

Appendix CC

FREEZER BAG COOKING

Freezer bag cooking (also known as FBC) involves making your own meals just the way you want. They are similar to commercial freeze-dried meals but without the cost, and you can customize them exactly the way you want!

How to Do FBC

Most people who do freezer bag cooking will package their meals at home before the trip. You should note on each bag what the meal is and how much water is required. Some people prefer to tuck a tiny note inside; others use a permanent marker on the outside.

When getting ready to cook your meal, bring your water to a near boil. Pour the water into your cup to measure, then add it to your freezer bag. This way you avoid the chance of burns, adding too much water, or touching your freezer bag with a burning hot piece of metal which risks melting the bag. You **DO NOT** need boiling water to rehydrate meals; boiling is at 212 Fahrenheit, but 180 degrees will work just fine in this case. However, if you choose to boil your water to remove any chance of water-borne pathogens, let it cool for a couple of minutes and then proceed.

Stir with a long-handled metal, wooden (bamboo), or heat-safe plastic spoon. After you have mixed it well, zip up the bag tightly and wrap in a fleece hat, jacket, or coozy made for the purpose. Then let the bag sit for 5 to 15 minutes; the recipe and altitude will determine how long. Make yourself a drink and wait for your meal. Once ready, stir well and eat. It's a good idea to put the bag into your coozy before you add the water. This way, the coozy holds the bag upright for you while the water is added.

Coozies

What is a coozy? Coozies are like hot pads designed to hold freezer bag meals. They are made of fabric and measure 8 inches in width and 7½ inches in length. Weight on average is 1 to 1.2 ounces, depending on the weight and thickness of the outer fabric. Coozies are open at the top to save weight.

Eating From the Bag

If you squeeze or knead your bags to mix up the food, be very careful—be sure you have pushed out all the air before you do this. The steam from the hot liquid can cause a buildup, and your kneading could cause the bag to pop open. Kneading works well, if done carefully, for items like mashed potatoes and stuffing.

Eating out of the bag may take a little practice. When your food is ready, roll the top one-third of the bag down, sort of like cuffing your socks. This will turn your bag into its own bowl. If eating soup or chowder, be careful. With a sharp camp knife, cut off the top half to make a “bowl.”

Alternatives

Alternatives to FBC include

- Cook in a pot or in a mug.
- Use plastic food containers that have a lid. The containers can be placed in soft-sided coozies.
- Use roasting bags or slow-cooker liners found in the plastic bag section at stores.
- Use vacuum sealer bags (or boil-in-bags) that are rated for submerging in boiling water for extended periods. These are some of the strongest food bags on the market.
- Use foldable bowls and plates (e.g., Fozzil bowls and Orikaso dishes).

Recipes

Many of the recipes below will feed two people, which might make one wonder how two people can eat out of one bag. The best way to handle this is to bring an extra bag. When the meal is ready, do the final stirring, then divide the meal between the two bags.

Breakfast Taters

Serves one; total time: 5 minutes

- ½ cup instant mashed potatoes
- 2 tablespoons cheese sauce powder (This can be found online or in some grocery stores. You can also use cheese sauce powder from boxed mac 'n' cheese or use 1 ounce of cheddar cheese, diced up and added in with the water.)
- 1 tablespoon dry milk
- 3 tablespoons shelf-stable bacon or bacon bits
- ½ cup water

At home, pack everything in a pint freezer or sandwich bag. If taking shelf-stable bacon, pack separately in a small plastic bag.

Freezer bag cooking method: Add near boiling water and mix well. Add a bit more water if needed. Let cool.

Insulated mug method: Add boiling water and mix well. Add a bit more water if needed. Let cool.

BBQ Chicken Wraps

Serves two; total time: 5 minutes

- 7 ounce pouch chicken breast
- 2 flour tortillas (soft taco size)
- ¼ cup barbecue sauce (This is shelf stable and can be carried in a leak-proof container, or you can use two tubs from a fast-food restaurant.)
- 2 ounces pepper-jack cheese (If purchasing at a grocery store in sticks similar to string cheese, bring along 2 sticks. If you cannot find these, carry 2 ounces of the cheese. Colby cheese or cheddar will also work.)
- ¼ cup french-fried onions

At home, pack the fried onions into a snack bag. Tuck in two paper towels with the ingredients.

When you're ready for lunch while camping, open the chicken pouch and add in the barbecue sauce, stirring well to break up the chicken. Lay out a clean paper towel for each tortilla, and divide the chicken between the two. Dice up a piece of cheese on each tortilla, then sprinkle on the onions. Roll up and enjoy! Bring some extra fried onions, and those can serve as a side treat!

Chicken, Gravy, and Stuffing

Serves one; total time: 5 minutes

- 1½ cup stuffing mix (low sodium will help with salt intake)
- 1 pouch chicken or turkey gravy (use 1-cup size package)
- 1 pouch (5 ounces) or can (7 ounces) of chicken or turkey

Put the stuffing in one freezer bag, and the gravy mix in another. At camp, pour 1 cup boiling water into the gravy, stir well, and add the chicken or turkey. Stir again and seal securely. Then place in the coozy. To the stuffing bag, add ¾ cup boiling water, stir, and seal well. Wrap in a towel or jacket and let sit for 5 minutes. Fluff up the stuffing, and pour the gravy over it. Very salty, but good!

Pecan Brownies

Serves up to four; total time: 10 minutes

- 1 sleeve graham crackers or 1¼ cup crushed cookies
- ¼ cup diced toasted pecans
- 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
- ¾ cup chocolate chips
- 3 tablespoons dry milk

At home, crush the graham crackers into crumbs and pack in a sandwich bag with the pecans and sugar. Put the chocolate chips and milk in a quart freezer bag. To make the dessert at camp, add ¼ cup water to the chocolate bag. Bring a small pot of water to a gentle simmer (warm). Turn off the heat. Dip the tightly sealed chocolate bag to melt the chocolate. When melted, add the graham cracker crumbs to the chocolate bag and knead to mix thoroughly. Eat warm with long-handled spoons or let it cool and break into chunks.

This recipe can serve up to four people, but that depends on what you consider “dessert”! If you want larger helpings, it may serve only one or two.