

Dehydrating in the winter to get ready for the summer

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In the cold winter months, setting up camp in the snow can be a tempting challenge. But for those who don't want to tackle trying to teach your girls how to build a quinzee or fill your ice box with snow, or at least not this year, why not try a camp or series of meetings getting ready for some warmer camping.

Dehydrating food is an easy process, but not a fast process. If you are lucky enough to own a dehydrator let the drying begin, if not, a regular old oven can work just as well. These recipes are something you can get the girls to prepare over the course of the meeting and then take home to finish, or take advantage of the large ovens and supplies at many of our local campsite cabins (Marion's Manor works quite nice).

Oven Drying:

- Fruits and vegetables need to dry at 135F, meat at 145F. To ensure you are safely drying food, an oven thermometer is essential, check it often.
- Midway through, turn over large pieces, separate anything that is stuck, and switch the things in the center to the outside and vice versa.
- Prop open the oven door with a wooden spoon to allow the moist air to escape.
- If you have multiple trays in at a time rotate their positions in relation to the heat (things closer dry faster).
- Check things every half hour or so.

Dehydrating

- You will know your food is dried when you touch it and it is leathery. If you are testing fruit, you can tear a piece in half. If you see moisture beads along the tear, it is not dry enough. Meat should be tough, but shouldn't snap apart. Vegetables should also be tough but can also be crisp.
- When storing your dried product, keep in mind that no moisture should be allowed to enter the container...ever. Dried food absorbs moisture from the air, so the storage container must be airtight; try jars or plastic freezer bags, use a straw to suck out the air inside. If storing leather, wrap in plastic wrap so it's not touching itself and store in an airtight container. Store your containers of dried food in a cool, dark, dry place, or a deep freeze. 60F or below is best.
- Fruit:
 - o Allow one whole fruit per person per meal.
 - o Wash all fruit, core and peel if desired.
 - o Cut fruit ¼ inch thick and dip in a pre-treatment method (optional).
 - o You may wish to pre-treat your fruit with lemon juice or ascorbic acid so it won't darken while you are preparing it for drying. Just slice the fruit into the solution and soak for 5 minutes.
 - o Try other methods such as cranberry juice or adding spices to enhance flavour.
 - o Drying takes from 6-20 hours depending on the thickness of the fruit; with blueberries and cherries cut in half taking the longest.
 - o If re-hydrating is desired, soak with enough water to totally cover.
- Vegetables:

- Frozen vegetables dry well and require no pre-treatment; thawing slightly before drying speeds the process.
 - All fresh vegetables except onions, peppers, and mushrooms should be washed, sliced, and blanched. Dry vegetables in single layers on trays.
 - Cut vegetables ¼ inch thick at least, depending on use.
 - Drying takes from 6-12 hours depending on thickness.
 - Re-hydrating is generally quick; add to your meal with only about 15 minutes left in cooking time.
- Meat:
- Choose lean meat and remove all visible fat, gristle and connective tissue before drying or it may become rancid after it is dried.
 - Deer, elk, moose, and venison make good jerky.
 - Jerky does not store as long as fruits and vegetables. For long term storage (longer than a month) store in the freezer or refrigerator.
 - Poultry must be skinned and cooked before drying and is a tricky one to master; dark meat is preferable.
 - Ground meats again need pre-cooking and need to reach an internal temperature of 145F for 45 minutes while dehydrating to kill off any unwanted micro-organisms.
 - To re-hydrate, submerge in just enough water to cover and let stand for about an hour. An easy way to do this is to place it in a water bottle with enough water and re-hydrate as you hike ... just don't mistake it for your water bottle. Keep the water and use it in your cooking as it now has lots of flavour in it.
- Tomato Paste
- Spread two 5.5oz cans onto an oiled leather tray or small jelly roll pan so that the layer is about ¼ inch thick. Dry until you can peel it off the sheet. Cut into manageable pieces and roll in plastic wrap before storing in an airtight container.
- Spaghetti Sauce (or salsas)
- Use homemade sauce or sauce from the store, with or without meat. Spread onto oiled leather trays or jelly roll pan so the layer is up to ¼ inch thick. Dry until you can peel it off the sheet. Cut into manageable pieces and roll in plastic wrap before storing in an airtight container.
- Fruit Leather
- Any fruit can be turned into a leather, have fun and create some interesting combinations. If you have small sized pans (I have seen metal cake or bread pans used) or small leather trays for your dehydrator you can get the girls to make their own creations in a small group. Just give them some pitted and peeled fruit and a blender and set them loose (age appropriate of course). Make sure you know the amount of puree you need to fill a tray or pan to ¼ inch thickness (pour ¼ inch of water in the intended pan and then drain it into a measuring cup). Cover your tray with plastic wrap before adding puree to allow easier removal. Try not to use trays that are too large as it will dry faster around the edges than the center. Dry until there are no wet or sticky spots. Cut into manageable pieces and roll in plastic wrap before storing in an airtight container.

- Yogurt Leather
 - You can dry any flavoured yogurt, but you will need to add pectin or applesauce to make it hold together in a sheet; try plain non-fat yogurt with 1 tbsp thawed frozen orange juice concentrate, or 1 cup cooked peaches or pears, or swirl in a couple spoonfuls of fruit-flavoured Jell-o powder.
- OJ leather
 - This does take more than an hour to re-hydrate into orange juice; you could set it up the night before and have fresh OJ when you wake up.
 - Thaw one 12oz can of pure frozen orange juice concentrate, cover leather tray or baking pan with plastic wrap and pour on the concentrate. Once dry cut into 4 equal pieces, roll in plastic wrap and store in the fridge in an airtight container until ready for use. Re-hydrate each quarter in $\frac{3}{4}$ cup of water.
- Fruit leather breakfast cookies
 - A good snack but not a substitute for a real breakfast.
 - 1 cup fresh fruit, such as bananas, peaches or pears
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup orange juice concentrate, thawed
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup powdered milk
 - 1 tsp vanilla
 - wheat germ, shredded coconut, sesame seeds, or sunflower seeds for topping
 - puree the first 4 ingredients in a blender. Spoon the puree onto a leather tray or baking sheet into cookie sized rounds leaving space between cookies. Sprinkle with topping of your choice. After around 3 hours of drying, or when they can be peeled off, flip each cookie and dry for another 3 hours.
 - Makes about 20 cookies
- Jerky
 - Jerky should dry between 6-20 hours until pliable. Wipe fat off of the jerky while it is drying.
 - Marinade strips of meat overnight before drying
 - Jerky Marinade No.1:
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Soy sauce
 - 2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp garlic powder
 - 1 tsp liquid smoke
 - 1 tsp salt
 - Jerky Marinade No.2:
 - 1 cup ketchup
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vinegar
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup. brown sugar
 - 3 tbsp Worcestershire Sauce
 - 2 tsp dry mustard
 - 1 tsp salt
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp pepper

Using Dehydrated Food

- You will need to soak or cook your dried foods before using them in recipes.
- Some foods require soaking and cooking.
- Vegetables are usually soaked between 1/2 to 1-1/2 hours and then simmered.
- Some vegetables can be re-hydrated while they are cooking.
- Fruits are soaked, and then cooked in the water they were soaked in.
- Fruits are sometimes eaten in their dry state as snacks.
- You must remember that after a food is re-hydrated, it may spoil quickly, so use it promptly.
- Recipes
 - **Apple Pie**
 - 3 ½ cups dried apples
 - 2 cups water
 - ¾ cup sugar
 - 1 tsp cinnamon
 - Cook apples until tender. The apples will rehydrate during the cooking and baking process. Add sugar and cinnamon. Fill and top with pie crust and bake 30 minutes at 350 degrees.
 - **Cream of Tomato Soup**
 - 1 tsp dried tomato powder (see below)
 - ½ cup boiling water
 - 1 tbsp flour
 - ½ cup milk
 - To make tomato powder, blend dried tomatoes in food processor. Add powder to water and simmer. Add flour to milk and stir. Add flour/milk mixture to water and tomatoes. Simmer and stir to prevent scorching.
 - **Backpacking Breakfast Burritos**
 - Tortillas
 - Dehydrated hash-browns
 - Dehydrated veggies (such as peppers, onions, mushrooms)
 - Salsa (may be dehydrated)
 - Package of powdered eggs
 - Cheese
 - Oil (for frying)
 - Re-hydrate ingredients (maybe done overnight). Cook eggs, hash-browns, and veggies. Wrap in tortillas with cheese and salsa

*** Most information above I have obtained from clippings of old Canadian Guider's, training sessions, and through communications with other guiders. Some sources I do know are <http://farmgal.tripod.com/Dehydrate.html> for the marinade recipes and the pie and soup recipes, and a cookbook Vancouver Area Guiding put out a few years back, the backpacking burritos comes from Agnes D'Entremont. I have been fortunate to have access to a dehydrator in the past when I have done this myself so have only heard that the oven method works quite well. Try a small test at home to ensure you know what you are doing when you try to teach the girls.