



When most people think of vital camping or travelling gear, they think tents, sleeping bags, chairs, and camp ovens. However, 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 like meat to be stored for much longer periods of time. This allows you to take food you wouldn't normally on your trip. Plus, you'll make fewer trips to the shops while travelling.

Not everything can or should be vacuum sealed, though. 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, 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 with the right preparation certain vegetables can also benefit from some work at home, before going in a vacuum pack and into the camp fridge.

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

## What Does Vacuum Sealing Do?

Vacuum sealing removes the majority of oxygen from the packaging, vastly reducing the ability of aerobic or oxygen-dependent bacteria. Not only does the reduced ability of this bacteria help extend the shelf life of your food, but oxygen itself is 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. 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 achieving a good seal.

## Tips for Using a Vacuum Sealer

One of the best parts about a vacuum sealer is that you can cook meals in the comfort of your own home, without worrying about cleaning up, using precious water supplies, or how much garbage you produce out at the campsite.

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

Once you know you have a good seal, it's 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 seal 'er up!  
Smaller package, and no stale chips.*



## Re-Heating Vacuum Sealed Food

On your big adventure, you have two options.

If you're using good quality bags, you can pop them into a pot of hot (but not necessarily boiling – 70°C is plenty warm) water for a few minutes to heat up your meal. Out of the water, being careful not to burn yourself, snip off the top and empty straight into a bowl. Serve it with of whatever you've planned – 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 your meal into a pot or pan, and heating it up as you would at home. This is more conventional, but there is more washing up afterwards! For meal planning ideas for an outdoor 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.*

## Best Foods to Vacuum Seal

As mentioned above, hard cheeses go well in the vacuum sealer. Buy a big block of tasty cheddar, cut it into four smaller portions, and vacuum seal them individually. Open as needed, and always enjoy fresh cheese!

Vegetables are a little different. Many vegetables will give off a gas when vacuum sealed, and this leads to almost immediate spoilage given 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 dunk 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 like this is a great way to extend their shelf life to up to three weeks on the road.

## Vegetables Not to be Vacuum Sealed

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




*Something that is often overlooked but should follow closely behind is the humble vacuum sealer – and a roll of bags! Image: Campfire*

## Vacuum Sealed Meat

Vacuum sealed meat can often be a darker colour when first removed 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, but 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!

 *As you can see, all the air has been removed. This cut of beef will keep significantly longer*



*now, either in the fridge or freezer at home, the car fridge, or icebox.*

## 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. I ended up catching so many fish though, 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 highly recommend one to everyone!

**As well as vacuum sealing, Ben and Lauren also chat with Dr. Kate Garrock on the Snowys Camping Show about the benefits of dehydrating food:**

**Do you vacuum seal your food for camping trips? Let us know, we'd love to hear what your experiences have been.**