
Storing Food at the Campground

How to avoid food spoilage while camping.

If you're looking for advice on catching your own food at the campground, then you've been watching too much of the TV show *Survivor*. Campground meals are meant to be enjoyed without the worry of food spoilage or being rampaged by the local animal population. As long as you can plan accordingly, provide adequate storage, and take necessary precautions to secure your food from the elements and from wildlife, you can look forward to many, worry-free meals when you're camping.

Below are suggestions for how to avoid food spoilage while camping, plus tips for food preparation and storage at the campground.

Related Resources

- [Choosing a Cooler](#)
- [How To Purify Water](#)
- [Kitchen Duty](#)
- [Packing a Cooler](#)

From Other Guides

- [Food Safety](#)

Elsewhere on the Web

- [Handling Food Safely](#)

Question:

What's enjoyable about campground meals?

Answer:

Food always tastes good at the campground! Mainly because we make it into more of an event than we do a daily routine. The atmosphere is relaxed, we're sharing in preparations with family and friends, and we are eating healthy.

Question:

Do you ever recommend trying to catch your own food, like the cast members of the *Survivor* show do, and why or why not?

Answer:

There is no need to undergo hardship in order to enjoy the outdoors. Hunters and fishermen may cook up a meal with the daily catch, but there's no need to go to the extreme of eating the local creatures. I advocate conservation and respect for nature, which includes not eating the animals around the campsite.

Question:

How much food do you need per person per day while camping?

Answer:

Campers love to eat, and since we're usually participating in other outdoor recreation while camping, we tend to expend more energy and consequently build up larger appetites come meal time. Plan on enough food for a good breakfast, a hearty lunch, some afternoon snacks, and an evening dinner per person, per day.

Question:

What advice would you give to someone who dreads the idea of surviving on hot dogs and chips for a weekend -- can campground cooking be classy?

Answer:

Campground cooking can be as simple or as gourmet as you like it. If you have the cooking utensils and the means to get them to the campground, you can prepare meals as scrumptious as those you make at home. With a charcoal or propane grill, a two-burner

stove, and a Dutch oven or two, you can make practically anything at the campground. With some of the pre-packaged one-pot meals now available, even backpackers can enjoy great meals while in the backcountry. It's all a matter of adjusting your recipes to the amount of cooking gear you can take with you.

Question:

What's the number one issue in food storage safety?

Answer:

Avoiding spoilage! This means providing adequate cooling for perishable foods. This is easy to do when camping: take two coolers, one for your perishable foods, and one for drinks and snacks. The trick to keeping foods cold in a cooler is to keep the lid closed until you need to get food out to cook. If you store drinks with your food, the cooler will be opened and closed frequently, allowing warmer air to circulate around the food and melt the ice faster. Keeping drinks in a separate cooler eliminates this problem, and your food will stay colder and last longer in its own cooler.

Question:

Are most people good at storing their food safely?

Answer:

Yes, or they will learn very quickly. The smell of spoiled meat in a cooler is usually enough, but tummy aches and other bodily discomforts soon teach us that we should better store our food.

Question:

What's the most common mistake people make?

Answer:

The most common mistake that I observe campers making in regards to food storage is to leave it out while they go off to play for the day. Covering it up on the picnic table will not keep crows, ravens, gulls, chipmunks, squirrels, raccoons, skunks, and other small animals out. These creatures can literally wreck a campsite in a matter of minutes. When you're not preparing meals, secure all food in containers, place them in the shade (not in your tent!), and dispose of all garbage in appropriate receptacles.

Question:

E coli is a big problem these days, how do you keep food from becoming rotten and dangerous to eat?

Answer:

First, invest in a quality cooler; second, keep foods in a separate cooler from drinks; third, replenish the ice level daily. I also keep my food wrapped or enclosed in containers to avoid having it sitting in the water in the bottom of the cooler.

Question:

Do you have any convenient storage tips? For example someone suggested freezing pasta sauce to make an ice pack which can then be used once it de-thaws.

Answer:

Yes, freezing foods ahead of time will extend their storage time and decrease the need for replenishing ice. This is particularly useful for chicken, which we tend to eat in the first couple

of days at the campground, because it spoils faster than meat. Also, there are numerous recipes that can be prepared ahead of time, frozen, and then finalized at the campground without requiring all the fancy utensils that you used to prepare it at home. We've found that we've been able to keep foods frozen in our cooler for over a week, which allows for lots of make-ahead meal possibilities.

Question:

Do you have any gourmet food tips? For example I read somewhere that adding citrus rinds to your campfire coals will improve the flavor of the food, or to try serving Spanish sausage, like chorizo, as an alternative to the more common beef jerky sticks.

Answer:

To me, gourmet foods at the campground are no different from gourmet foods we eat at home. The only difference is in how we adapt our cooking methods to equate with the means by which we cook at home. Improvisation is the key! But it's best to experiment with recipes at home before trying them on your friends at the campground.