



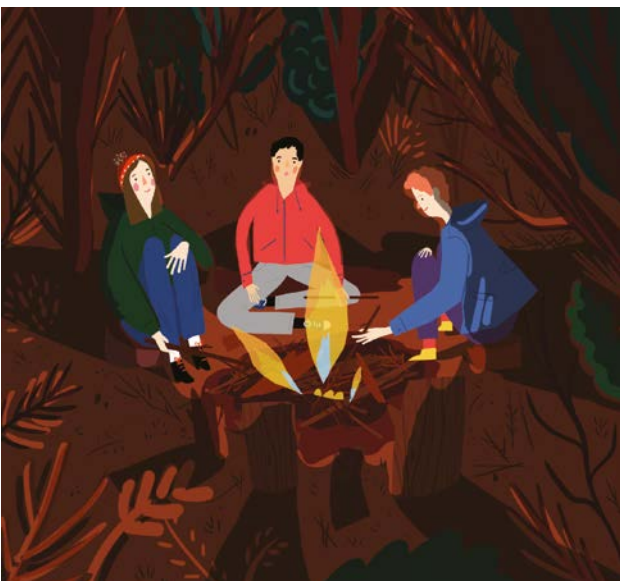
Catering

Who's cooking?

Meals can either be provided centrally by a cook and team of helpers, or be prepared by the young people themselves. Either way, the menu should deliver a balanced diet within the capabilities of the cooks and the equipment at their disposal.

If the young people are catering for themselves, you will need to consider the following:

- have they cooked before
- what type of food have they cooked
- will they be cooking on open fires or using gas stoves
- how much cooking equipment will be needed
- how long will preparation, cooking and washing up take



You will need to build an appropriate amount of time into your programme for the preparation of food. If you have to get a cooking fire started, you will need to allow a longer time than if you were cooking on a gas stove. Washing up will also take longer if cooking on a fire as the outside of the pans will be a lot dirtier.

You should allow at least two hours for the meal from start to finish. Young people are not always used to catering for themselves and will need organising and supervision to make efficient use of time and teamwork.

Centrally-catered events will allow you to have more activity time, but will not give the young people experience in how to cater for themselves.

It may be possible on camps to combine the two approaches with a mixture of small group cooking and central cooking. For example, under the guidance of the cook, a duty team could assist in meal preparation on a rota basis.

On camps, which are mainly centrally catered, you could arrange for one or two meals where the young people can have a go at backwoods cooking on fires without pans.

What's cooking?

A well thought out and delivered menu will go a long way to enhancing an event. Planning a menu ensures well-balanced and interesting food. It should be done in conjunction with the programme so that it supports your event by providing appropriate nutrients at the right time. It also needs to reflect the skill of the cooks, the equipment and facilities at their disposal and the numbers that they are catering for.

Essential information

You will need to know the following information as early as possible:

- the approximate numbers of young people and adults
- any special dietary requirements or allergies
- the programme for the camp such as the timetable and planned activities
- whether central or self-catering, or a mixture of both
- the cooking equipment and facilities available
- accessibility to shops in the area
- storage facilities, for example, size of stores, fridges/cool boxes

A balanced menu

The menu should be balanced and contain appropriate amounts of protein, fat, fibre and carbohydrate.

You should aim to have at least two hot meals per day. Breakfast is very important so provide cereals as well as some form of cooked breakfast.

Regarding lunch and dinner, your programme will dictate whether one or both meals are cooked. If there is only one hour allowed for lunch, unless you are centrally catering, there will not be time to prepare, cook and clear away a hot meal. The time of year will also influence your decision, for example, in summer a light lunch of sandwiches might be preferable, whereas in winter you would probably want all meals to be hot.

It is advisable to have fruit and water or low sugar content squash available all day to allow young people to supplement their meals in a healthy way. Avoid allowing access to biscuits and cakes during the day, which may be filling and not leave room for meals.



Dietary needs

No one should be made to feel different if they have particular dietary needs. Find out if a young person has a special requirement and talk to their parents before the event. You will need to provide alternatives within the menu to meet any medical or cultural needs, and to cater for vegetarians. It may be worth considering providing alternatives for those who simply do not like something on the menu.

Estimating food quantities and shopping

It can be difficult to get it right between having enough supplies and having too much. Here are some suggestions.

Measuring quantities

- 25g (1 oz.) flour, cocoa, custard powder
= a well-heaped tablespoon
- 25g (1 oz.) sugar, rice, butter, fat
= a level tablespoon
- 250 ml (half a pint) liquid
= a normal camp mug full

The camp mug-measure

It is also possible to use a half pint camp mug for measuring all sorts of quantities. A half pint camp mug, lightly filled, will hold the following approximate weights:

- 125g (5 oz.) flour
- 200g (8 oz.) sugar
- 100g (4 oz.) grated cheese
- 175g (7 oz.) rice
- 150g (6 oz.) dried fruit

It is advisable to invest in a set of measuring scales or cups to avoid estimating where measurement is important, for instance, making cakes.

How much food to buy

Generally the quantities to buy per head for an event are in line with the list below. Remember to adjust amounts down for younger groups and increase for older groups, generally by approximately one quarter.

Dairy produce

Milk (if serving cereal)	375 ml (1/2 pint) per head per day (and don't forget a bit extra for leaders tea and coffee!)
Butter/margarine/low fat spread	allow 250g spread to three/four loaves
Eggs	one per person (for meals including eggs such as breakfast)
Cheese	500g (1lb) between 12 people (also allow for people who do not eat meat and late night sandwiches for adults)

Meat

Meat	120g (4oz) per person
Bacon	two rashers per person
Sausages (large)	two per person for breakfast, more if making bangers and mash

Vegetables

Potatoes	200g (7oz) unpeeled per portion
Onions	one average onion between three people
Tomatoes	buy amount per head
Cucumber	one between 12 people
Carrots	one average carrot per person
Sweetcorn	one standard tin between four people

Fruit

Apples, oranges, bananas	two items per person per day
Fruit salad (tinned)	one standard tin between two people

Bread/pasta

Bread	allow one loaf per day per eight people
Rolls	buy by the amount per head per meal
Pasta	75g per person
Rice	50g per person
Cake	most cakes have serving suggestions or buy individual cakes
Biscuits	buy several packets of different varieties (chocolate ones are liable to melt)

Dried and tinned goods

Cereal (cornflakes)	15 - 18 servings per 750g box. Young age groups may prefer sugar-coated cereal. Avoid Weetabix, which uses a lot of milk
Baked beans or spaghetti hoops	one standard tin between three people
Instant Whip	one pack serves two and uses ½ pint milk

Where and when to buy

The timing of your food purchasing will depend on how long you will be away, the availability of local stores, transport and storage facilities.

For a weekend event it may be best to purchase your provisions shortly before you leave and take them with you. If you do not have the cool box/fridge capacity, or are on a longer event, you will have to purchase some of your supplies whilst on camp from local stores.

These days many campsites are within a short drive of a main supermarket and many are open 24 hours a day. Find out in advance where the nearest shops are, and plan when during the event will be the best time to make the trip.

For long events, find out if you are able to pre-order online from the main supermarkets that offer a delivery service in the area. Alternatively, you can do the shopping as and when required on the event.



Ordering ahead

There are a number of advantages of the delivery option:

- you can work out all the quantities and place the orders before the event
- you can pay online and take less money or payment cards to camp
- you won't need to leave the site for shopping during the event

The main disadvantage is that once ordered you are stuck with the menu as originally planned and quantities originally ordered. This may leave you with unused food that will have to be taken back to your meeting place.



Shopping

The advantages of doing the shopping at the event include:

- you can adjust the quantities and/or menu if your estimation proves to be incorrect or you decide to change a meal. This should mean that you take very little, if any, surplus food back
- you can restock on other consumables that may be running low, for example washing up liquid
- The main disadvantages of this approach are that you will need to take more money or a payment card with you, and you may have to take an additional leader/adult with you offsite to replenish stock (ratio could be effected so consider this). You will also have to take into account that the exact products you wish to buy may not be available, and a more expensive alternative may have to be purchased

Tuck shops

Most camp sites operate providores (site shops) with plentiful supplies of all the things that young people like to eat. Always check the opening times and ensure that they do not fill up on sweets just before eating their main meal.

If you are at a location without a providore, you may choose to provide the young people with their own mini tuck shop. It is generally best to keep to sweets in packets that will not melt or go off quickly, and limit how much each person can have and the times at which they can access it.