

COOKING FOR SCOUTS

Try a Cooking fair

Scouts pair up or work in trios. Each group tries to show off their cooking skills by preparing one or more dishes.

Arrange the area in country-fair style so that while the cooking is under way everyone can make the rounds and see what is going on. Cooking can be over open fires or charcoal. Modern barbecues make a cooking fair possible for even the most urban boys. When ready, all food is placed in the centre of the cooking area on a tarp and served pot-luck style.

Rules for fire building

Let's review the five simple steps followed by the successful fire builder.

1. Put fireplace in a spot from which fire will not spread. To be sure, clear away combustible materials six to eight feet from the hot spot. Check the area for over-hanging branches.
2. Have all materials within reach before lighting. This means tinder, kindling, and fuel.
3. Place tinder next to a stick stuck in the ground pointed toward the wind. This will offer support to the kindling and firewood until it is well lighted and going strong.
4. Light tinder on the windward side, then shield it from the wind until the flame catches and spreads.
5. Feed the fire - gently at first, then nourish its growing appetite as needed. Don't try to force things.

Recipes

Chicken on a spit

Primitive way is to spit chicken on a stick rack! : run stick from vent to neck. Truss bird securely so it will turn with spit. If wings or legs stick out they'll burn before bird is done. Test by twisting leg; when this is loose, the entire bird should be okay.

Baked potato

Scrub well one big potato per person. Prick skin with a fork and grease lightly, wrap tightly in foil, place on metal plate or pan, and set on pebbles in hot Dutch oven. Cover, add coals to lid, and bake for an hour or so. Test with splinter of meaty crumbs sticking to wood show potato is done. Slash an X in foil and potato and pinch to push it open. Add butter and salt.

Pot roast

Dredge (coat with flour) a four-pound roast and brown all side in hot fat in Dutch oven. Add 1/2 inch of water, put on lid: add coals to lid. Simmer for two to three hours, adding water as needed, until tender; add peeled potato, onion, and carrot per diner for last 45 minutes.

Baked apple

Wash and core one large apple per person. Fill hole with sugar, raisins, add dab of butter, cinnamon if desired. Put apples on greased metal plate or pan and add some water. Put plate in hot Dutch oven on three pebbles to prevent burning and bake for about 20 minutes.

Twist on a stick

Peel a piece of "sweet" wood (non-acrid such as maple) two inches thick and about 2 1/2 feet long and point the ends. Preheat the centre of it. Make dough. Wet the stick. Roll a long "sausage" of dough, and twist it around the heated area. Put one end of stick into the ground so the dough bakes over the fire. Keep turning as it browns and reverse ends of the stick to even the browning. Make sure that your twist won't burn or bake too fast.

Chicken on a dingle stick

Suspend the bird from a dingle stick to one side of the fire over a foil or other drip pan- Prepare bird as usual and truss the legs and wings. Then run skewers through wings and upper body. Be sure the

drumsticks are snugged down and that the wing tips don't stick out. Now hang the bird from the dingle stick by running a thong under the skewer. While cooking, turn it frequently. When about half done, swap skewers so top and bottom are done equally. Baste the breast, as it tends to dry out before the rest cooks.

Damper

How primitive can you get? Pat dough into an inch-thick cake and put it on several sweet green leaves (such as maple). Sweep coals and ash to one side and lay cake and leaves on hot hearth. Cover with leaves then gray ashes and hot coals. Test in 10 minutes by pushing dry stem of grass into it - if it comes out clean, your bread is done.

Smoked fish

Chop up red cedar twigs and put two inches deep in large pot. Clean fish and string them by the tails on sticks, and hang from the pot rim. Cover pot and put it over fire. Fish should be done in about an hour - the flesh tender and juicy, the skin tough.

Some charcoal tips

Know how much charcoal you will need for the cooking job to be done. Let the new fire go for at least 20 to 30 minutes before you start to cook over. You can temper the heat if it gets too brisk, by sprinkling a few drops of water on the fuel. For quicker cooking, put your utensil directly on the coals. Slow things down by raising pot, skillet, or foil from the heat. Kill your fire just as soon as you've finished with it by dousing it with water. You can let the sun dry out the remaining charcoal to be used another time. In the first place never use flammable liquids to start a charcoal fire; for one thing, they burn off fast often without getting the fuel well lighted, especially if it's charcoal. Then there is that often-fatal tendency to pour on more liquid and - boom! Even with charcoal briquettes, use twigs and small twig fragments plus plenty of draft to give you a sure safe start. Always allow about a half-hour extra to give your charcoal fire time to reach a steady, smokeless glow for clean, powerful heat. Plain charcoal is excellent for preparing quick-cook items like steaks, bacon and

eggs, fish and a hot drink. For longer cooking such as whole roasts, fowl etc. the briquettes are best.

Cooking terms

Here are a few basic terms that will help Scouts describe what is intended in cooking.

Bake - To cook by dry heat, as in a reflector baker or Dutch oven

Baste - To moisten cooking food with melted fat, drippings, or especially mixed sauces such as barbecue sauce.

Boil - To cook in water or liquid that's mostly water at boiling temperature. Bubbles keep rising to the surface to break there.

Braise - To brown in fat then cook in covered pan with or without added liquid

Broil - To cook uncovered over direct radiant heat over an open fire

Fry - To cook in fat

Marinate - Treatment of food (usually meat) by letting it stand in a liquid to tenderise or add flavour

Plank - To cook and serve on wooden slab or board

Poach - Cook below boiling point in water or other liquid that covers the food

Roast - To bake in hot air, without water or cover

Sauté - To fry lightly and quickly in a little hot fat

Scald - Heat to temperature just below the boiling point

Sear - Sealing of surface by exposing it to intense heat

Simmer - Cook in liquid at temperature just below the boiling point

Steep - Extract flavour and nutritive value by soaking in water than is hot but not boiling

Stew - To boil or simmer in a small amount of liquid

Toast - To brown by dry heat