

Food for Long Trips

The following are some of the things I have learnt about organising and packing food for long trips. When heading off in the wilds for a week or two with little chance of resupply, you need to be well organised. Going hungry or living on baked beans would rather spoil the experience I think. You do not want to carry too much food, and you do not want to run out. It also has to be satisfying and nutritious.

1. Plan a rough menu for each day – breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks etc with a lot of variety. Don't forget drinks. A menu helps you prepare a shopping list.
2. One pot meals are easy to prepare and they minimise washing up.
3. I take a range of meats vacuum packed in individual meal packs. I have a home vacuum unit for this and the meat will last in the fridge for a few weeks without trouble. Alternatively, your butcher should be able to cryovac it for you. Meat with bones in, or chopped meat (e.g. mince) will not last as long as steak for example. I have carried Cryovac steak in the fridge for 8 weeks without any problem. I find rump steak very versatile – it makes a great BBQ and is also quick and easy to cook for casseroles.
4. Fresh vegetables take up lots of room in your fridge and they do not stay fresh for long. I dehydrate carrots, zucchini, egg plant, mushroom etc, and just throw a handful in the pot (along with pasta) and a packet of casserole sauce when cooking a stew. Dehydrated vegies are very light and do not take up much room. They must be properly dried so they do not go off. For variety, tins of mixed vegies are good. Being basically lazy I tip the tinned vegies with their water into a pot, heat it up and when just on the boil I add Deb dehydrated potato and stir until I have a mix of mashed potato and vegies... surprisingly tasty. Tins of stir fry vegies are useful for a change of meal.
5. Fruit cannot be carried into quarantine areas because of fruit fly and therefore a range of dried fruits can substitute. Dried peaches, sultanas, mangos, pears etc all work well. Semi dried tomatoes work well. Plastic jars of preserved fruit are easy to pack.
6. When you can carry fresh fruit, wrapping each piece of fruit in newspaper and then packing them into a well ventilated box (carton) will keep them unbruised and in good condition for long periods. The newspaper can then be used for lighting fires. Potatoes, carrots, onions etc can also be carried like this.
7. Remove the bulky outer packaging from groceries and you will find that they take up much less room and you will have less rubbish. Always pack so that the items you need first or most often are readily accessible. I work out of food drawer and have boxes of food elsewhere for use as needed.
8. Glass jars are heavy, they break, lids come undone on corrugated roads and they are a disposal problem. Transfer contents to plastic containers.
9. Cans of beverage can leak on corrugated roads when they rub together. Wrap each can in newspaper. I put each one in a drink cooler. When fridge space is at a premium, put enough for the following day into the fridge the night before.
10. I also mix up powdered milk the night before and put it in the fridge overnight – tastes just like real milk.
11. With wine, I drink red so that it does not need refrigerating. Two litre casks (instead of bottles) are good and is better quality than 4 litre casks. Cask wine is not available in many towns in central Aust.
12. For breads, packs of flat breads last a long time and are easy to pack. Try making damper or even proper bread in the camp oven. You need to practice these.

There are many other ways to organise food. Please share your helpful hints and recipes. See you on a track somewhere. *John Kent*