**Top Chef Garibaldi 2016: Meal Planning 101**

Planning your meals for a backcountry expedition is not the same thing as doing a grocery shop for at home. PLUS, you can’t order pizza if you’re feeling lazy (although some have figured out how to make a mean backwoods pizza). There are multiple factors to consider in your meal plans, and your overall success will depend on how well you manage all these factors. Of course, there’s always a little give and take – tiramisu on top of a mountain takes some extra effort, but it has been done. Stag chilli is heavy, and, well… it’s just heavy.

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| **Your goals and tasks for meal planning are:** |

* I can contrast everyday meals with backcountry meals
* I can identify the multiple aspects of meal planning for trips
* I will research different backcountry recipes and snacks within my cooking group
* I will discuss and help create a successful meal plan that satisfies everyone in my group

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| **Factors to consider when creating a backcountry meal plan:** |

**COST**

Cost is a crucial factor. Remember, you are purchasing and packing breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, and hot drinks for five or more people for multiple days. Pre-packaged freeze-dried meals can’t be beat for ease of preparation and packability, and man, some of them taste pretty good (at least after a full day of hiking). BUT, those things can cost $7-12 per person. Watch out for the portion sizes on them too – while some say they provide two servings, this might only fill up one hungry boy.

The same issue arises for snacks. Protein bars, Jerky, sausage links, dried mango etc., all taste amazing when you are out in the bush. And while I highly recommend including at least some of these in your menu, beware the cost. Pick up bulk packs from **COSTCO.**

**Tip:** Look in the bulk foods section at the grocery store, but don’t automatically assume it will be the cheapest source of dried fruits and trail mix – you can often find bulk 1kg packs for cheaper than what it would cost if you spend 10 minutes shaking that stuff out of a bulk food container. Just my 2 cents.

**WEIGHT**

Since you will be carrying everything on your back on the way up to Garibaldi Lake, please keep in mind that the ounces really add up. Food is the #1 source of weight on an expedition. When possible, purchase food items that **do not have water content in them**. This is the advantage of dehydrated or freeze dried foods. This is also why canned food can be a bad idea.

An maximum total pack weight, including both gear and food is:

For females, 1/4 of body weight

For males, 1/3 of body weight

An ideal weight would be much less than this. I weigh 185lbs, which means my max pack weight would be over 60lbs! This is RIDICULOUS! 35-40 lbs is a more realistic goal. **You will find much of those savings in your food.**

**SHELF LIFE and PACKABILITY**

Check the expiry date on everything, *especially bread*. I recall more than once having groups pull out mouldy buns. Mmm. Check yourself before you wreck yourself kids.

Raw meats are an absolute no no on trips. Eggs can work, but are nearly impossible to pack and I strongly advise against them. Vegetables and fruits are OK, but some pack better than others. If it’s going to get crushed, is there any way you can pack it in a hard container? And remember… fruit weighs a lot.

Are you going to pack those buns at the bottom of your bag? Have fun with your flattened balls of dough. Perhaps wraps are a better idea. Cookies or crackers? Crushed. So too will your soul be crushed when you pull out your snack and it’s in a million pieces. Think: everything will be in a bag on your back. You are the walking pantry amigo.

**NUTRITION**

The average person, going through their average day (in their heated vehicle, heated home or office, comfortable chair, etc.,) needs around 2000-2500 calories per day. Well guess what: the human body needs approximately 3000 calories ***just to thermos-regulate***. That’s right – you need 3000 calories if you aren’t going to be in your heated bubble. Which you won’t be; you will be hiking in an alpine environment in late October. So before everything, think: will I be eating enough on this trip? You’ll need more food than normal!

**Tip #1:** gram for gram, you get way more energy out of fat than from protein or carbs.

**Tip #2:** You need to have sufficient protein. Bars, beans and rice, whatever it is, make sure you are eating more than just noodles. Without protein, your body will not be able to repair itself as efficiently as it could, and you will become a slightly less useful version of yourself. And no one wants to see that.

**Tip #3:** Soup is a bad choice for a meal. And this is why: it won’t fill you up unless you eat it with bread! **Trust me: no one will want a broth-based soup as the only part of their meal**. If you insist on soup (hey, it tastes great!) then make sure to add another component, especially one with some carbs.

**Tip #4:** Get some vitamins. Most dried fruits retain the good stuff, and cliff bars etc add supplements. Your body needs these things!

**Tip #5:** Eat garbage – your body will want it! Pack chocolate. Pack the high calorie foods that make you feel guilty. You **will** crave them, and that’s ok! It’s your body’s way of saying “feed me.” Most Everest climbers survive on a diet of potato chips, chocolate, and other assorted junk. It’s good for the soul.

**PREP TIME AND CLEANUP**

How long will it take to make your meal? Is the prep process overly complicated? Do you really need to julienne a bunch of veggies? Are you packing 5 minute rice or the regular stuff? (Regular rice will take *forever*). How big will the mess be? If you burn it, will it make washing extremely difficult? Know that **you can’t make everyone late for our activities**. If you take way too long for breakfast, I WILL make you stay at camp for the day, even if this means missing out on Panorama Ridge. You are cooking your own meals, but everyone will be on the same clock.

Oatmeal with dried fruit is an excellent and quick breakfast. Easy cleanup too.

**GARBAGE AND ‘LEAVE NO TRACE’**

You pack it in, you pack it out. This is the principle of ‘Leave No Trace’, and we will follow it when we are out on our trips. In fact, we will make it our goal to leave our camp area cleaner when we leave than when we first found it. We will be that group. We will respect the places we go and act like the leaders we truly are.

Consider packaging when creating your menu. Try to minimize garbage! Remember, even though we will pack everything out, *we are still creating garbage*.

**Tip:** pre-package all your snacks for individual portions before we leave for the trip. This will make portioning out snacks super easy. The work you do beforehand will save you a lot of stress on the mountain.

**TASTE AND TEAM**

Remember, this is food. Food is good. Make sure you are planning a menu that **satisfies all members of your group**. On that note, don’t be that one fussy person who ruins it for the whole group. Unless it is completely repulsive, be open-minded to the ideas of others. And above all – HAVE FUN!