

DofE EXPEDITION FOOD – A FEW THOUGHTS

One very important consideration when sourcing food for an expedition is **weight**: the more miles you've carried something which is too heavy, the more you will wish you'd looked for a lightweight version! It really does make a difference to cut food weight down. Dried food weighs much less, because you are not carrying the water, and is generally the best choice for hot meals.

How you **start the day** is crucial. It may be tempting to just get packed up and off, not bothering with breakfast, but you'll regret it after an hour or two! Taking the time to have breakfast means your energy stores will be stoked up. A hot oat-based cereal, or muesli if you prefer, is great, as oats release energy slowly: it'll keep you going for longer. You may find that a good hot coffee or tea helps wake me up and get me going, providing a welcome psychological boost.

During the day, when you are travelling (walking, canoeing, sailing...), it's good to **keep your energy levels topped up** by eating **little and often**. Some experienced travelers make it a mantra to eat something at least once per hour. As well as replacing energy as you use it, this approach means that your body only has to digest small amounts of food at a time. It's amazing how lethargic you can feel after stopping for a large lunch: your body is busily digesting all that food and is not really interested in whatever else you want to do!

So you may well find that good snack foods will work better during the day than a pack of sandwiches. Nuts and dried fruit are tasty and nutritious: Trail Mix packs are very handy. Cereal bars of one sort or another offer better value and eating pleasure than so-called energy bars. Many peoples favourite snack bar is flapjack: good ones taste great and the oats give slow-release energy, which is exactly what you need. Beware of certain sports nutrition products which are intended for athletes undertaking short bursts of very intense activity, rather than the extended moderate activity which is typical of an expedition.

Other handy snack foods include Peperami, or other types of salami, which will keep fine in your pack with no refrigeration, and savoury biscuits. You will probably find that you will look forward to savoury snacks, as there's only a certain amount of sweet food anyone can eat! So what about chocolate, then? Whilst you wouldn't want to use it as a major part of your energy provision, I think that chocolate is handy for giving you a boost, or a treat, every now and then

Your body is good at telling you when you need food: sooner or later hunger will drive us all to go rooting in the pack for something to snack on. However, you may not realise so easily when you need to **drink**. It is said that by the time you are thirsty it's actually too late: you should actually have been drinking quite a bit earlier!

The effects of **dehydration** steal up on you but are actually quite severe. You will probably feel more tired than you'd expect, you might get a headache and possibly other aches and pains, you may feel dizzy or light-headed. Your judgement will be impaired, meaning that you are more likely to take a wrong turning and get lost, or take too many risks in hazardous terrain. All this stuff is absolutely no joke, so keep drinking through the day: a couple of mouthfuls fairly frequently is better than gulping huge amounts down (and you are less likely to lose most of it fairly soon by going to the loo!).

Dinner time... After a good day in the outdoors and reached your overnight stop. You've been snacking during the day, so why not just have a few more snacks and collapse into your sleeping bag for the night? Well, quite apart from the fact that 20 conditions say that you need to cook and eat a substantial meal, you do need to properly replenish your energy stores

in preparation for the next day. You will find that eating a good meal really makes you feel good, and the fact that the food is hot makes a big difference. However tired you are and whatever the highs and lows of the day, life is always better after dinner!

An evening meal should be easy to cook, good to eat and have plenty of calories. Easy to cook ideally means no simmering: apart from the delay, many camping stoves are not at all good at simmering (especially meths/alcohol stoves like the Trangia), and of course simmering means you use more fuel. [Freeze-dried meals](#) are great: just open the pouch, pour in boiling water, re-seal the pouch and wait a few minutes. Hey presto: hot, tasty dinner!

You may be tempted by boil-in-the-bag meals, or so-called "wet meals". They are easy to use, and the good ones taste excellent. However, they are heavy and typically low in calories: you'd need to add some bread, crackers or savoury biscuits to bump up the calories. Do take care if you are making drinks with the water you heated the bag in: not all wet meal bags are intended to be used in this way, and you could find that ink, glue or other nasties are making their way into your mug of tea! It's best to empty the contents of the bag into a pan to reheat it if you are unsure; this is also likely to use less fuel. By the way, if you are interested in this type of meal, the ones you find in a supermarket are generally much nicer than the ones you typically find in a camping shop, and often cheaper too!

So, there's a lot to think about food-wise to ensure you have a really great time on your expedition. One way of making life easier is to use our [one-day ration packs](#), which contain everything you will need to eat for one 24-hour period in the outdoors.

MENU PLANNING

Here are our suggestions for good things to include in your meals. I have also included a list of things to avoid because they can cause specific problems when camping.

BREAKFAST

FOOD TYPE

SUGGESTIONS

Porridge oats	Must be instant, not whole oats. Mix 50g oats, 50g powdered milk and 15g sugar in a small sandwich or freezer bag. Add 350ml water and cook whilst stirring until everything goes thick. You could also use an preprepared sachet of instant oats like Oat So Simple but these do not contain powdered milk.
Cereal	Choose the highest calorie per 100g cereal you can find (as long as you like it). Most cereals are around 340 - 380 calories per 100g but Crunchy Nut Cornflakes are over 400 and crunchy muesli type cereals (anything with 'cluster's in the name) are around 480 calories per 100g! Mix 50g cereal and 50g powdered milk in a sealable bag. To eat empty into a bowl and then pour cold water over and stir.
Beans	Not very high in calories and the tins weigh quite a bit but if a hot plate of beans makes you feel better in the morning then give it a go. You can get half size cans as well and ones with sausages in have a higher calorie content.
Cereal bars	Not very satisfying but some people like to get away early in the morning without doing any cooking or washing up so cereal bars might do at a pinch. Get the highest calories per 100g.

Soup	Instant soup sachets with pitta bread to dunk.
Hot chocolate	Not on its own but with some food as well hot chocolate can add some extra calories and warm you up nicely on a cold morning.
Frankfurters	Sausages which are smoked or cooked or dried already and which have not been taken out of their packets should be fine but if they are supposed to be kept in a fridge eat them the first day.
Hard boiled eggs	If you make yourself some hard boiled eggs before leaving home they should be ok for at least 24hrs but don't keep them too hot for too long and try not to get them squashed...

LUNCH

Think of lunch in two parts: carbohydrate and fat/protein. You need something bready or starchy and something tasty and protein.

CARBOHYDRATES

Bready things: pitta bread, oat cakes, naan bread, fajitas	Can be warmed up on top of a pan lid whilst you cook something else underneath and can't get squashed as they already flat (actually oat cakes will get a bit squashed but thats ok)
Rice, pasta, mash, noodles	If you want a hot lunch treat read the dinner section below for suggestions

PROTEIN

Meat	Dried meats like pepperami, chorizo, beek jerky etc are all great sources of protein and fat. Anything out of the fridge section of the supermarket is a bad idea as it could go bad and give you food poisoning. The only exception might be frankfurters if you eat them soon on your expedition as they are salty and pasteurised to kill any bacteria. Once open they are not safe however so eat them all!
Fish	Tins of sardines, mackerel, tuna in sauce, oil or brine. Yummy and nutritious and can be eaten straight out of the tin saving on washing up.
Cheese	Most cheese will go sweaty and gross in your rucksack. Stick to things which are individually wrapped like babybel, dairy lea or cheese in a tube (are you sure you want to go there?).

DINNER, SUPPER, TEA, WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL IT...

Again choose a carbohydrate and a protein and go for the highest calories and the shortest cooking times.

CARBOHYDRATES

Risotto My other favourite carb along with instant mash. Get sachets of risotto which are already cooked with various flavours in like Uncle Ben's Risotto. You can even boil the sachet in water without opening it then eat it out of the sachet when hot. Just pour two or three dessert spoons of boiling water into the sachet after opening and give it a stir. No washing up! Yeah!

Rice Never bring normal rice as everything takes twice as long to cook on a camping stove as on a stove at home and rice already takes 20mins so that's 40mins.... nightmare. 10min boil in the bag rice is OK but the best kind is the pre-cooked type in a sachet such as Tilda Steamed Rice or Uncle Ben's Express. Also see instant risotto in the dinner section below.

Pasta and noodles Just like rice never bring any kind of pasta which takes 10 or more minutes to cook normally. Only use quick cook types or instant meal types (like Pasta n'Sauce). Noodles tend to be faster than pasta and some pre-cooked types are virtually instant- you just stir them around in a little boiling water to heat them and eat.

Instant mash potato One of my favourite camping foods. Incredibly easy to cook, hardly uses any water so takes seconds to boil enough and is warm and filling.

Couscous Easy peasy to make- get the precooked one, it should say something like: 'leave for 3mins' not: 'leave for 10mins'. Measure how much couscous you are going to use (50g per person) and add the same volume of boiling water. About half a mug of each per person. Then just wait a few minutes.

PROTEIN

Tuna sachets You can now get cooked tuna steaks in sauce or oil in a plastic sachet. You can heat them up by boiling the unopened sachet in water. 116 kcal/100g

Beanfeast A vegetarian dried chili con carne like stuff which you add water to and heat up. 315 kcal/100g

Salami Dried sausage like salami or chorizo can be sliced and thrown into past, risotto or eaten on its own. It has a very high protein and calorie content. 407 kcal/100g.

Smoked Sausage Mattesons' Smoked Pork Sausage is salty enough and has been smoked enough to preserve it and so as long as you don't open the packet it will keep in your bag for the duration of your expedition. 310kcal/100g

Cheese Some cheeses will go slimy in your bag, especially on a hot day. There are a few which will be fine- camembert, brie, babybel and feta. Camembert and brie will go very soft and runny but that's how you're supposed to eat them anyway... About 290-320 kcal/100g.

Sauces Add a sauce if you like. Buy sauces in sachets instead of glass jars and try to get ones in single serving sizes so you don't have to reseal the packet. Most sauces are under 100 kcal/100g but satay sauce is nearly 200 kcal/100g because it contains peanuts and black bean sauce 136 kcal/100g.

SNACKS

Snacks are very important if you want to increase your calorie count from around 1,500 to over 2,000. Snacks tend to have very high calories per 100g. Conversely this is why you should avoid snacks if you are on a diet! Remember you are not on a diet when on your DofE, even if you do want to lose weight, don't try to do so on your expedition!

SNACKS

Nuts and trail mix	Nuts are very high in fat and therefore very high in calories. You can mix them with dried fruits to make 'trail mix'. You can put whatever you want in your trail mix and put it in a resealable plastic bag. You can have it in your pocket ready for your hand to dip in whenever you feel a drop in energy.
Super Trail Mix	When people do a serious expedition to the South Pole or something they do not eat breakfast or lunch and instead just make a big bag or special trail mix which they keep eating all day. It contains broken up pieces of high calorie chocolate bars, flapjacks, chunks of cheese, salami and nuts. You could try making your own one or if the idea of eating salami and chocolate at the same time puts you off try making a savoury and sweet one separately.
Chocolate	Although on hot days chocolate might melt a little its got masses of calories in a small compact size, doesn't go off and almost everyone likes it. The highest calorie bars are Kit Kat Chunky, Mars Bar, Snickers, Cadbury's Dairy Milk. Basically anything 'chunky'.
Sweets	Traditional hard boiled sweets are great as they contain plenty of calories and you can suck them as you walk. Starburst etc are also good ideas. Take 'em if you like 'em.
Peanuts	Either in your trail mix or on their own peanuts contain loads of calories and don't go off. Check that no-one in your team has a peanut allergy though as its one of the worst allergies!
Pepperami	Yum yum. Don't get anything sausage like which is supposed to be kept in the fridge though.

DRINKS

Generally speaking you will run out of any drink you are carrying at the end of the first day and need to refill. As you can't buy anything on your expedition its going to be water you're drinking. If you do take any drinks for your first day don't bring anything with caffeine in as it is a diuretic (makes you wee) and so you will become dehydrated.

The only other drink worth bringing is hot chocolate. It weighs hardly anything and gives you a sugar and calorie boost and makes you feel better either in the evening before bed or in the morning to wake you up. Get the single serving hot chocolate sachets. Make sure its not Cadbury's Options or Highlights as these are low-fat and low calorie versions. Yuck.

THE BAD LIST

A list of foods which are not very suitable to take on a DofE Exped.

Bacon	Personally I don't recommend bacon as it causes a mess of your cooking pan, you won't have oil to fry it in so it will stick and you have to use it all in one go or it will go rancid. Some people just ignore all my advice though...
Sausages	Fresh ones are a no-no as they will go off and you could get nasty food poisoning.
Eggs	You <i>could</i> take raw eggs in a tupperware dish and then try to fry them but where would you get the oil from?
Mushrooms, tomatoes etc	Fresh stuff will not last, could get squashed and contains nowhere near enough calories to get you going. Tinned things weigh too much and don't contain enough calories to make up for this.
Fresh fruit	Fine for your first day but don't bring more than you need for day one or it will get bruised and go nasty in your rucksack.
Crisps	Although they are high in calories they are bulky due to needing to have air added to the package to stop them getting crushed so they take up way too much room in your rucksack. A bag of Walker's crisps has the same calories per 100g as a chocolate bar but takes up twice as much room at least and contains fewer grams.
Pot noodle	Very bulky as the packaging contains lots of space inside for the water. Not very high in calories or indeed much of anything else either...