

# LIGHTWEIGHT COOKING



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**THE PATROL BOOKS no17**

The Patrol Books .... No. 17

# LIGHTWEIGHT COOKING

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and  
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Editor's Notes:

The reader is reminded that these texts have been written a long time ago. Consequently, they may use some terms or express sentiments which were current at the time, regardless of what we may think of them at the beginning of the 21st century. For reasons of historical accuracy they have been preserved in their original form.

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## FOREWORD

We were asked to re-write "Backwoods Cooking" - No. 17 in the Patrol series, written by Charles Stafford in 1953 when he was on the Staff at Gilwell. Now he is Assistant Executive, Training of the Boy Scouts of Canada.



Our dictionary defines "Backwoods" as "remote un-cleared forest land". There isn't much of this left in Great Britain so we have tried to modernise the book. Hence we have retitled it "Lightweight Cooking". In particular we have added a chapter on Foil Cooking.

We should like to pay a tribute to Charles Stafford, most of whose ideas we have retained. He has encouraged many Scouts to experiment with Cooking without taking every pot in the kitchen out with them.

Being naturally lazy characters, it has always been our preference to carry very light rucksacks so we like to carry as little as possible in them. Food and cooking pots weigh a lot and we have tried to show you how you can keep these down to a minimum and enjoy your hiking all the more.

We have paid you the compliment of assuming you know quite a bit about normal Camp Cooking, which is why we have not described the orthodox camp dishes.

Good Camping and Hiking to you - and "lovely grub".

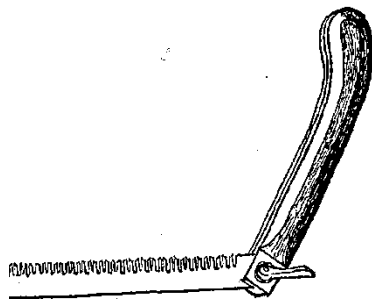
CHAPTER ONE

TOOLS, FIRES AND GADGETS

Before we can produce a meal, we must make a fire to cook it on. So let's consider the types of fire we might use.

Obviously, as we are travelling light we shall not have a spade - so we cannot dig a trench fire. We shall not have an axe either, because it is usually possible to find enough small wood which can be broken by hand or under the foot.

We *shall* have a knife. There is also another tool which can be very useful - a folding Pruning Saw. This is a Saw with a blade about 1 foot long; it folds in half so that the edge of the blade fits into a slit in the wooden handle. It weighs practically nothing and fits splendidly in the side pocket of a rucksack. In the folded position, the teeth are hidden in the handle, so that they do not catch on anything in your rucksack. This will saw through any wood you cannot break with your hands - but obviously it will not saw large logs.



Whatever sort of fire we are going to build, if we put it on grass, we must first remove a sod rather larger than the area to be occupied by the fire. We shall replace this sod before we leave the site so that it may grow again and cover up all traces of our fireplace. With a little care we can cut out the sod with a knife. It is necessary to cut the sod about 5 inches thick so as not to cut through the grass roots, otherwise the grass will only die.

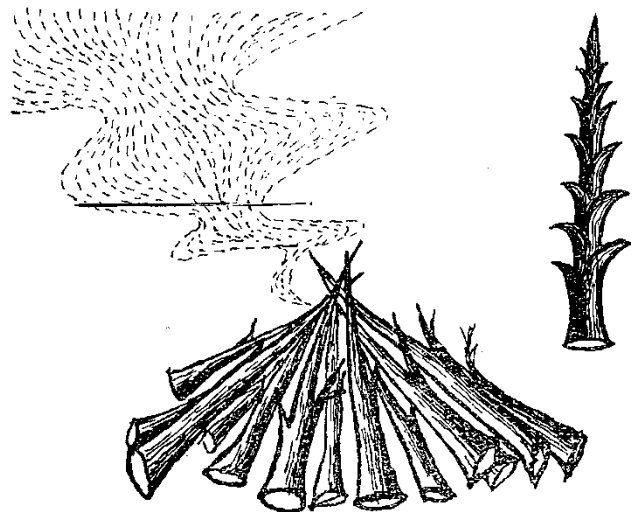
And now for the fire itself. There are two useful types - the *Pyramid Fire*, and the *Hunter's Fire*. Both types are better for cooking a lightweight meal than a huge great conflagration.

To make the **Pyramid Fire**, first produce three **Fuzz Sticks**.

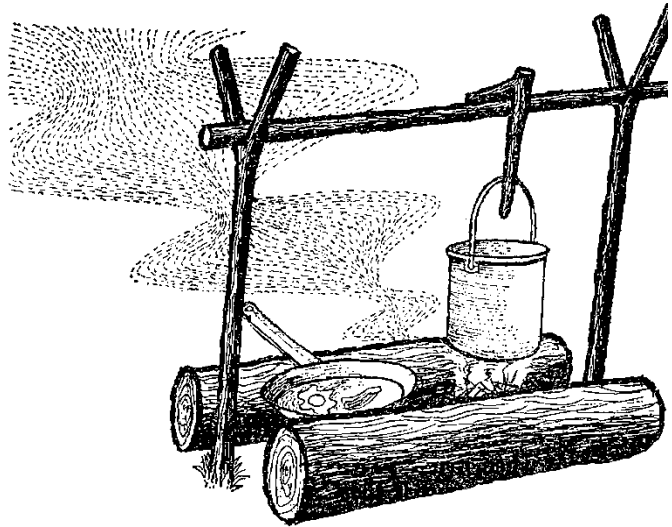
These are soft wood sticks about the thickness of your little finger. With your knife, shave each one almost through for about half its length, leaving the shavings sticking out one below the other, giving the stick a fuzzy appearance. Stick the Fuzz sticks in the ground in the form of a pyramid with the shavings pointing downward. Now stand the rest of the kindling around on end and leaning into the top of the pyramid. The whole thing should be not more than 9 inches high.

Your billy should be suspended over the fire before you light it. This ensures that every bit of the heat in the fire is used for heating up your billy.

The Pyramid fire gives a quick heat but is soon over, So it is most suitable for a quick meal which does not need long cooking - boiling tea or heating up soup for instance. Thin pieces of soft wood will produce the best results for a quick fire.



The second type of fire is the **Hunter's Fire**. This type lasts longer and is therefore more suitable for cooking a biggish meal or one which takes longer to cook. First get two small logs about 3 inches in diameter and about 18 inches long. Lay these parallel and about 4 inches apart. They should be placed so that the wind blows between them. Now put your tinder between the logs. Then put a layer of thin twigs about the thickness of matches across the logs. Place a second layer of twigs on top of the first layer, but this time parallel to the logs. A third layer running across the logs and a fourth parallel with the logs complete the job. You can then put a few thicker twigs on top. Remember to leave air space between the twigs as the fire needs air to make it burn.



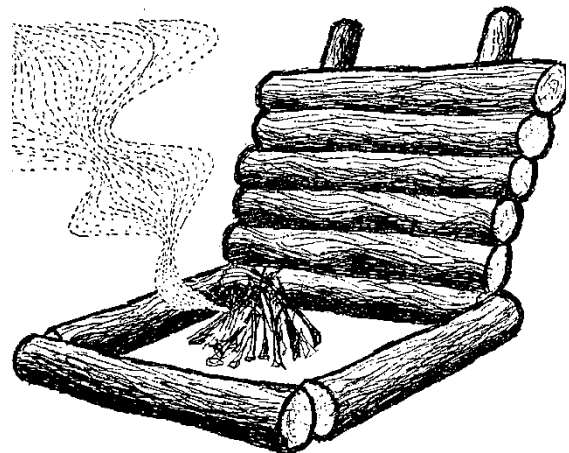
Now light the tinder, and the wind should fan it into flame so that the criss-cross erection on top of the logs lights. When it is well alight the embers will fall between the logs and create a good bed of red embers, suitable for foil cooking amongst other things.

For a really big meal, you can increase the scale of the two logs and put larger wood on top of the criss-cross twigs. This will produce a bigger and better bed of embers. These bigger logs will also make it possible to support your cooking pot over the fire. Incidentally you can use stones instead of logs as a container for your embers.

If you are using a Pyramid Fire or the smaller type of Hunter's Fire, you will need some sort of support for your billy, otherwise it is liable to upset, and there is nothing more depressing than spilling your good soup into the fire just at the moment when it is ready to serve!

One form of support is the **Crane**. For this you will need a forked stick driven in the ground. In the fork you rest another stick, one end of which is over the fire and the other end held in some way to the ground, possibly by being weighted down by a stone. If you notch the stick on which you hang your billy, the notch stops the billy sliding down the stick.

If you can find two forked sticks, you can drive these in one at each end of the fire with a horizontal stick resting between the two forks, and on this you hang your billies. This is rather more stable than the crane.

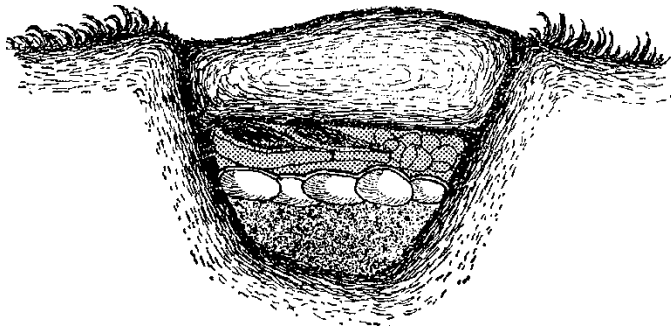


Though you may be travelling light there are times when you perhaps stay put for some time in a base camp and have time to do some more elaborate cooking. There are a number of suitable fires for this purpose.

First, there is the **Reflector Fire**. As its name implies, you build a sloping, wall at the back of the fire to reflect the

heat forward. You can do this with a large stone or stones, or a sloping wall of logs. See also what we have to say about this in the chapter on Foil Cookery. This type of fire is very suitable for roasting. Suspend your roast in front of the fire, on a cord from a crane (in which case a flat triangular piece of wood stuck into the cord will catch the wind and twist the cord, making the roast turn round and cook equally on all sides). Or you can spear it on a spit. If you put a plate or dish under the meat you will catch the fats and juices, which you can use for basting the roast.

Another type is the **Fiji Oven**. Scoop a hole in the ground about 1.5 to 2 feet deep and wide enough to accommodate what you want to cook. In this, light a fire of dry wood, laying the sticks parallel. When the fire is going really well, lay stones on the wood. Test whether the stones are hot enough by dropping water on one. It should sizzle and turn to steam.



Then level off the stones and remove any burning wood. Put a layer of green leaves on the stones (or a piece of Aluminum Foil), put in what is to be cooked and cover well with leaves (or foil). Then cover the whole with earth so that no sign of escaping steam or smoke is visible. You can then leave it, as your food will not burn. So off you go on your expedition, and when you come back, five or six hours later,

your food will be cooked. You can, of course, put a billy containing your food into the Fiji Oven. Incidentally, if you do this, you can heat an additional lot of stones on a separate fire and pile them on top of the billy, so that it is completely surrounded by hot stones before sealing the hole with earth.

As a final suggestion, you can cook a number of things on a flat stone - a paving stone is ideal, but people are apt to stare if you start cooking in the busy part of the High Street.

Keep a fire going for about half an hour on the flat stone. Brush away the ashes and embers. Put four strips of bacon or the stone in a square. Crack eggs in the square and watch them fry.

As a last tip, get all your food ready for cooking before you light your fire. Otherwise you will waste the heat of the fire whilst you rummage round in your rucksack for this and that.



CHAPTER TWO

COOKING

Having spent a lot of time preparing to cook, let's now get down to the job of cooking our food.

In this chapter we suggest to you certain dishes which require a Hike Billy or a Frying Pan and other dishes which you can cook Backwoods fashion without utensils. Many Scouts seem to cook every meal in a frying pan. May we suggest that this is a dull way of feeding and that you should vary your type of cooking. Besides, continually to eat fried food is bad for the tummy.

We suggest you take out of your pocket No. 23 in this series entitled "The Scouts' Cook Book". This tells you just how to cook a lot of delectable dishes. Because you are travelling light, you may have to modify the methods of cooking a bit.

But obviously you don't want your rucksack to be weighed down with food, so you want to pack light but nourishing foods. The perfect solution to this problem is to carry **Dehydrated Foods**. They weigh very little and they don't take up a lot of space.

First of all there are some delicious soups of the dehydrated variety, either made up in cubes or in powder form. Any grocer will be able to help you find these. They slip into a tiny space in your rucksack, are well packed and taste delicious.

Then there are various dehydrated meat dishes on the market. (Bachelors make some). The package contains a foil bag of dehydrated meat and something to go with it, like mashed potato, also packed in a foil bag. The whole thing is usually packed in a carton, but the carton is unnecessary bulk, so we suggest you throw away the carton and pack the bags alone in your rucksack. Full instructions are normally printed on the bags. Make sure they are, before throwing the carton away.

You can also get dehydrated vegetables and powdered potato. All these dehydrated foods are simple to cook.

Again, you are not going to swell your rucksack by carrying loaves of bread. Far better to carry the ingredients and make it on the spot. Here are the ingredients:

- 40 parts self-raising flour.
- 1 part salt.
- 12 parts water.

Mix the dry ingredients together, scoop a hollow in the middle of the mixture and pour in the water. Having made the dough there are several types of bread you can make with it.

**Dampers.** Pull off bits of dough about the size of eggs and flatten them in your hand to discs 1/2 inch thick. Put them on a hot dry pan or stone, or in front of a reflector fire. If you put them in a pan, shake them in the early stages to prevent them sticking. Turn, as soon as one side is golden brown. The cakes will take about five minutes to cook and will rise until they are about 3/4 inch thick. Cut in half, and butter them.



**Twist.** Cut a green stick 1 inch thick. Peel it and heat it thoroughly until the sap bubbles out at the end. This will ensure your Twist is well cooked on the inside. Now lightly flatten your dough into a strip 1 inch wide 3/4 inch thick Wrap it round your previously heated stick like a snake. Hold the stick over the embers of your fire and turn the stick until the dough is a golden brown. It is most important that the stick should be really hot before you put the dough on it otherwise the outside will be cooked and the inside uncooked.

**Sausage Twist** is made by skewering a sausage on a *very* hot stick and covering with a Twist. Cook as for a Twist.

**Ember Bread.** Take a dollop of dough and slightly flatten it. Rake aside the embers of your fire, to expose the hot earth. Place the dough on the ground and rake the embers over it. Cook for 15 minutes. The outside may be burnt, but you can scrape off the outside leaving a beautifully cooked piece of bread.

We have described three sorts of bread, but with slight variations in the mixture there are lots more exciting things you can produce.

**Flapjacks.** Rub four parts of fat into the flour and add four parts of sugar. You can either add water as before, or substitute milk. Mix into a smooth batter. Heat the pan really well and slightly grease it. Pour in enough batter to nearly cover the bottom of the pan. When the surface of the Flapjack is covered with little bubbles, shuffle the pan to loosen the cake, and then toss it or turn it over. When it is done on both sides, spread butter on it and eat whilst hot.

**Drop Scones.** The mixture is as for Flapjacks, but substitute an egg for the fat, and cook by the spoonful. One egg to half a pound (or pint) of flour.

**Pancakes.** Much the same ingredients, but see "The Scouts' Cook Book".

**Batter,** for coating fish before frying or for making **Batter Pudding.** Use the Flapjack mixture but use about half the amount of water or milk. For Batter Pudding, see instructions in "The Scouts' Cook Book".

You see what a large variety of things you can produce by carrying flour instead of bread in your rucksack.

Now let's go on to **Grilled Meat.** A simple **Broiler** or **Grill** can be made from green twigs, but avoid sycamore, laurel or conifer as these give a strong flavour to the food. Peel the sticks and weave them into a sort of tennis racquet (a small piece of wire is useful for making the joint of the main frame solid). Put steak or chop on the completed racquet and then weave some sticks over the top to hold it in position. Rest the shaft of the racquet in a forked stick. Grill the steak in front of a good ember fire. It will take about eight minutes each side. You can also do fish this way.

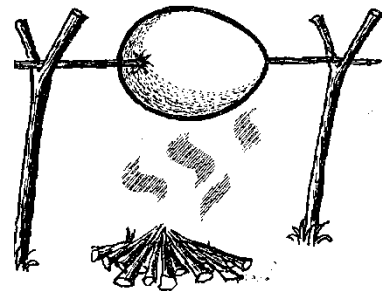
Perhaps the simplest form of Grilled Dish is the Kabob. For this you need two forked sticks driven in the ground, the crutch about 9 inches above ground. Peel a straight green stick about 18 inches long and as thick as a pencil. Sharpen one end. Cut your food into 1 inch squares and spear alternately meat and pieces of onion on the stick, leaving the ends of the stick bare to rest on the forks. Grill over the fire, twirling the stick continually. You can improve on the mixture by adding bits of bacon, tomato or in fact anything else you fancy, provided it does not take longer to cook than the meat.

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## LIGHTWEIGHT COOKING

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Strange as it may sound, you can cook an egg in exactly the same way as a Kabob. Prick a tiny hole in the shell at each end with the point of your knife. Push a thin greenwood skewer through the holes. Place it on the forks over your embers and cook for ten minutes.

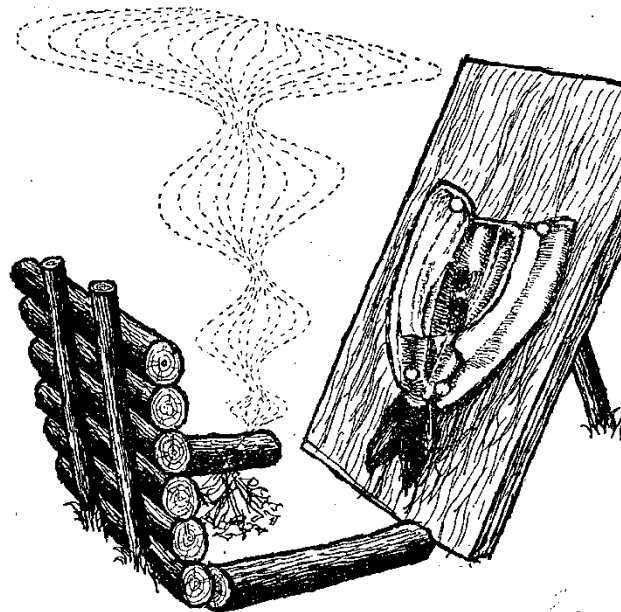


Potatoes make a fine basis for many dishes. **Spud Egg** consists of cutting the top off a large potato about a quarter of the way down. Cut also a small piece off the bottom so that the potato will stand without toppling over. Scoop out the potato from the top, making a hole slightly larger than the egg (a teaspoon does this well). Crack the egg into the hole in the potato. Use either a little white of egg to seal the top back on to the potato, or hold the top in place with two fine slivers of wood. Place in an upright position in the fire and surround with embers. Cook for 20 to 25 minutes.

**Cheese and Potato** is made in the same way as the Spud Egg, except that you substitute cheese for the egg.

**Baked Fish** can be cooked in a large leaf. Many books refer to cooking in a "large leaf" and most people imagine this to be the leaf off a tree. But any large leaf will do, and a cabbage leaf is ideal. Wrap the fish, after cleaning, in the leaf. Cover the leaf with a layer of firm mud to seal it. Place it in the fire on good embers and also rake embers over it. Leave for about 45 minutes. Birds and other small animals can be done in the same way, though with them it is not essential to have a leaf-the mud is sufficient on its own. Feathers or skin need not be removed as they come off when the mud pack is opened after cooking.

**Planked Fish** consists of pegging a fish flat on a flat piece of wood (you can often find a piece of scrap board or a flat sided log or the end of a sawn log). Pegs are made of thin pieces of wood, pushed into holes made with the point of your knife. Slit the fish open from head to tail either along the backbone or along the belly and peg it out. Place the planked fish in front of the fire, preferably sloping away from it. Test occasionally with a knife - the fish is done when the flesh comes away easily from the bone. Kippers are excellent cooked this way, especially as they are already slit open when you buy them.



Most Scouts can produce reasonable food with pots and pans. But if you can feed yourself on the dishes we have mentioned above, you will have proved yourself a real Scout and need never starve if you are caught without your cooking gear or have deliberately left it at home.

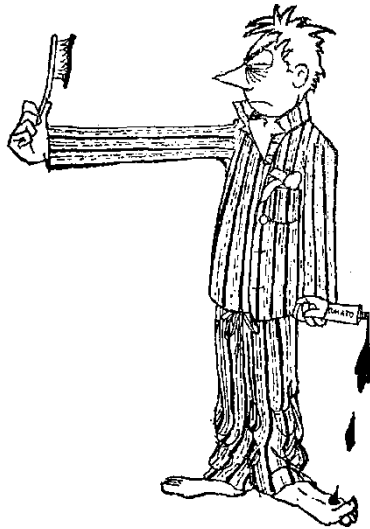
CHAPTER THREE

MOUNTAIN AND EXPEDITION RATIONS

There is a subtle difference between the sort of cooking you do in the plains and the cooking you do on a mountain, or similar, expedition. Conditions are such that you probably have to use a pressure stove and in any case you need to cut cooking to a minimum.

We are not going to say much about Pressure Stoves, except that the older fashioned variety of portable stoves are simpler to use than some of the more intricate modern ones, and that in our experience they still bring your tea to the boil quicker.

Our preference is for paraffin fuel rather than petrol, for safety reasons. Besides, you can heat a hike tent in winter by keeping a Paraffin Pressure Stove going at a low level inside the tent. With a Petrol Stove you would gas yourself.



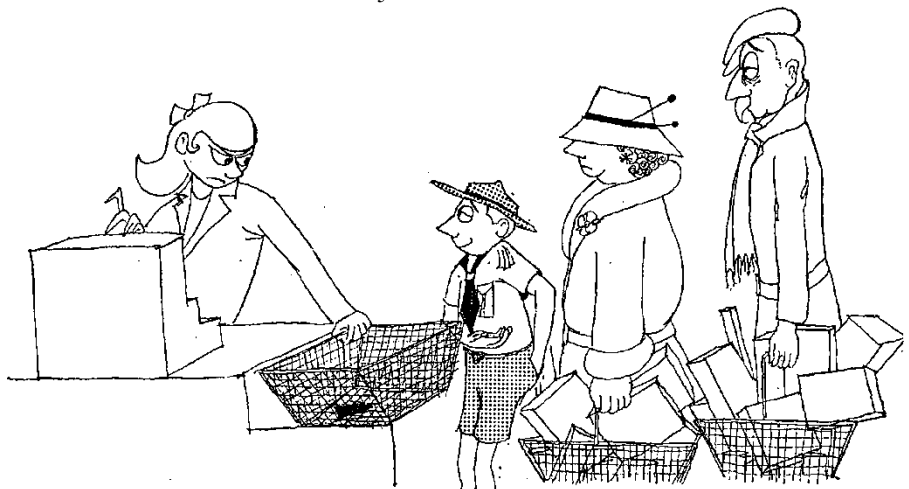
Soups are a wonderful standby for restoring warmth (as our artist shows!) to the body, and in their modern cube form are very simple to produce.

As you are using a Pressure Stove, Twists are off. You can of course make Dampers or Flapjacks. We suggest you carry a packet of Macvita - a thin wheat biscuit, which is nourishing, filling and tasty, and is easily digestible, takes up little room and is light.

Bovril or Marmite are useful because they not only make a soup, add taste to stew, but they make admirable tasty sandwiches.

One of the difficulties of hike rations is to reduce the weight of things like jam and milk, and to find a container which will prevent them leaking over your clothes in your rucksack. Jam scraped off old clothes is slightly revolting! Nowadays you can buy many things in tubes, like toothpaste.

Among the things you can get in this form are Condensed Milk, Jam, Fish and Meat Pastes, Marmalade, Fruit Purees, Tomato Puree and Mustard. With these you can squeeze out just the amount you require. Screw back the cap, and there is no mess. The contents of the tube will last almost indefinitely. Even a condensed milk tube first opened one summer, was quite sound the next year. You may have to go to a large Delicatessen or Grocery Store, as the small shops do



not usually stock these tubes. Many of the bigger Camp Suppliers also stock them. Butter is not obtainable in tubes but it can be bought in small tins.

Though fresh food is to be preferred every time, you cannot carry fresh meat for a long time in your rucksack, particularly in hot weather. Small tins of stewed steak, just enough for two are very useful and nourishing on such occasions.

**Sandwiches** are an important part of the menu, and are usually given insufficient attention. It is often necessary to prepare sandwiches to take with you for the midday meal. If you do this at breakfast time you could fry a little extra bacon and one more egg, and you have a filling much less dreary than the more usual piece of Spam. Here are a few suggested sandwich fillings which you may care to try:-

Cream cheese with grated walnut or sliced tomato.

Finely chopped cooked liver and crisp bacon.

Kipper fillets, lightly spread with mustard.

Chopped hard boiled egg with chutney or Worcester sauce.

Chopped dates and cheese.

Honey and banana.

Grated chocolate (you can grate it off a block with your knife).

Generally speaking, sweet sandwiches are more appetising when you are being energetic and the sugar content helps to restore lost energy. For the same reason, boiled sweets are carried by mountaineers to restore energy.

It is always advisable to keep some emergency rations handy in case something happens to prevent you getting a meal. This is particularly important in winter when you rely on food to keep you warm. A block of chocolate and a few hard biscuits make an excellent emergency ration. If you don't have to use them, you can always declare an "emergency" when you get back to base!



We have already mentioned the difficulty of carrying jam in a rucksack. Even dry foodstuffs are messy if allowed to wander loose. The lightest sort of container, and very suitable for dry things, is the polythene bag. These are made in all sorts of sizes, and you can find one to suit any requirement. If you want to ensure the contents keep dry over a long period you can seal them into the bag by running a hot piece of metal across the open end of the bag. The point of mother's flat iron does this rather well (we await the letters of protest from mums!) You will have to experiment to find out the amount of heat needed - it is not very great. If the iron is too hot, the polythene will stick to it. So, have a few spare bags handy to enable you to practice. This, incidentally, is the ideal way of packing sandwiches so that they keep fresh.



CHAPTER FOUR

**ALUMINIUM FOIL COOKERY**

The use of aluminum foil for cookery is a fairly recent find, which is why we are devoting a whole chapter to it.

Aluminum Foil Cookery is real lightweight cookery. The foil is very easy to use and is just the thing for small parties of up to four. It is not so good for larger numbers - except that it is a wonderful way of cooking a chicken or small joint.

With foil you can Bake, Boil, Fry and Roast and make your pots and pans, plates and mugs from it, though it is singularly unsuitable for making Knives and Forks! It can even make a fine reflector fire, as we shall see.

You buy it in rolls 12 inches wide, and tear off whatever length you need to take hiking with you. It takes up next to no room in your rucksack and weighs nothing. It has another terrific advantage - it does away with washing up. After use, you just crumple it up into a tiny ball and bury it - although that is rather wasteful. In fact you can use foil several times, if you treat it carefully.

The Scout Shop stocks "Polyfoil" which is excellent. Whatever you use, it must be Aluminum foil and nothing else. Aluminum foil is not damaged by a nice bed of embers so that is the sort of fire you want. But it does not like a flame. Flame makes the foil granulate and produces a hole which renders your foil useless. So good red embers please.

Let's get on with the cooking. Now what about a cup of tea to start with? What are you going to boil your water in? Here are two ways of making a container out of foil:

(1) Take a piece of foil 24 inches by 12 inches. Fold it in half so as to make a piece of foil 12 inches by 12 inches of double thickness. Then fold the edges in to the centre so that you now have a 6 inch square. Raise these last four folds vertically to make the sides of your container. Wrap the corners tightly so as to make it leak proof. If you arrange for the sides to lean inwards a little they will hold their shape better when you fill the container with water. Now you are ready to put it on the fire and "tea up" can very soon be called.

(2) If you happen to have some stiffish wire with you or find a piece of fencing wire lying about you can make a second type of container. Start with a 12 inches by 12 inches piece of double thickness as before. Find a log or a gate post or an old tin or a bottle-anything roughly cylindrical of about 6 inches diameter. Mould your foil round this. Then place your wire round the foil and mould and twist it to form the rim of your container and its handle. Then tuck the foil round the wire as tight as possible, and slide the whole thing off the mould. You now have a saucepan, complete with handle. With care it will last a whole weekend.

You can make a frying pan in either of the above ways. The only difference is that you keep the sides shallower.

### **Frying.**

Using your container on embers, you just fry in the ordinary way. In fact you can do without your neatly made pan, by putting a sheet of foil over a slight depression in the embers and putting whatever you want to fry on the foil over the depression. You must, however, be careful none of the fat slides on to the fire, otherwise you will create a flame, make the foil granulate, and ruin the materials.

### **Roasting and Baking.**

This is probably the most satisfactory way of cooking with foil. Take a double sheet of foil sufficient in size to more than cover the bird, meat or fish you want to cook. On the sheet place a few rings of sliced onion so that your food rests on the onion rings and is thereby kept away from the part of the foil which is on the fire. Then bring the two sides of foil up above your food and fold them together three times, making sure there is an air space above the food. Your food is then inside a sort of open cylinder. Twist the two open ends of this cylinder, rather like a Christmas cracker. Put this package on your hot embers.

The important thing is to leave an air space all round your food if you can. So don't wrap it too closely. What in fact you have made is a primitive sort of pressure cooker.

The beauty of this method is that you can pre-pack your food before leaving home. If the air space has been flattened out in your rucksack the pressure created inside the package after it has been on the fire for a bit, will soon make it reappear.

With your meat, bird or fish you can also cook vegetables, but remember you want all the contents of the pack to be ready cooked at the same moment. So you must adjust the sizes of the pieces accordingly. For instance, carrots take about three times as long to cook as potatoes. So, slice your carrot so that it is one third the thickness of the potato.

Only experience can tell how long to cook your food by this method. You can, of course, open up your package from time to time to have a look how it is doing. But as a rough guide a dish for one man will take about 20 minutes to cook.

When you finally open out the container, you can either use it as a plate or preserve it carefully for further use - as you are using double thickness, you have a clean side left on both thicknesses.

### **Bread and Pastry.**

Foil makes an admirable lightweight reflector - just the thing for bread making.

Take a sheet of foil about 5 feet long and double it. Put it flat on the ground and push two green sticks (or pieces of wire) through one end of the foil and into the ground so that they stick up near each side of the foil and about 12 inches to 14 inches above the ground. Then curve the foil sheet upwards so as to form a reflector and pierce it again with the tops of the sticks to hold it in position. Your fire should be built as near the front edge as possible. You then put whatever you want to cook at the base of the reflector as near the front as possible.

Using the reflector, you can do all sorts of baking, such as scones, rolls, apple or meat turnovers.

**Scones.** First take a mugful of self-raising flour, a pinch of salt, a knob of butter and a little milk (if your flour is not of the self-raising variety, you will need a little baking powder). Mix these into a dough, shape it into balls, flatten them and place them at the back of the reflector. Cook till they are light brown in colour.

Although we have told you how to mix your own dough, don't ignore the ready-mix ingredients which are now on the market. After all, your main concern is probably to get a quick end-product (as they say on T.V.).

**Bread Rolls.** These are made in a similar way but the dough mixture consists of flour, salt and water (no butter or milk) and you do not need to flatten the balls. Dampers and Twists can also be cooked on the reflector.

**Apple Turnover.** Either stew or bake your apple first. Whilst that is going on, make a dough from a mugful of self-raising flour, half a mug of suet, a pinch of salt, and water. Roll your dough (or press it lightly) into a circle about 1 inch thick. Put your cooked apple on one half of the circle, turn the other half over so as to cover the apple, and press the edges together to form a sealed envelope, containing the apple. Place the whole thing on the reflector and cook until the pastry browns. When the top browns, turn the whole thing over until the other half browns too. Hence the name "Turnover"! Exactly the same process is carried out with meat, or meat and potatoes (Cornish Pastry).

### Spitting.

Don't be vulgar. Put two green forked sticks in front of the reflector. Spit whatever you want to cook on another green stick and suspend this between the two forks and rotate until your food is cooked. You can do chicken, kabobs or steaks this way.

We have described above only a few of the things you can do with foil. There are endless possibilities and we suggest you have fun experimenting. In fact our last word is do experiment, because (a) it is such fun; (b) you learn so much from it; (c) you may conceivably make some world shattering culinary discovery. You may fill a dustbin in the process, but we wish you more successes than failures!

