



QUARTERMASTER

Lesson Four: Creating the Balanced Menu for camp

Being a Quartermaster isn't just about looking after the tents – you may be required to look after the food stores and this may include developing the menu for camp – and looking after the food when you get there

Food Groups – what makes a balanced menu

I like chocolate and cream cakes... but I would not want to just eat these all weekend!

A good menu should include foods from 5 main food groups – and they are:

- Fruit and vegetables – this should make up about 30% of the menu. A simple measure is that you should aim to have 5 portions a day (a portion is about a handful). Orange juice would count as one portion – but 5 glasses still only counts as 1 portion.
- Bread, cereal, pasta and potatoes – these are the starch elements and again make up about 30% of the menu. If you do decide to go for pasta, you don't have to have spaghetti... most people end up cutting up the strips to make it easier to eat. Instead, make use of the other shapes.
- Milk and Dairy – about 20%. As well as milk, this includes cream and cheese. However, you should be careful that you don't eat too much cheese – as well as giving you nightmares if you eat it late at night (it is said!) it is also quite fattening. A portion of cheese is about the size of a matchbox.
- Meat, Fish and alternatives – about 15%. Alternatives to meat and fish include baked beans, butter beans, lentils and pulses – as well as soya products, tofu, Quorn.
- Fats – about 5%. This includes the oil, the margarine, the chocolate and the cream cake. You can't totally avoid it – and in most cases you will need some to cook with – but you need to make sure that you only use a little

(Source: Diabetes UK)

It's worth noting that you don't need to have all 5 groups in every meal, but over a day you should be able to somehow work it all in.

You should also consider the sugar levels within the foods. As well as being a dietary issue (and a dental one too), added sugar can cause hyperactivity... so eating something that will give you energy late at night can be a bad thing (especially for Leaders).

Intolerances and allergies

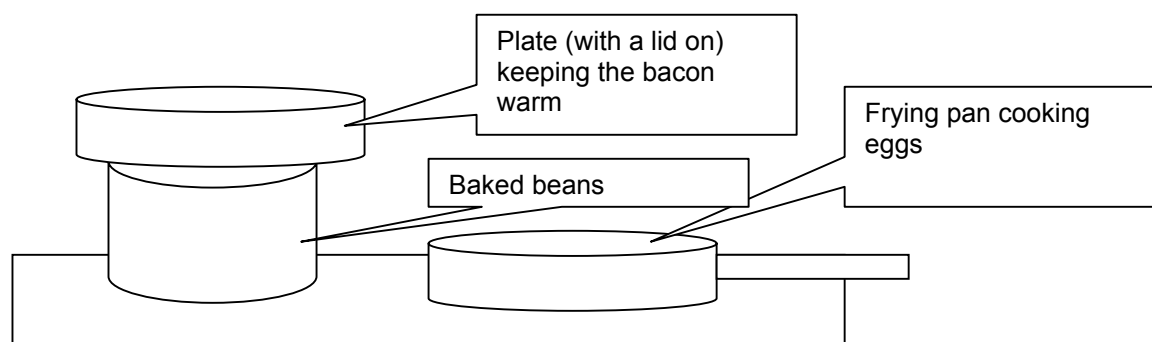
There are many items that people can't eat certain things; whether for medical, religious, ethical reasons – or simply because they just don't like the taste. Before planning any menu you should know what people can and can't eat – and what they do and don't like. You can then plan accordingly.

If you have time – and you want to make sure that everyone will eat what you are suggesting – you can always make your menu available for others to look at before you start shopping for ingredients!

What equipment is available to you

An important aspect of designing a menu for camp is considering what cooking equipment you will have and how you will store the food whilst at camp. There's no point in buying a frozen pizza if you don't have a freezer – or an oven to cook it (unless, of course, you are planning to build an oven!)

So you will need to think about how it will all work, how long it may take to cook and what can be cooked together – or how you can keep things warm whilst you cook something else. For example:



In the above (very simple) diagram, you can see that we have fried the bacon and put it onto a metal plate (covering it with a lid). We can put this on the baked beans (or hot water) whilst we fry the eggs. In this way, the heat from the beans will keep the bacon warm – and keep it from mixing with the fried eggs.

Question: why might you NOT fry the eggs first, then the bacon?

If you're cooking (say) cabbage and carrots, you could cook them together in the same pot.

Similarly, if you are catering for vegetarian and non-vegetarian, you could make use of vegetarian mince mixed with a strong flavoured sauce – it becomes very difficult to notice that it isn't meat!

Food storage

As you will be at camp, you may not have access to a fridge or freezer. There are options that you could make use of to keep food cool:

1. Cool box (but remember, you will need to keep the freezer blocks cold)
2. A covered washing up bowl filled with cool water (of course, you will need to seal things like butter so that the water doesn't get at it!)
3. Digging a small ditch about 15cm deep, putting linen or a T-shirt in the bottom and keep the material wet (this is a compromise between 1 and 2)

Whatever solution you decide to use – you will need to make sure that the larder is not in direct sunlight or suffer the heat of the sun – these will only keep things relatively cool, not cold. Oh – and don't forget that if you are digging holes, or filling bowls with water, clearly mark it so that a Leader doesn't tread in it!

But even "dry goods" need to be carefully looked after. Boxes of cereal left on the ground are special treats for wildlife – and field mice can quickly nibble into your box of Frosties!

Wherever possible, get the food OFF THE GROUND. This could be as simple as putting it onto a table, or putting it into a hanging larder – but even if the only thing you have available is your Patrol box, making sure the lid of the box is shut will deter opportunists.

Food Hygiene

Good food storage will help make the food you have bought safe to eat, but you still need to be careful about food hygiene. Some simple steps to remember:

- Before cooking – wash your hands properly. You're at camp and you're a Scout. Your hands WILL be dirty
- Make sure that the cooker and the equipment is clean. You really don't want to cook in germs – so once you have finished, clean up properly
- Don't leave left over food lying around. As well as being disgusting to look at, it acts as a beacon to all kind of animals and insects – and that just attracts problems.

If you can dispose of rubbish before it gets too big, that's great. If you can get a fire going, you can also reduce the amount of rubbish that you are disposing of also. You can then:

BURN – burning tin cans will clear out food remnants, as will burning up left over foods

BASH – Bashing the (cooled) cans will take up less space

BIN – You should always leave somewhere cleaner than you found it. Properly disposing of waste will mean that the ground isn't contaminated.

Where will you get your food

For a specialist camp – e.g. a hiking expedition, you may need to buy dehydrated foods from a specialist camping shop. For a normal camp though, you should be able to buy food from anywhere.

Whilst it is always pleasant to buy "nice" food, you need to keep an eye on the budget. Buying "finest" sausages may work at home, but at camp you need to consider that you won't necessarily taste the difference. However, buying the budget sausages may well just fall apart when you start to cook them (as the skins are typically quite thin).

If possible, you should also think about how you will transport your food. It may be easier and simpler to buy the food when you get to your location, from local shops (but of course, think about those with specific dietary needs – will you always be able to buy "gluten free" food?). Plus of course, this helps the local community and can mean fresher vegetables!

Exercise

(This is a requirement for the badge)

You are planning a menu for a weekend camp. The group will head to the camp site Friday evening and will leave after Sunday lunch. You need to plan the menu for 6 people, and you will have 3 cookers to make use of. You have asked if there are any allergies etc, and have been advised that there are none. You will not have access to a freezer, but you do have two standard-sized cool boxes.

The idea for the weekend is that you will have a hot supper once the tents have been erected, then after lunch you will all go on a full day hike, returning to camp for the evening meal. Sunday morning you will have a swim using the campsites indoor pool, before lunch and going home. You will need to plan the menu for:

Friday Night – supper

Saturday – Breakfast, Lunch, dinner, supper

Sunday – Breakfast, lunch

You do not need to worry about actual quantity measurements, but you will need to give consideration to how you will cook the food with only three cookers.

Don't forget, you will also need to wash up ... so remember you will need hot water!