

Backwoods Cooking

The secret to successful backwoods cooking is to build a good fire that will provide hot embers, for it is on embers that we cook - not flames. One of the problems with embers is that they tend to become cool after a short while. The keyhole fire solves this problem. Build the fire in a large circle area and pull the hot embers through into the smaller circle where the cooking takes place, as they are needed. A two inch bed of embers is required for successful backwoods cooking, use beech or oak logs, as these will give longer lasting embers. Charcoal can also be used and it will hold the heat longer than wood embers.

Aluminium foil can be used if you want to take the easy way out. This way it is possible to construct pots and pans for cooking food or you can place your food in an aluminium foil envelope.

The pioneers and backwoodsman of the past used only those materials that could be found locally for creating cooking utensils. They often used leaves and clay as well as ingenious cooking spits and holders made from green twigs and branches (green twigs and branches are less likely to go on fire and are pliable so they can be worked).

Hygiene

Although backwoods cooking is considered to be primitive in approach your food hygiene methods should not be. Wash all food before use and keep covered until you intend to use it. Clean up the area used after you are finished and dispose of all food scraps carefully. Don't forget to clean your hands also after you have finished eating as it is likely that it will be your hands that you use to hold and eat the food with.

Simple Recipes

Container Cooking

It is possible to use food as containers for other foodstuffs, such as, orange skins in which eggs can be cooked. Onion shell created by cutting an onion in half and scooping out the core of the onion and leaving three or four shins in place to form a container. You can also use potatoes or pineapples in the same manner.

Baked Potato

Perhaps the easiest to cook backwoods.

1. Take a potato and place it in the embers of the fire. When it is cooked, after about 25 - 30 mins slice open the skin and place a piece of cheese or butter on top.
2. First wrap the potato in foil. This will cut down some of the burnt skin.
3. Soak loads of newspaper & 1 sheet of greaseproof paper. Wrap the potato in the greaseproof paper and then layer after layer of newspaper. Finally put on a layer of foil. Best method for a moist, uncharred potato.

Orange Eggs

Cut an orange in half and eat out the contents without breaking the skin. Break an egg into the orange shell and place on embers and allow to cook. When done, eat from container.

Onion Eggs

Cut the onion in half after removing the outer skin. Remove internal contents except for the remaining three outer layers. Break egg into shell and place on embers. When cooked eat the onion container as well as its contents after removing the outer scorched layer.

Spud Egg

Halve a large potato. Hollow one half. Break egg into hollow. Pin two halves of potato together with small sticks and roast in hot embers.

Twists

Mix flour, water and a pinch of salt together to form a thick dough, adding raisins and sultanas if you like. Make a snake like roll of the dough and twist this snake like femberion on a thick green stick (with bark removed). Support it over glowing embers turning occasionally until the outside turns golden brown.

Instant Hot Dogs

Lay sliced onion on a cabbage leave add a sausage or two and place more onions on top. Wrap up the cabbage leaf tightly and secure with a number of small green sticks. Place in embers for about 7 - 10 mins turning occasionally.

Simple Kebab

Remove the bark from a green stick and onto it spear slices of bacon, mushrooms, sausage, carrot, tomato, peppers, pieces of pork. Support the skewer over glowing embers turning occasionally. Eat when the meat is crisp and golden brown.

Fish

It will be necessary for you to clean and gut any fish before you cook it. The fish should be cleaned thus:

Wembers the fish thoroughly in clean water Remove the scales by scraping with the back of a knife (that is not the shape edge), working from the tail towards the head. Cut the spine at a point just behind the gills and tear the head off with a steady, slow, forward motion. If you are careful, the fish innards will come out with it. Slice the belly open from tail to gills and thoroughly clean the inside.

Finally, cut of the fins and tail and cook as desired.

Cooking Methods for Fish

Planking A Fish

For this you need a fair sized fish gut it and remove the head and tail then split along the back bone of the fish so it lays flat then nail it to a plank of wood and place it near a bed of hot embers. The fish will cook slowly and you will get the flavour of the wood smoke. When ready peel off the strips of fish be careful the odd fish bone may come with the meat you are peeling away.

Fish In Newspaper

Place your gutted fish in newspapers (about 5 layers) really wet the paper through at this point then place on the hot embers. Turn the package every 2 - 3 minutes and continue to wet down the newspaper through out. The fish will take about 15 minutes to do using this method. For an even more natural method you can use cabbage leaves instead of the newspaper.

Fish In A "Y" Stick

Get a long flexible "Y" green stick then either tie or weave the two ends together to form a circle, lay it on a flat surface then place your gutted fish inside the circle and with further green peeled sticks weave a lattice work around the fish and the "Y" stick. When you have finished your fish will look like a fish trapped in a tennis racquet!... simply cook over the hot embers.

Fish On A Stick (A Fishy Lollipop!!!)

Peel the bark off a green stick and push it through a gutted fish. Place your stick into two "Y" shaped sticks which you should place either side of the hot embers. (This way you can do several fish at once and you don't burn your hand) cook for about 15 minutes then eat of the stick... magic!

Wrap Method

Wrap fish in grass and cover in mud and place on fire. Or wrap fish in cabbage leaf and pin together with a small twigs and place on fire.

Broiling Method

Construct a broiler as shown and place your fish in it cook of hot embers turning regularly.

Fish cook very quickly so be careful you do not burn them.

Meat and Burgers

Meat and burgers can be cooked by a number of methods some of which are described above such as the Kebab method or the wrap method whereby the meat is wrapped in cabbage leaves. Meat may also be cooked using a broiler or by frying on a hot stone.

Burgers in Leaves

Place three layers of cabbage leaves directly onto the hot embers and put the burgers or mince patties on top of them. After approximately 10 minutes, turn the meat over, putting it onto three new cabbage leaves. Repeat this process until the meat is cooked.

Twists / Green Stick Cooking / Kebabs

The simplest form of this is to simply 'twist' some dough around a green sapling branch [use hard wood - oak, sycamore - & strip the bark]. And roast the dough over the fire. You could try some variations on a twist mixture... e.g. sugar and cinnamon in the dough should be quite tasty. Eat plain or with jam or honey. Variations to this is wrap around a half cooked sausage then bake to give a sausage roll

Kebabs are good - I buy the bamboo skewers. You can put all sorts of stuff on them. Steak, onions, peach, potato and kiwi fruit is not bad and it will get the kids' attention.

Bananas in Foil

Split the banana down the middle and pack the middle with chocolate buttons before wrapping in foil and putting into the embers. Everything goes nice and chocolatey and gooey.

How about Some Spiders?

Cut hot dogs in quarters, length wise 1/3 of the way from each end. This leaves a solid centre to put on a stick or hot dog fork. Cook over open fire (the spider's legs will curl), serve on a bread bun!

Ants on a Log

Celery covered with peanut butter and topped with raisins.... Great appetiser.

Sausage On Stick

Peel the bark off a green stick and slide your sausage along it. If you want, you can wrap a slice of streaky bacon round it and if you wish you can cook the sausage first then wrap the twist dough round it to create a sausage roll!

Chicken In Clay

Gut your chicken but don't bother to pluck it, now plaster it with clay or thick mud to a depth of about 2.5 cm [1"] now bury the chicken in the embers for about 30 minutes (this really depends on the state of the fire) when the chicken is ready peel away the clay and the feathers will come away as well thus exposing the chicken ready to eat.

Self Basting Chicken

Gut and pluck a chicken then suspend it over a bed of hot embers by a fairly stout rope. The trick to get it to self baste is a "Dingle" a dingle is basically a wind driven flat surface that you tie into the rope so that the wind will move the dingle and of course the chicken around, this action allows the heat to cook the bird more evenly after about 30 minutes turn the chicken so both ends get cooked (note it is very important that children do not eat the chicken half cooked as they could get quite ill from this) A chicken is cooked when no blood ooze's from its flesh when pressed... if in doubt give it another 15 minutes worth of cooking. The fact that the juices will run down the outside of the bird provides the self basting action require.

Eggs In An Orange

Cut the top of an orange, eat the centre out of the orange, the crack the egg into the available space, pop the lid back on and secure with small sticks, place on the hot embers for about 10 - 15 minutes till cooked

Eggs In An Potato

Cut the top of an potato, scoop out the centre out of the potato, the crack the egg into the available space, pop the lid back on and secure with small sharp sticks, place on the hot embers for about 15 - 20 minutes till cooked

Eggs In An Onion

Cut the top of an onion, scoop out the centre out of the onion, the crack the egg into the available space, pop the lid back on and secure with small sharp sticks, place on the hot embers for about 10 - 15 minutes till cooked.

Corn on the Cob

Do not remove the sheaves, simple dip in a bucket of water then fling onto the embers, turn occasionally... eat with butter, a meal fit for a King!

Bonfire Toffee

Melt 2 oz of butter, add 2 tablespoons of syrup a pound of brown sugar, boil quickly for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. See if it's ready by dropping a few drops in cold water. When crisp pour out into a heavily buttered tin break when firm.

Garlic Bread

Get your loaf slice thickly, butter with garlic butter thickly, wrap in foil, place on the embers to heat through. (Best to do an extra loaf as its bound to be popular!)

Camp Fire Sandwich

Butter the bread place the buttered side of the bread to the outside add a filling of your choice, wrap in foil place on embers turn once after about a minute.

Some Others

Melt a marshmallow

Place between two digestive biscuits add a square of chocolate.... truly decadent.

Choc - o - Mint Oranges

Cook an orange in its skin on the embers, remove it from the heat slice it half way through place 3 wafer mints insides place back on the heat for 5 min then eat.

Shish Kebab

Cut any type of meat into cubes, place onto a long peeled green stick add onion, mushrooms, pepper, pineapple etc. to taste, cook till ready turning frequently

Fruit Shish Kebab

The same method as above using fruits add a syrup sauce before eating

Cheese Fondue

Make a rich sauce out of any kind of cheese (processed cheese works well!) add a white wine or cider to thin the sauce, cut small squares of bread dip into the sauce and eat. {Interesting this, if you loose your bread in the sauce you must pay a forfeit!!!}

Drop Scones

Prepare a batter of 1 pint of milk 1 egg, 2 oz of castor sugar and 4 oz of self raising flour mix well and allow to stand for an hour, grease lightly a heavy frying pan drop enough batter to make a 3 inch scone turn when the underside is brown, butter add jam to taste. (This is enough for about 20 scones but be advised they go like hot cakes!)

Pancakes

The same method as above but use plain flour, once made flavour with syrup, dessert dressings, fruit, cream etc.

Hunters Steak

Clear an area on the fire so you can cook on hot embers, place steak direct onto the fire, when ready remove dust off embers which may have stuck to the meat and eat. (The fire will sterilise any germs so don't worry about it)

Baked Apples

Core the apple, fillings can be added, marshmallow, sugar, fruit, cherries, Smarties, M & M's, syrup to name a few. Seal in foil place on the embers for about 10 -15 minutes.

Stuffed Sausages

Mix up a packet of sage and onion stuffing add some Worcester sauce and a dembers of tomato sauce, slice the sausage lengthways stuff the sausage wrap in foil place on the fire for about 10 minutes.

Stuffed Fruit Loaf

Take a plain loaf cut off the top lengthways scoop out soft inner's crumble and add to this two apples finely diced and one cup of sultanas. Fix the top back on using cocktail sticks. Spread margarine thickly on the outside of the loaf wrap tightly in a double layer of foil place on the embers for about 15 minutes turning regularly

Tattie (Potato) Soup

(For Eight) Peel and grate 1 Lb. of potatoes, peel and chop one large onion fry this in 2 oz of butter then add this to 2 pints of stock (which is made from two chicken or ham stock cubes) boil then allow to simmer for 15 minutes serve with a grated cheese topping.

Cracker Surprise

Ritz crackers, with cheese spread and a square of pineapple on top.

Brandy Bananas

Cook the banana in its skin until soft then slip add a teaspoonful of brandy or a square of chocolate or marshmallow and re-heat until ready.

Embers Toast

Simply place a piece of bread directly onto the hot emberses, (Don't worry the heat will sterilise any germs) then using tongs turn over as soon as it's done.... It has a unique flavour. You may want to add cinnamon to taste.

Toffee Apples

Place the apple onto a green stick hold over glowing embers until the apple is soft this takes about 15 minutes, peel off the skin then roll in a mixture of syrup and sugar, re-heat until the sugar forms a candy coating.

Angels on Horseback

Cook a slice of bacon then wrap it round a square of cheese return to the heat until cheese is soft.

Bac-o-Cheese Dog

Cut a sausage long ways, but not all the way through add cheese to the split then wrap in a slice of bacon hold together using tooth picks then cook for about 10 minutes.

Drinks Various:

Fruit Punch

Orange juice, cider, 1 large can of tangerine oranges, fruit to taste.

Pine Tea

Boil water then place in your cup a fresh young pine leaf wait about 5 minutes, remove the leaf and strain add sugar to taste

Nettle Tea

Boil water then place in your cup a fresh young nettle leaves wait about 5 minutes, remove the leaves and strain add sugar to taste.

Russian Tea

Lots of sugar, black tea, 2 large tins of mixed fruit, 1 bottle of cheap red wine add to taste. Simmer for 30 minutes until fruit is soft.

Gluhwine (Mulled Red Wine)

Red wine and gluhwine spices (can be bought locally) simmer for 30 minutes.

Kye

Cocoa, sugar, milk, spirits of some description to just flavour the drink. Snacks: