

The Backcountry Gourmet

Speaker: Michael Gray of Uncommon Adventures, a kayak school and tour company that operates May-September in the Great lakes, Alaska, Greenland, Iceland and Feb-April in the Bay Islands of Honduras www.uncommonadv.com or e-mail: info@uncommonadv.com, ph.231-882-5525

Introduction: This is not so much a presentation of recipes, but a provisioning method that I've adopted over the last 20 years of guiding as a reaction to the dubious quality and expense of most commonly available pre-packaged backcountry foods. Most of these items are commonly available in supermarkets and will require a little organizing and re-packaging at home, but the results are very tasty and healthy meals while you are investing your precious vacation time.

Backcountry Nutrition: Your fuel for the journey

Although our modern culture seems to be focused on low-carb diets, — which is fine if you are driving a desk for a living-- we are going to need on-demand energy for active outdoor paddling. That's right, that brownie could be considered "safety gear". Especially for the cook if the weather turns ugly. Let's face it; a good meal can easily make people forget about bad weather or challenging bugs on a trip. Meals on our trips start from a complex carbohydrate base with a balance of protein additives that come from vegetable protein compliments, meats, dairy and nuts. It seems to work...many of our returning clients comment that they'd on our trips just for the food.

***Carbohydrate foundations**

- *Pasta: many shapes to play with from Orzo to couscous to tortellini filled with fungus

- *Rice: basmati brown to wild to minute, it can all be very useful

- *Legumes: all manner of beans, lentils, peanuts, split peas, and garbanzos...you name it

- *Breads: more whole grain the better: bagels, lavash, pita, biscuits, crackers, tortillas, etc

- *Grains: bulgur, millet, barley, oats, corn, buckwheat

***Produce: fruits and vegetables that will keep for varying lengths of time without refrigeration**

- *Savory veggies: sweet and hot peppers, onions, garlic

- *Squashes

- *Fruits: apples, citrus, melons, pineapples, even bananas...just mash them into pancakes if they become abused

- *Potatoes, carrots, cabbages of all types, yams,

- *Dried fruits like cherries, apples, blueberries, cranberries, prunes, raisins,

***Protein Additives**

- *Meats: freshly caught fish, vacuum-sealed smoked meats like salmon, turkey or cured ham or various Italian cured sausages like salami

- *Canned or packet meats: fish, chicken, turkey, salmon, crabmeat, smoked oysters

- *Nuts: not only a good source of protein, but also add a nice crunchy texture to soft food

- *Dairy Products and Eggs

- *Various hard cheeses and cream cheeses carry well

- *Eggs travel well unrefrigerated if left in their shells and are very versatile.

- *Milk: canned, UHT and powdered whole milk

***Fats and Sugars: otherwise known as dessert, can keep you alive is someone is feeling chocolate deprived**

- *Instant Stuff: cheesecake mixes, peanut butter pie, puddings, hard chocolate bars, Baileys

- *Freshly bakes items: brownies, cakes, cinnamon rolls, and cobblers

- *Hot drinks- coffee, tea, chocolate, cider all sorts of easy and quick mood enhancers

Your conceptual toolbox

- *Sequence meals in such a way as to make leftovers part of the next meal (i.e.: leftover beans or chili becomes huevos rancheros the next morning).
- *Reduce packaging at home and use resealable containers for dry items
- *Pack kitchen tools that have double and triple uses: a steamer that can drain pasta or warm wraps
- *Zip-seal bags: can hold dry items and serve as mixing bowls astronaut-style
- *Reduce food odors with airtight packaging and be ready for determined animalia that want your food more than you do. Make your food unavailable to them. Don't act like, smell like or taste like food in bear country
- *If you are in an area where campfires are allowed, burn all paper waste, but leave no new fire scars
- *Pack out all garbage with you, tightly sealed to reduce odor
- *LEAVE NO TRACE: remember we're just visitors, it's their home.**

Example Meals: all successfully "field tested"

***Breakfasts**

- *Hot Granola with toasted bagels and cream cheese
- *Huevos Rancheros with last night's veggie chili or black beans
- *Pancakes: buckwheat banana to apple corncakes to wild berry, they're all good

***Lunches:** usually cold portables easily accessed during the paddling day with little prep

- *Breads or crackers
- *Cheeses or meats like smoked oysters, tuna, salmon, or turkey
- *Fruits and veggies like carrots, plums, apples, and dried apricots
- *Dark, non-melty chocolate or spreads like peanut butter or Nutella
- *Salads made the night before: pasta, hummus or coleslaw stuffed in pita with boiled egg

***Dinners:** Hot and hearty

- *Fresh foods using a "cheater pack" for first or second night out...anything from steak to shrimp fajitas: only limit here is your imagination.
- *Garlic Chili Shrimp over pasta with Gorgonzola sauce
- *Mongolian Beef or Pork
- *Wild mushroom pasta with grilled peppers and fresh basil
- *Freshly poached fish filets with Italian cabbage salad

***Lighter weight dinner with long carry times**

- *Veggie Chili with cornbread dumplings
- *Frijole burritos with sun-dried tomato salsa
- *Falafel in pita bread with yogurt and cucumber dressing
- *Black beans and saffron rice Cuban style with cabbage dressed in lime juice...especially good with foraged seafood!
- *Thanksgiving dinner—canned turkey, dried gravy, better instant mashed potatoes and dried cranberry relish
- *Fried Rice: this is a good standby for whatever you have left!

Note: If you like the sound of any of these food ideas, check out Michael's cookbook, "Hey, I'd Eat This Home!" available for Kindle at Amazon.com or direct from the author at www.uncommonadv.com