

## BEAR RIVER MERCANTILE – BOWRON LAKE BC

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### Info Sheet #2 – Bowron Lake Circuit Food Ideas

Food never looked as good as after an exhilarating day of backcountry paddling. Fresh air, strenuous activity and nature's marvels have a way of stimulating the appetite. Although there's no reason to scrimp on backcountry cuisine, you do need to ponder and plan before you pack. The selections and amounts of food you bring will depend on the number of days you plan to be out; the number of people in your group; the terrain and conditions you'll encounter; your personal abilities, strengths and preferences; and the areas 'rules' that need to be taken into consideration.

**Portages** – If doing the Full Circuit, you will encounter 10.8 kilometers (6.7 miles) of portages. The three longest portages fall within your first two or three days out, when your packs are at their heaviest. Although the Park allows the use of canoe carts for trolling your canoes over the portages, it limits the amount of gear you are allowed to carry inside that canoe while it is being pulled over the portages to 28 kilos (60lbs). **This is not a limit to how much gear you can bring**, it is only a limit to how much gear you can carry in your canoe while it is on the wheels being pulled over the portages. Everything over this 28 kg (60 pounds) must be bodily carried by on your backs..... that means by you! (See Info Sheet #3 'Portages, Packing & Paddling' for more information). This restriction alone could make a big difference in the kind of food you pack. Although convenient and lightweight, a menu filled with dehydrated foods is not a necessity (but it is a good idea to have some to help keep the weight down) and most fresh meats and vegetables can be safely taken with some careful planning.

**Organize Your Menu** - The first step is to draft up a menu plan; include each day's breakfast, lunch, supper and snacks. Break each meal down to the smallest ingredient so that you will be sure not to short yourself or forget anything. Add one or two extra meals in case you get stuck in the wilderness a little longer than expected. Most people like to plan two or three days of fresh foods before breaking into the dried stuff. Keep in mind that you will need to eat the most perishable foods first so plan to consume your fresh meat-based dinners during the first few days of the trip.

You can either prepare your meals from scratch at the campsite or prepare them before hand at home. The latter is recommended with most 'made from scratch' meals, because after a long day of paddling the last thing you want to do is spend hours preparing dinner; especially since there are plenty of other chores to do like setting up camp, drying out clothes, looking for firewood, and getting the fire going. Also pre-cooked foods generally last longer than raw foods, especially when it comes to meat and they do not smell as strong (a good thing while in bear country). If you keep your pre-cooked meals frozen until you hit the trail, they will stay fresher longer. Well preserved foods such as sausage

rings and spicy dishes such as beef curry will last longer than fresh foods, so plan these dishes around mid-trip. Save dried foods, such as pasta and rice mixtures and dehydrated meals for the last days of the trip. Make two copies of your menu plan, use one as a checklist, scratching off each item off as it's physically being packed and use the second copy as a meal guide while out on the lakes.

**Plan Your Food Storage** – If you don't own a vacuum sealer, cooked and frozen meals can be kept in either Ziploc bags or tight sealing plastic containers. A warning about putting mushy foods in Ziploc bags, though, they may take up less room in a barrel than the bulky Tupperware type containers but they're not always leak-proof. You can try double-bagging but this is not always fool proof. Glass food containers like jam & salsa jars are not allowed out on the Bowron Chain so you must repackage all glass contained foodstuffs into small plastic bottles (Nalgene is great) and then bag them into Ziploc bags for added protection against spills. Screw top plastic containers seem to be more leak proof than ones with snap-on lids. If in doubt, use duct tape around the lids for that extra seal. Avoid cans as much as possible because you have to carry all your garbage out. And no, they won't melt in the fire... unless you've got a smelter going. *Please*, don't leave burnt cans in the fire pit - not only is it disgusting but it shows a total lack of respect for nature and can cause a real bear hazard for those who use the campsite after you.

**Breakfast foods** aren't a problem. Fresh eggs can be tricky to pack but there are ways to get around this. You can put the cardboard carton into a Ziploc bag and keep them at the top of the barrel or pack to prevent them from being squished or you can use the more rigid plastic egg cartons found in camping supply stores. Another method is to crack all the eggs into a wide mouth plastic (Nalgene) bottle and seal tightly. During the first few days they will pour out whole, and during the last few days you will have scrambled eggs. This method requires that you eat them up faster though, as cracked eggs do not keep as well as un-cracked eggs. Also if bringing fresh eggs (as well as butter, veggies and other perishables), you should be sure to protect your food container from the hot sun.

If you can do without fresh for a while, powdered eggs and liquid egg substitutes are available. Powdered eggs are best with a bit of spice or sauce to make them more flavorful. Bacon can last a week, but bring it frozen. Even yogurt lasts a while and can be frozen first, but don't forget to duct tape the yogurt container shut. Hash browns should be pre-grated and cooked at home or pre-cook your potatoes on the fire the night before so they will be ready for breakfast the next day. Other quick and easy keeping breakfast foods include bagels, English muffins, cheese, granola, cold cereal, instant oatmeal and pancake mixes. Juice crystals, powder milk, hot chocolate, instant coffees and teas top off the menu and provide both energy and warmth.

**Lunch foods** such as loaves of uncut rye bread, salami, pepperoni, or summer sausage have good last-ability and make great sandwiches. No problems either with crackers, cheese, jams and peanut butter. Tortillas and pita bread keep good and are great to pack, you don't have to worry about squishing them! Beef jerky, trail mixes, rye crisp, dried fruits, nuts, chocolate, power bars and dense fruit loaves are great for quick snacks that can be eaten right out of your pack and don't require the

building of a fire. If it's a hot lunch you desire, there are multitudes of dried soups, pastas & rice mixes and quick cook noodles on the market today.

**Suppers** can be elaborate full course meals, or quick 'one-pot' affairs depending on your personal preferences. A few suggestions include:

- Pasta or rice mixes (like Lipton Side Kicks) with a frozen quick fry steak and biscuits.
- Pre-cooked stew or chili (dehydrated at home or pre-frozen).
- Burritos with ground meat mixture (pre-frozen), refried beans and sliced veggies.
- Spaghetti or tortellini (Angel Hair pasta cooks quicker than regular pasta) with sauce (the sauce can be as simple as canned or as elaborate as Granny secret recipe, frozen and bagged.)
- Noodles & sauce with dehydrated (or fresh) veggies and canned salmon or sliced meats thrown in.
- Instant mashed potatoes & stove-top-stuffing, gravy mix, turkey patties and dried cranberries.

A good look around the supermarket can provide a multitude of combinations. Deserts are a real bonus and a much welcome treat. Cookies and cakes are quite easy to bake on a campfire and there are lots of instant pudding mixes to choose from. Even hot bannock smothered with butter and jam is something to look forward to. You can make your own bannock mix or buy one. I like to make lots of bannock during the evening meal so that there is some left over for the next day's breakfast and lunch.

Bringing along fresh fruits and vegetables can be a little more trying. Lettuce will keep for a few days (romaine lasts better than iceberg), sprouts are easy and nutritious but go bad fast. Tomatoes should be put in a plastic container so as not to squish them, but make sure some air gets to them or they will go moldy fairly fast. Firm veggies such as cabbage, carrots, onions, potatoes and turnips pack great keepers but are very heavy and take up a lot of space. You might consider grating or slicing them before hand, though this can shorten the length of time they will keep. Cucumbers and green peppers will last a few days, but can't take much abuse. Apples and oranges are great and take a lot of abuse, but again take up a lot of space and are heavy. Kiwi are smaller but must be packed carefully and eaten sooner. An under ripe avocado can last until the second week and is a real treat when most of the fresh stuff is gone.

**The Art of Planning a Good Menu** requires taking a lot of factors into consideration. Try to plan meals in order as to how perishable the ingredients are and as to how they might provide day by day. For example, the perishable lettuce you bring for your day one sandwich at lunch time can also be used for the day one salad with your steak dinner. 'Already flat' pita bread can be used for both the lunch-time sandwiches and dinner-time garlic bread. The left over steak (if there is any.... you might have to cook an extra one) can be used as steak strips with your eggs on day two breakfast or as finger foods for lunch. And get creative, finely sliced dried pepperoni makes a great addition to dehydrated scrambled eggs.

**Commercially Dehydrated Meals** - Of course commercially dehydrated one-pot suppers are the easiest way to go. They provide a quick hot meal in one pot (which makes clean-up a breeze), are filling, and can actually be quite delicious (though after a day's padding anything will taste good). Unfortunately they can also be quite costly, so shop around. As mentioned before it is suggested that you plan on some dehydrated meals for the latter part of your trip or just have some in case of unexpected delays - you never know when a storm might prevent you from reaching your next planned campsite.

**Home Dehydrating** - If you find commercially dehydrated foods unattractive, you can try your hand at dehydrating your own. In general, any food with relatively high water content and low fat content can be dehydrated. This includes fruits, vegetables, lean meats and fish. Fruits and veggies should be cut in uniform sizes and dried until they are leathery or brittle. When doing meats, such as ground beef, sliced beef and chicken it is best to cook them first, wash them to remove as much fat as possible, then dehydrate. Fish such as canned tuna or salmon can also be dehydrated. To make soups and stews, dehydrate all the ingredients separately, add some corn starch, beef soup mix and spices and put it all together like the commercial companies do. Look at the ingredient lists on packaged foods to get ideas for your own blends. Experiment and test your creations at home first, so you know it will be good in the bush.

An electric dehydrator is nice but not necessary, as the process can be done right in your own oven. Dry the food on food grade material such as stainless steel window screen or cheesecloth. Do not use aluminum or galvanized materials. Preheat oven to 150 F. Arrange racks with spaces around them for air circulation and leave the oven door propped open 2 - 4 inches with an electric fan at one side to blow damp air from the oven. Keep a close eye on the temperature and the food. After 1 - 2 hours drop the temperature to 140 F, and further to 120 F near the end of the drying process.

**Packing Your Camp Food** - Here are a few suggestions I use when packing our camp food:

1) Pack all your meals separately in Ziploc bags and label them accordingly (Day 1 lunch / Day 1 dinner / Day 1 snacks etc.) Make sure you include everything needed to complete each meal in each Ziploc (except your condiments - see below) and place the Ziplocs into your food container in the opposite order of consumption (last meal of last day on the bottom - the first meal of the first day on top). When it comes time to prepare a meal you only need to grab the appropriate bag and the condiments bag. The only exception to this is if you have a loaf of bread or a carton of eggs, which should be kept at the top of your food container so as not to become squished or broken. These items may have to be grabbed separately along with your meal bag and condiments bag. After you have removed what you need for your meal, the food container holding all the rest of your food can then be safely stored in the Bear Cache. That way if a bear came along while you're preparing dinner you might lose that one meal and your condiments, but you won't lose everything.

2) As you re-package your meals in the Ziploc bags, think in complete meals. For instance if you are planning Macaroni & Cheese with instant chocolate pudding for a lunch, make sure to include the correct amount of powdered milk for both the Mac & Cheese and the pudding mix. The key is to try to include everything you need to prepare a meal (except the water) all in a single Ziploc bag. That way you know that you are carrying enough food stuff, like powdered milk, to get through your trip - but no more than necessary.

3) In a side pocket or at the top of your food container, where it is easy to reach at all times, pack your condiments bag which should include spices, oil, margarine, jam, coffee, tea, sugar, ketchup etc. (the small packets you get at fast food outlets are great). That way all the condiments you need repeatedly for each meal are always together and close at hand. As you paddle you can also put each day's allotment of juice crystals into this pocket so that it is easy to find when you get thirsty. We always paddle with two water bottles, one with juice and one with water, and we make sure that they are refilled at every meal stop.

4) Leave all the excess packaging at home (unless you need cardboard for fire paper). Many purchased foods come in large boxes but are also plastic bagged inside of these boxes. Get rid of the excess which not only takes up room, but produces garbage which has to be either burned or packed out.

**Some Recipe Ideas** - there are hundreds of recipe ideas that can be found in books and websites (see some websites at the end of this info sheet), here are a few recipes that can be pre-mixed at home for quicker outback meals:

**Bannock** – Pre-mix at home - 1 cup flour, 1 Tbsp. baking powder, 1 tsp salt, 1/4 cup raisins (optional). Mix all together. In camp add 1 cup water. Pat dough into a 'pancake', fry in pan. Or wrap dough on stick and cook over hot coals.

**Back Country Scones** - Pre-mix at home - 2 cups flour, 2 cups oats, 2 Tbsp. sugar, 1 tsp salt, 2 tsp baking soda, 1/2 cup powdered milk, 1/2 cup raisins, sunflower seeds, currants or nuts. Mix all together. In camp add 1 cup water and 1/2 cup oil. Pat dough into well-greased fry pan and score into wedges. Cover and bake over hot coals approx. 20 mins.

**Sunny Oatmeal** - Pre-mix at home - 3/4 cup oatmeal, 1/4 cup assorted dried fruits (such as apples, pineapple, bananas) and nuts, pinch cinnamon and nutmeg, 2 Tbsp. powdered milk. Mix all together. In camp add 1 cup water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and cook until thick and serve. Serves one.

**Easy Campfire Stew** - Prepare at home - fry 2 lbs hamburger with diced onion, celery, garlic, salt & pepper, herbs and spices. Boil diced potatoes and carrots then drain. Add meat, potatoes, carrots, and some frozen peas and corn all together. Freeze in a Ziploc.

In camp, add the pre-cooked, frozen meat & veggie mixture with 1 can of concentrated Vegetable soup in a big pot, add enough water to prevent sticking. Heat through and serve with biscuits. Serves two to four depending on the amount in your pre-cooked mix.

**Tuna Mushroom Buns** - Pack 2 cans tuna, 2 cans cream of mushroom soup (or better yet, powdered soup & tuna in a pouch), 6 hamburger buns. In camp, mix tuna, soup and water together, heat though, serve over toasted buns. Can serve 6.

**Couscous and Veggies** – Pre-mix at home - 1/2 cup couscous, 1/2 cup dried veggies, vegetable soup base to taste. In camp boil 1 1/4 cup water add seasoning, cook dried veggies for 2 to 3 mins. Add couscous and remove from heat, cover and let sit for 5 mins. Makes 2 cups.

**Curried Chicken & Rice** – Pre-mix at home - 1/2 cup instant rice, 1/4 cup raisins. In a separate bag add 1 pack chicken noodle soup to 2 Tbsp. curry. Also pack 1 small can of chicken & some margarine (from your condiments bag). In camp sauté the rice and raisins in 4 Tbsp. margarine. Add 4 cups water, chicken soup and curry. Bring to a boil, simmer for 15 mins. When almost done stir in chicken, heat through and serve.

**Campfire Pita Pizzas** – Pre-mix at home - 1/2 tsp Italian seasoning, 1/2 tsp garlic powder, 1 Tbsp. dried onion, 2 Tbsp. dried chives, 2 Tbsp. dried mushrooms, 2 Tbsp. dried green peppers, and bag. Also pack pita bread, 1- 6 oz. can tomato paste, 1/2 cup grated cheese, salami or pepperoni sausage & margarine.

In camp, combine the tomato paste, 1/2 cup water, dried spice and veggie mix and heat over low to reconstitute. Put Pita in fry pan, spread tomato sauce over, arrange sausage slices, and sprinkle with cheese. Cover and heat over coals until warmed through and the cheese melts.

**Quick Berry Cake** - At home bag together 2 cups Bisquick Mix, 1/4 cup powdered milk, 2 Tbsp. sugar, 1/4 tsp cinnamon. Plan to pick wild blueberries at camp or pack store bought dried berries.

In camp, if using dried berries, reconstitute in a bit of water first. Heat berries in bottom of pan with water to make a sauce. Mix Bisquick mixture with enough water to make a thick batter. Drop large spoonfuls of batter over the berries, cover and bake over low heat.

### Sample Menu Plan #1

	Breakfast	Lunch /Snack	Dinner	Dessert
<b>Day 1</b>	Eat before leave	Pitas, cheese, deli meat, tomato, apples, granola bars, juice powder (cold lunch)	Beef steak, instant mash potatoes & gravy, snap peas, buns, tea	Boxed cake, hot chocolate

<b>Day 2</b>	Eggs, bacon, buns, jam, tea	Pitas, deli meat, cheese, green pepper, cookies, apples, juice powder (cold lunch)	Smoked Salmon, rice mix, coleslaw & dressing coffee/tea	Boxed cake, hot Drink
<b>Day 3</b>	Eggs, bacon, bagels, cream cheese coffee/tea	Soup, bagels, cream cheese spread, cookies, oranges, juice powder (hot)	Kubasa sausage, noodles & sauce, dehy veggie, rye bread, coffee/ tea	Boxed cake, hot drink
<b>Day 4</b>	Pancakes, syrup, berries coffee/tea	Ramen noodles, choc bars, fruit leather, juice powder (Hot lunch)	Canned ham, pineapple, scalloped potato mix, rye bread, coffee/ tea	Dehydrated dessert
<b>Day 5</b>	Granola, powder milk, fruit pouch, coffee/tea	Canned chicken, avocado, cheese, rye bread, fruit leather, cookies (cold)	Spaghetti, sauce mix, rye bread, coffee/ tea	Instant pudding, hot drink.
<b>Day 6</b>	Instant oatmeal, rye bread, jam, coffee/ tea	Soup, crackers & cheese spread, granola bars, trail mix, juice powder (hot)	Macaroni & cheese, corned beef, rye bread, coffee/ tea	Scones
<b>Day 7</b>	Dehy eggs, scones, jam, coffee/ tea	Tuna Salad (canned), rye bread, fruit leather, cookies, juice (cold)	Off the chain – Big Burger at Bear River!	

### Sample Menu Plan #2

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks
Day 1	Eat before leaving	Pita sandwiches with sliced sausage & cheese, sliced cucumber, apples, cookies, juice.	Campfire stew, bannock & margarine, cookies, fruit, hot drinks, juice.	Chocolate bars, trail mix.
Day 2	Pancakes, syrup, margarine, hot drinks.	Crackers, kipper fish, beef jerky, cucumber, cheese, left over bannock, juice.	Pita pizzas with noodles & sauce, instant pudding, hot drinks, juice.	fruit leather, power bars
Day 3	Instant oatmeal, dried fruit, hot drinks.	Packaged soup, crackers, cheese, granola bars, juice.	Curried Chicken & Rice bannock, margarine, berry cake, hot drinks, and juice.	Power bars, trail mix.
Day 4	Granola, powdered milk, leftover bannock, jam, hot drinks.	3 min. noodles with spice, carrot sticks, sesame bars, juice.	Couscous & Veggies, fried can ham, cake mix, hot drinks, juice.	Fruit bars, Beef Jerky

Day 5	Pancakes, syrup, leftover ham, hot drinks.	Peanut butter, jam, Rivita bread, carrot sticks, dried apricots & apples, leftover cake, juice	Dehydrated Beef Stew, bannock, marg, instant pudding, hot drinks, and juice.	Bakers Chocolate, trail mix.
Day 6	Instant Oatmeal, bannock & jam, granola bars, hot drinks.	Macaroni & cheese, Rivita bread & avocado, juice	Dehydrated Chili, berry cake, hot drinks, and juice.	Power bars, Fruit leather.
Day 7	Granola, powdered milk, Fruit bars, hot drinks.	Can tuna, Rivita bread, packaged soup, leftover berry cake, juice.	Juicy Burger at Bear River	trail mix, sesame bars,

Extra snacks bag: Shoe string potato chips / Dried fruit / Ritz crackers / Chocolate squares

Hot Drinks: Coffee / Hot chocolate / Tea / Coffee whitener / Sugar

Condiments bag: Salt & pepper / Garlic power / Ketchup / Pepper sauce / HP steak sauce / Miracle whip / Mustard / Butter (for spreading & cooking) / Salad Dressing / Jam / Peanut Butter / Syrup

**The Last Word on Food** - The food we eat is literally the fuel source that makes our bodies function. I'm sure you've heard the term "calories" before. A calorie is the unit of energy used when talking about food. Calories are *literally* energy, and that's *all* they are. The calories in our food come from three sources: carbohydrates (also called sugars), proteins, and fats. Carbohydrates and proteins provide us with 4 calories per gram. Fats provide us with 9 calories per gram. What this means is that fats are much more energy-rich, or energy-dense, than carbohydrates or proteins. This concept of energy density, or "caloric density" is very important as your body requires a specific amount of energy to get from point A to point B. Using some physics and math, we could actually calculate how much energy it would take to get you, a 68 kg (150 lb.) hiker with a 11.3 kg (25 lb.) backpack, pulling a 31.7 kg (70 lb.) canoe with 27 kg (60 lbs) of gear in it along the 2.4 km. (1 mile) portage from the trailhead to Kibbee Lake. Because I was never good at Physics, I'll skip the math and throw in an estimate of 1800 calories required for this feat.

If you only packed carbohydrates or proteins, this would require 450 grams of food (1800 calories / 4 calories per gram), which works out to be 0.45 kg (1 lb.) of food. But if you only packed fats, you would only need 200 grams of food (1800 calories / 9 calories per gram), which is only 0.2 kg (0.44 lbs). Just by changing your fuel source, or the type of food you packed, in this situation you could cut your weight from 1 pound of food to under 1/2 a pound of food, and still get the same job done! Amazing, but true! Of course most foods are a mixture of carbohydrates, proteins and fats so this example is a mote point, but you can lean towards packing foods that have a higher fat content such as nuts, fish, meat and cheese products as well as some plant based foods like avocados.

Here is an easy way to figure out the caloric density of foods. Let us compare a PowerBar and a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup. A PowerBar Performance Oatmeal Raisin energy bar has 230 calories. It



weighs 65 grams, or 2.3 ounces. Therefore, its caloric density is 100 (230 calories / 2.3 oz.). A Reese's Peanut Butter Cup weighs 0.25 ounces and has 36 calories, giving it a caloric density of 144 (36 calories / 0.25 ounces) therefore the Reese's Peanut Butter Cup provides more caloric density and it will provide more energy value or 'fuel' for your body to function. Getting rid of all the caloric density calculations....in a real generalized estimate you should plan on at least between 0.45 to 0.9 kg (1 to 2 lbs) of nutritious, energizing food per person per day.

**An Easy Campfire Oven** - To bake a cake or even make cookies, a campfire oven can be made from a large pot & lid, three similar sized rocks, and a smaller round cake pan which fits inside the pot. Place the three rocks inside the pot near its outside edges to form a triangular base. Put the cake pan (containing a cake mix) on top of the rocks inside the pot so that the cake pan is raised up off the bottom of the pot. Cover with a lid and you have a mini-oven. Baking over the coals of an almost burned out campfire produces great results.

**An Instant Camp Table** – The backcountry campsites at Bowron are not equipped with picnic tables, though some manmade structures have been built between stumps and trees. Roll up camp tables are nice but can be heavy, bulky and are really not necessary because a handy food prep table can be made from your boat, which, if you are paddling the Bowron Chain.... you already have! Just find two (or more) rounds of firewood and place them sufficiently far enough apart, then turn your canoe over and place it on top of the rounds so that it sits bottom up. You now have a nice, fairly flat table to work on. You might need to do a little shimming to make sure the rounds do not roll away and upset your table. Just remember that you should not do any cutting, or place your camp stove, directly on top of your canoe table...use a separate round of firewood, tipped on end, for such activities.

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