**Trail Cooking Guide**

There are five primary goals that you should keep in mind when developing a Trail Cooking Menu Plan:

1. **Weight**
2. **Bulk (space)**
3. **Storage (non-refrigerated foods, critter proof storage)**
4. **Calories**
5. **Trash reduction**

1 – Weight

When backpacking, every once matters. The weight of the food, equipment, utensils, plates/bowls, and water all need to be considered.

Food –Dehydrated, freeze-dried, and precooked items are all good ingredients to include in your menu. Many dehydrated foods can be ordered online, or you can pre-cook many meals and then dehydrate them in your oven (spread food on a sheet tray and keep at 150 degrees for 8 hours) or in a food dehydrator. Food repackaging to take only the amount of an ingredient needed on the trail is another way to reduce weight and size.

Equipment – typical camp stoves are too heavy to take very far from a car or trailer. Use trail stoves that are compact and have small, refillable fuel sources for the best results. Planning out a one pot meal is a great way to reduce the equipment needed on the trail.

Water – often the water will be the heaviest item that you need to carry for a trail meal. Pre-calculating the amount of water is very beneficial, or having water treatment options (iodine, boiling, filter) and knowing locations where you can find water on your trip is the other option.

2 – Bulk

Bulk is essentially the space used by the same items considered for weight. Using foods that have little or no air within the packaging (like rice, beans, nuts) is better than carrying items that are packaged with lots of empty space inside (bags of chips). Consider the type of pasta as an example: Spaghetti noodles are less bulky than elbow or spiral pasta – i.e. less space for the same weight.

3 – Storage

Two aspects need to be considered for storage: preservation of food, and protection from wildlife.

Preservation – refrigeration and ice is often times not available on the trail. Dehydrated, freeze dried, or powered forms of common ingredients are often used to address storage needs as well as space and weight considerations.

Protection – you need to consider how you will store your food on the trail and carry the equipment needed (ex: bear bag and long rope). Bears are not the only critters that will seek to get into your food, so you need to consider how squirrels, chipmunks, and birds will be kept out of your food as well.

4 – Calories

When you are backpacking or hiking, you are burning many more calories than you would normally. On an extended trip of more than a couple of days you need to consider how many extra calories you will need to maintain your strength. If your trip is only a couple of days you should still make sure you are getting sufficient calories, but your body stores are likely to be sufficient.

If you are backpacking with a typical weight pack and going 8-10 miles each day, you will burn well over 1000 Calories extra. Consider this when planning breakfast, your on-the-go lunch and snacks, and your end of day meal.

5 – Trach Reduction

Following The Leave No Trace Principles is essential to keep our environment healthy and enjoyable for future generations. This means that you will be packing out your trash. Packaging each meal in a Ziploc bag that can both organize your meals as well as serve as a compressible trash bag is advised. To do this, you will need to repackage your food for the trail and can often mix all of the “dry ingredients” for a meal ahead of time.