

# BREAKING BREAD

By Kevin Estela



Amaze your friends with Dutch oven bread. The author shows off his favorite honey whole wheat creation.

**S**ustenance, by definition, it is the nourishment needed for life. It is the food we consume to keep us fueled for our daily functions and activities. Food is part of our daily routine and vital to our survival. Food is the element of a camping trip that can turn a dreary and rainy weekend into a more enjoyable stay away from home. Despite the importance of food, countless trips

sacrifice comfort foods for bland or expedient meals. As a person who loves to eat and lives to eat (as opposed to eats to live), I hate having boring or simple meals in the bush. There is always a way to make a meal more enjoyable and being outdoors, food always tastes better. Food is best when it is shared and therefore, let me share some tips and tricks for you to try on your next trip. ➡

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How can we take a boring meal and make it more appealing? How can we incorporate the whole family or group in the preparation of a meal? How can you challenge your cooking skills and impress your friends? These are challenges commonly faced by the outdoorsman. Cooking doesn't have to be a daunting task and you don't have to take the easy way out. Over the years, I've been sur-

rounded by some of the most amazing cooks in the field. Jerry O., Jerry Y., Aggie S., Care B. and countless more, you know who you are. I am floored when a restaurant quality meal can be made with the most simple ingredients and care. I am thankful for a treat when bland is all that is expected. While I cannot and would never claim to be as skilled as my campfire chef friends are, I can proudly state I know how to flex my culinary skill without looking like a Food Network wannabe. Be forewarned! If you are too good at what you are about to learn, you will be expected to prepare meals all the time!



While many types of bread can be made in a single pot, preventing the dough from getting caught in the corner between the bottom and side of the pot can be a pain. Invest in a decent mixing bowl to make bread making easier.



The author drizzles honey on the top crust of the bread before covering it over with the lid for another 5-10 minutes. Let your friends see extra touches like this step and they'll assume you're a misplaced chef in the outdoors.

### 1. Surprise 'em!

Depending who you are camping with, certain foods will have more of a desired effect than others. Obviously kids love sweets and having a fun dessert they can help out preparing will make a memorable experience. Take Pillsbury Crescent rolls and stuff them with Hershey Kisses. Wrap them in aluminum foil and cook right on the coals. If refrigeration is an issue, the ingredients to smores don't need it. For adults, a small nipper of Kahlua Coffee Liquor can top freshly baked Dutch oven brownies for a new twist on a camp favorite. In either case, don't allude to the fact there is a surprise coming. Suddenly your meal will be more memorable than the scenic vistas you passed throughout the day.

### 2. Get them Involved!

If you have a group to take care of, assign tasks. For kid's camps, I used to love breaking out the giant crock pot and having each camper help make chili by opening cans of ingredients, taking turns stirring, serving, and cleaning up. Depending on the age of the group, they can help slice, dice, fillet, and chop up the ingredients needed. Have an abundance of local plants you can harvest? Send kids on red raspberry picking "missions" or blueberry "missions." Show the adults how to find wild leeks or how

to identify a couple plants difficult to mistake for anything else (i.e. Indian cucumber, sheep sorrel, young milkweed pods) and watch what they come back with. The group that works together eats well together.

### 3. Serve Soups and Stews!

Even in warm weather, a hot meal can be appreciated. Warm liquids will be welcomed on rainy evenings. The other added benefit of serving soups and stews, it is difficult to appear as if you are playing favorites without say, choice cuts of a single piece of meat. How can one cup of liquid be more choice than another cup? Other than quantity served, it is tough to tell. Soups and stews can become more filling with the addition of different grains you probably carry already. Add some rice to your bouillon cubes or some pasta noodles to make it heartier. If you really want to impress your friends, take Bisquick mix and make steamed bread in your mess kit. Just poke some holes in a piece of aluminum foil and secure it over a pot of boiling water. There is nothing like fresh bread with your bowl of soup or stew.

### 4. Mess with Proven Favorites

Most people know what a foil dinner is but for those not familiar it is generally sliced potatoes covered with peppers and onions and topped with a piece of meat all wrapped in tin foil and cooked in the fire. It is hard to mess up as the juices all mix together to create a virtual flavor party in a convenient packet. Why limit yourself to tradition? Why wait until the campfire to try this out? At home before you head out, make some foil dinners. Try sweet potatoes instead of golden, try chicken instead of beef, mix in zucchini instead of peppers, almost anything goes. The cooking concept is proven; the ingredients will be up to you. Next time you go camping and you pull out a foil packet, let them think they're getting an old standby. See tip #1 for what really will happen.

### 5. Presentation Matters!

You've seen magazine advertisements of freeze dried foods that look appealing but once you try to make them they look like...I just won't say. How you serve yourself and your companions in the outdoors will make a difference. Visually, would you want to eat something that looks slapped together? One good friend of mine doesn't like peanut butter because he has changed diapers before. You may have to tote a larger serving plate or use a burdock leaf as a plate. You might find more food samplers around your camp if you put toothpicks (you knife junkies can carve your own) in each finger food. You will definitely be appreciated if you not only serve a great meal

but know how to compliment it with condiments. Think sour cream on chili but don't stop there, find wild onion and garnish with that. Can you say seconds please?

### 6. Finish Strong!

On a canoe trip in New Hampshire a couple years ago, I recall serving the world's greatest bean dip. Was it? That night, we thought it was. Why? For 3 days, that bean dip was frozen in my small cooler and was perfect serving



Nothing warms the body like a good stew. In this pot, sweet potato beef stew flavored with India Pale Ale. Mouth watering? E-mail Kevin for the recipe at [estelawildernesseducation@gmail.com](mailto:estelawildernesseducation@gmail.com)



Surprise your campers with cinnamon rolls. Save time by purchasing the premade variety in your grocery store. Cook them in an aluminum pan in your Dutch oven to save time cleaning up.

temperature by the last day. Far too often, perishable foods are quickly consumed for fear of spoiling. Learn to keep them longer in the outdoors. Use a rock and good Ziploc sealed bags with a river as a natural refrigerator. Freeze foods to use as coolant in a soft sided cooler until they are thawed the next day. Save your finest culinary creation for the last night of the trip and what will be the strongest memory your friends will have? Most likely the last meal thanks to the recent effect of their memory.

### 7. Slow Down!

Don't rush your way through your meals. Dining outdoors constitutes a large portion of your time outdoors. Enjoy it. Society is content with take out and with convenience meals that sacrifice time away from friends and family around a dinner table. When you slow down and break bread together, you spend time together. Cooking and eating is a bonding experience as important as hunting, fishing, laughing, crying and remembering good times together. If time together is paired with good food, there will be few times in the woods not worth repeating. It will help ensure the future of outdoor recreation and create family traditions that will live on.



While heavy, a good dutch oven is the most versatile cookware item you can have with you in the outdoors.



Proving its versatility again, the lid of a dutch oven can be inverted and used as a griddle. Mix finely chopped bacon with shredded cheddar to your burgers and watch the mouths water. Food outdoors does not have to be boring!