch can be eaten as a solo meal or shared with a lunch buddy. I would suggest choosing a lunch buddy who is at the same hiking ability level as yourself — this way you're not waiting around for an hour with a block of cheese while your buddy is catching up to you with the crackers. Here are some suggested lunch foods that may be enjoyed either solo or shared: Tuna salad: make with foil packs of tuna and use mayo and relish packets from restaurants. Peanut butter/jelly: available in tubes, or you can put into refillable plastic tubes. Summer sausage/beefsticks: can be eaten with crackers, pita bread or bagels. Cheese: Crackerbarrel type will keep a couple days; string cheese is good too. Crackers, cookies: can be stored in plastic tubes or old Pringle's potato chip cans. Bagels and pita bread are probably best choices for bread items because they won't crush in your pack and they will keep for a week.

Snacks: This is a personal choice. There are two basic types of eaters on the A-T, gorgers and grazers. Some folks like to enjoy their entire food intake in two or three big meals while others prefer to nibble all day long. Snack items can range from Snickers bars and Power Bars to beef jerky and Slim Jims to dried fruit and GORP (**G**ood **O**ld **R**aisins and **P**eanuts). Many choose to fortify their trail mix with jelly beans or Mike 'n Ikes. Be aware that eating dried fruit will require you to drink even more water.

Dinner: The entire group may be divided into dinner groups of six to eight hikers. Each person in the dinner group will prepare and dehydrate a dinner to serve eight people. We have many trail dinner recipes in the Troop 75 Cookbook. You may pick a meal from the cookbook, or you can get ideas from the internet or the library. Each dinner group will have one 2-quart and one 3-quart pot to use, so make sure that any meal you choose can be made in those pots. Some of our tried-and-true dinners include pasta with meat sauce, chili, beef stroganoff, tuna casserole, beef and bean burritos, ham jambalaya and black bean soup.

Drinks: Filtered spring or stream water is typically much more enjoyable than your own tap water at home. Still, plain water gets boring after a while, and when you're drinking 2 to 4 liters per day you will want a little variety. Gatorade powder is good, but somewhat heavy to carry because of the sugar content. Of course, this same sugar is an energy booster. Crystal-Lite drink mixes are sugar-free and weigh almost nothing. Cold-brew iced tea bags are light to carry, and we usually make a large container of iced tea each evening.