

One of the most enjoyable parts of a camping trip for me is the back-to-basics cooking. Bush cooking doesn't need to produce fancy food just good satisfying grub. Gone are the days of a three-course meal consisting of a piece of bread, warm can of beans and a suck on a tube of condensed milk; now it's pretty easy to conjure up simple yet satisfying meals, especially with the range of camp cooking equipment available.

Before you leave home, it's good to prepare and have a basic cooking and utensils box. Keep all your cooking needs together (and clean) to simplify the whole process. It makes preparing meals a lot easier, especially if it's dark or your kids are going bananas! You don't need to be a rocket scientist to pack a good kitchen box; when it comes to the crunch just pack what you like to use at home!

As a rough guide my kitchen box consists of the following;

- Tongs, spatula, serving spoons, wooden spoons, can opener etc
- Spices (salt & pepper, oregano, curry powder, garam masala, turmeric, chilli)
- Tea, coffee, sugar, Milo, Gravox, Vegemite, honey, tomato sauce, bbq sauce
- Oil and cooking spray (the lid also makes a good biscuit/scone cutter)

Also, be sure to plan your meals before you go and make sure you have the appropriate ingredients (don't forget the recipes)!

Of course, the next step is to actually cook something!

There are so many options for cooking these days, you are definitely not limited to a camp oven or a rusty old BBQ plate (although, some of the best snags I've had have been cooked on old plough discs). I find the most satisfaction comes from cooking on the open fire, so I will usually take a camp oven, and a toasted sandwich maker (Jaffle Iron). But it's not always convenient, and if you just want a quick breakfast before you hit the road a butane gas cooker might be a better option. These are very compact, cheap and easy to use; great for a quick meal or to boil the billy.

If you plan to cook on the open fire make sure you check for any fire bans (October to April is the standard fire ban period - but please check to be sure). Some campgrounds will only allow gas fires at certain times of the year, but it's definitely best to check before you go. Now let's get down to business! Here are three square meals that are quick and easy to prepare. Of course, different situations call for different meal plans but let's assume we're settled at our campsite which resides on the bank of a gently flowing river with a blazing fire that's been going all day and you're holding a beer in your hand! Life's good!

Breakfast of champions.

Toad in the hole with bacon and tomatoes

Ingredients: Bread, margarine, eggs, bacon, tomatoes

Method:

- Prepare a bed of hot coals away from the fire in a safe position; make it the size of whatever frying pan you are using.

- Place the frying pan on the coals to pre-heat.
- Butter the bread on both sides, then use the lid of your cooking spray to cut a round hole in the middle of the piece of bread.
- Place the holey bread in the frying pan and crack an egg into the hole.
- When the egg is half cooked through, flip the bread and remove from the pan when cooked to your liking.
- If you're cooking for a crowd, cook the toasts, bacon and tomatoes in batches. Or if possible cook it all at the same time and serve it up hot with a dash of BBQ sauce.

A light lunch

Without a doubt, the easiest lunch out bush is toasted sandwiches. Even if you've just stopped on the side of the road, it doesn't take long to whip up a small fire with enough coals for the 'jaffle iron'.

Use any and all of your favourite fillings, or maybe some leftover spag bog or baked beans. Classic favourite ingredients include ham, cheese, chicken, tomato, onion, tuna, bacon, pineapple and the list goes on.

Spread butter or margarine on the outside, less healthy I know, but it prevents a lunchtime nightmare if your sandwich iron is not as 'non-stick' as it used to be.



Dinner fit for a king

Thai Chicken Curry - serves 4

Ingredients: Oil, 500g diced chicken thighs, 1-2 tablespoons of bought green curry paste, 1 large chopped onion, 2 cloves finely chopped garlic, 1 can coconut milk, 3 cubed white potatoes, 1 head of broccoli or a handful of green beans.

Method:

- Place your preheated camp oven on a bed of coals (see my blog: [Camp Oven Cooking in 4 Easy Steps!](#) on how to do this).
- Add the oil, and when hot add the diced chicken, onion and garlic.
 - Add these ingredients in sections because if you add it all at the same time you risk losing heat in your camp oven and the meat will stew rather than fry.
- Once the meat is browned nicely add the curry paste and stir to combine with the chicken and onion.
- At this stage, the camp oven has been used as a fry pan, and we now want to transfer to the stewing stage, at lower temperatures.
- Generally, by adding all the uncooked ingredients, the temperature of the camp oven will drop sufficiently. If you feel like it is too hot (ie the ingredients are catching on the

bottom), simply adjust the number of coals exposed to the camp oven.

- Now add the coconut milk, the cubed potatoes, and the greens.
- Stir to combine and taste for seasoning.
- You may find you need to add a half a glass of water if the mixture is too thick.
- Put the lid on the camp oven, put coals on top of the lid and cook for approximately 1 hour, checking every 15 minutes or so to make sure the oven is not too hot.

I find making rice a hassle, hence I include potatoes in the recipe to fill out the meal a bit. Serve with a dollop of Greek yoghurt and a hunk of damper. (See my blog: [Camp Oven Cooking in 4 Easy Steps!](#) for a basic damper recipe).

For those craving a sweet treat after a meal, check out Dave's Blog: [3 Delicious Desserts around the Campfire](#).

So there you have it! I hope those simple recipes enthuse you to get out there and try camp cooking next time you're camping. There are a thousand recipe books available to tempt the taste buds, or if all else fails, what could be more enjoyable than sitting back with a beer in one hand and a burnt sausage in bread in the other!

Cheers and safe travels.