



When most people think of vital pieces of camping or travelling gear they think of tents, sleeping bags, chairs and camp ovens. Something that is often overlooked but should follow closely behind is the humble vacuum sealer and a roll of bags.

Vacuum sealing allows for food, such as meat, to be stored for much longer periods of time. This allows you to take food you wouldn't normally be able to take on your trip. And, you will be able to make fewer trips to the shops whilst travelling. Not everything can or should be vacuum sealed, for example, when done correctly, red meat can last up to 6 weeks at the bottom of your camping fridge, set at 0-2°C.

Pre-cooked meals like stews and spaghetti bolognese can be prepared at home and then ready to eat on the road, in just a few short minutes with minimal prep and next to no cleaning up!

Hard cheeses go great in the vacuum sealer and certain vegetables, with the right prep, can also benefit from some work at home before going in the camping fridge in a vacuum pack.

For a demo of how to vacuum seal, hit the play button above!

What does vacuum sealing do to food?

Vacuum sealing removes the majority of oxygen from the packaging. This vastly reduces the ability of aerobic (oxygen-dependent) bacteria, which is a prime reason for spoilage. Not only does the reduced ability of bacteria help extend the shelf life of your food, but oxygen itself is often the culprit, involved in several chemical reactions that result in food spoilage.

The number one aim of the game when preparing food is removing as much oxygen as possible. So anything less than a perfect seal should be done again. One of the ways to improve the quality of your seal is to fold the top of the bag in on itself.

Ensure that the part of the bag you wish to seal is dry and contaminate-free before sealing, as this will drastically improve your chances of getting a good seal.



Here's a range of some of the vacuum packing gear available. Clockwise from top: Campfire Vacuum Sealer, Travel Chef 12V Rechargeable Vacuum Sealer, Primus Re-Sealable Vacuum Sealer Bags, Dometic Vacuum Sealer Roll 8" and 11" and Dometic 12/240V Vacuum Sealer.

Tips for using a vacuum sealer

One of the best things about a vacuum sealer is that you can cook meals in the comfort of your own home, without worrying about cleaning up and using precious water supplies or how much garbage you produce, when out at the campsite. Red meat stews go absolutely fantastic, along with mince bolognese sauces.

Cook them up, throw them in some plastic containers in appropriate serving sizes (either individual or group) and then straight into the freezer. Once your meal is sufficiently set (not quite frozen, but so that liquids are more solid than not) scoop it into your vacuum bag. Just remember the trick to keep your edge clean and seal that bad boy up!

Once you know you have a good seal, into the fridge it goes ready for your trip.



How's this for a 'snack hack' - cut the top off your chip packet and vacuum sealer 'er up. Smaller package, no stale chips.

Re-heating vacuum sealed food

Once on your big adventure, you have two options. If using good quality bags, you can pop the bags into a pot of hot, but not necessarily boiling (70°C is plenty warm), water for a few minutes to heat your meal up. Out of the water, being careful not to burn yourself, snip off the top and straight into a bowl it goes. Put it on top of whatever you're serving it with - rice, pasta, baked potato - and dinner is ready to go!

No mess, no stress, and ready in under 10 minutes. The other option is emptying it into a pot or pan and heating it up as you would a meal at home. More conventional, but more washing up afterwards! For ideas on meal planning for your adventure, [head here](#).



You can pre-season your meat before vacuum sealing it. The same is true of marinating. In fact, the longer it's in the vacuum pack for, the tastier it will become.

What are the best foods to vacuum seal?

Hard cheeses go great in the vacuum sealer. Buy a big block of tasty cheddar, cut into 4 smaller portions and vacuum seal individually. Open as needed and always enjoy fresh cheese!

Vegetables are a little different when it comes to vacuum sealing. Many vegetables will give off a gas when vacuum sealed. This leads to almost immediate spoilage as those gases have nowhere to go. To counteract this, cut vegetables as if you were to eat them straight away. Always blanch vegetables for 1-2 minutes, followed by a quick dunking in ice water. Dry thoroughly before storage to ensure the seal is tight and a good vacuum is achieved. Preparing vegetables such as green beans, snow peas, potato, pumpkin, and carrots in this way is a great way to extend their shelf life to up to 3 weeks when on the road.

What vegetables shouldn't be vacuum sealed?

Cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage should never be vacuum sealed. This is as even after blanching they can emit gases at fridge temperature.



See, all the air has been removed. This cut of beef will keep significantly longer now, in the fridge or freezer at home. Or in the car fridge or icebox.

Vacuum sealed meat

Vacuum sealed meat can often have a darker colour when you first remove your package from the fridge. Upon exposure to oxygen, however, this should slowly return to a much more 'normal' red. Meat will often have a slight odour when first removed from packaging and this should dissipate after a few minutes.

Like all food, you should use your common sense. If it smells and looks off after 10 minutes out of the packaging, it's safer to discard it than to regret it later.

My experiences with vacuum sealing

I spent a month on Fraser Island fishing and camping and before leaving home I prepared and vacuum sealed several meals and packets of sausages. But I ended up catching so many fish that we hardly needed to touch them!

On our last day on the island, we ate a packet of sausages that had been sitting at the bottom of the fridge for exactly 30 days. After giving them a few minutes to air, and cooking them in the frypan, we enjoyed a delicious meal of beef sausages after weeks of fish!

While you might not always need your meat to last 30 days, vacuum sealing is a fantastic way of preparing and storing your meat, cheeses, *some* vegetables, and pre-made meals when camping or on the road. I would highly recommend one to everyone.



Do you vacuum seal your food for camping trips? Let us know, we'd love to hear about your experiences with it.