

Food and cooking

Expedition food is an opportunity to be creative and be part of a positive expedition experience. Food is fuel for both physical endurance and team morale. **DofE recommends working together as a team or tent group** to choose and agree a menu, purchase the food on a budget and share meals as it is excellent for team building and developing life skills. Some of these potential benefits would be missed if each individual simply used lightweight and high energy dehydrated food packets or boil in the bag meals prepared individually.

You should design an expedition menu which considers the following:

- As the length of the expedition increases, so does the need to ensure you eat a balanced diet, designed for physical activity in the outdoors.
- The key task is to pack as much energy (or calories) into the least weight and volume as possible. You may need to consume three, four or even five thousand calories each day. Choose foods high in sugars, carbohydrates and fats.
- Take food that you like and enjoy, which is quick and simple to cook and that will keep for the duration of the expedition even in hot weather. Dried, cured, smoked or vegetarian foods will usually last well.
- Think about keeping weight down by removing packaging and cooking as a team.
- Make sure all food is packed and waterproofed so it will stand up to the inevitable squashing into rucksacks, being sat on and being dropped that will happen during the expedition.
- It is a good idea to pack each meal together in a container or bag so that it is in one place and easy to find.

Expedition meals

Breakfast

It is good practice to start the day with a substantial breakfast. This can include cereals, muesli or porridge with tea, coffee or hot chocolate. You could even make up your own porridge before you go with oats, nuts, fruit and muesli, then add milk powder. Once on expedition simply add hot water to make quick porridge.

Lunch

Usually this will consist of picnic style foods that don't need to be heated or kept chilled.

A lunchbreak might consist of a hot drink with sandwiches, pitta bread or wraps with other high energy foods like flapjacks, cereal bars, nuts, dried fruit, biscuits, chocolate bars, dried sweets, jelly, mint cake and so on.

Some prefer to have only a short rest and "drip feed" high energy snacks continuously whilst journeying. It's up to you to decide as a team.

Evening meal

This substantial meal is prepared when you have more time in the evening at the camp site. It is quite possible for such a meal to be cooked on one stove in a short amount of time. Soup, curry, stews, pasta or noodle stir-fry are all great expedition meals and can be followed up with a hot or cold pudding like hot chocolate cake or crumble and custard.

Drink

You will need to ensure that you take on frequent and adequate amounts of fluid throughout the day, particularly in hot weather.

You should “tank up” with fluid before leaving the campsite each morning and drink as much as possible as soon as you arrive at your campsite in the evening.

As a general rule you should be carrying **at least two litres of water** with you. If necessary and particularly on very hot days, this can be topped up by the Supervisors when they meet you along your route. You should get your water from the campsite and it is not recommended that you take water from streams, as there is a high probability that it may be contaminated. Such water would need to be boiled or sterilised before it could be used for drinking or cooking.

Top tip: As a team, boil a pan of water and use it to make up soup as the starter, or a hot drink, then use it to cook a boil-in-the-bag pudding. Don't throw the leftover water away as this can be used to do the washing up.

For more ideas check out the document **Healthy eating on expeditions**

Training and preparation

To get the most out of cooking a substantial meal, teams need to practise preparing and cooking meals. These can be practised in your kitchen at home but it is important to be competent in the use of camping stoves to become familiar with how long different food takes to prepare and cook through.

Most participants will prepare their own lunches, but for shared breakfast and evening meals you need to work together to design your menus to a budget and then decide who will buy and carry what. It helps to ensure that everyone will eat well and it shares the responsibility.

Cooking stoves

Your stove will be gas fuelled. They are easy to operate and heat water very quickly. Some training in their use will be important for your safety.

Basic cooking safety and hygiene

It is essential to maintain good food hygiene while on expeditions. Here are some basic tips:

Do:

- Wash hands as often as if at home. Antibacterial wipes or gel can be helpful.
- Make sure that the surface where you are placing the stove is firm, level and **at least two metres away from flammable items/tents**. Consider the weather conditions and wind direction.
- Get everything together before starting to cook. Have somewhere safe nearby to put hot pans.
- Be careful to check if there is a flame or not, especially in bright sunlight.
- Make it clear to other people that stoves are lit/hot.
- Make sure that hot food is hot and cooked all the way through and that cold food stays cold
- Dispose of all waste responsibly.
- Clean up and wash up after every meal.

- Be aware that, at altitude, water boils at a lower temperature, but food will take longer to cook.

Don't:

- Be tempted to cook in or near the tent even if the weather is bad. A tent fire can be horrific.
- Leave a lit stove unattended or unwatched.
- Wash up in streams or under campsite taps.
- Use the same containers for raw and cooked food.
- Let everyone crowd the cooking area. That's how accidents happen.
- Cook more than is can be eaten. Leftovers attract all sorts of pests.
- Leave cooking food unattended.
- Try to cook in the dark. Always have plenty of light

For further ideas click on the links below and check out the pdfs (DofE-Eating-on-your-expedition-poster-A3.pdf, Food ideas (Lupine).pdf, DofE_Expedition_Menu_Planner_2019.pdf)

<https://www.dofe.org/shopping/expedition-kit/expedition-food/>

<https://pxadventures.co.uk/blog/dofe-expedition-food-tips/>