

# Planning Food for a Grand Canyon Expedition

Food is **crucial** on a wilderness expedition and the planning, buying, and packing food for 16 people for a 16 day trip is a full time job. If you've ever done a foodpack this big before, then you know **exactly** why you're letting PRO do it this time. If you've done a week's food for 10 people, well, it just isn't the same. A Grand Canyon trip is longer than fresh food will keep. Custom menu planning for an expedition is a job for a detail person who loves to eat. If you aren't that person, find one on your trip, and delegate! Or just select one of our excellent [sample menus](#) - you'll be glad you did. Familiarize yourself with the [Food Planning Checklist/Timeline](#) to get an idea of your menu planning timeframe.

## Getting Started

Before deciding on your [menu](#) and [food buy and pack option](#), investigate your participants' eating habits. It's simplest to accommodate individual preferences from the beginning. Distribute the [food preference survey](#). This is a good way to find out your group's needs. If you have a difficult mix of food requirements, such as food allergies, strict vegetarians *and* avid meat eaters, please contact us for strategies *before* you choose your menu.

## Food Volume and Boat Capacity

Before finalizing your menu, we evaluate if your foodpack will fit in the boats, coolers, dry boxes and drop bags available. Your choice of a [PRO or COMBO Pack](#) influences the volume of your food, as do your meal choices. On average (16 day – 16 person trip), a PRO pack can fit on four PRO 18' boats and a COMBO can fit on five PRO 18' boats.

If you are using personal boats, dry boxes and coolers need to arrive at PRO at least three weeks prior to your launch date. When submitting your initial menu selections please use the [food container worksheet](#) to list your coolers (with size by the quart) and dry boxes (with dimensions in inches). Food for 16 people for 16 days takes a lot of space. We can help you choose a menu that fits the dry, wet, and cold storage you have available.

## Food Costs

The average cost of a PRO sample menu for a 16-person 16-day trip is \$17 per person, per day. The cost of your food will depend on the menu you choose. Meat and seafood are more expensive than beans and rice; prepared foods cost more than whole ingredients. Once we receive your selections, we provide you with a menu and shopping list for your approval, plus the exact cost of your menu. Your shop list includes all the food, and if selected, a spice kit, kitchen and toilet sundries: soaps, bleach, toilet supplies, cooking oil, foil, and trash bags, etc.

# Planning Food for a Grand Canyon Expedition Cont'd

## Meal Portions

PRO's meal portions are large before any snacks, appetizers, sides and desserts are added. People eat more when they're outdoors all day, active, and hyped up by the big water and grand territory. You may wish to adjust the number of servings for your trip, depending on how many light or heavy eaters you have in your group. The general rule is to add or subtract one portion for every three heavy or light eaters in your group.

Add portions or snack boxes to your menu if you are doing a winter trip or if your group includes several

- ▶ very active people - kayakers, rowers, hikers, etc.
- ▶ people in their teens or twenties
- ▶ bottomless pit eaters
- ▶ men

Reduce portions on your trip if it's a summer trip (May-August) or if your group includes several

- ▶ mellow raft passengers
- ▶ people in their 40's and older
- ▶ women and/or children

It is possible to have a different number of portions for different sections of the trip or to change a specific meal's portions. Let us know what day and meal the change in portions occurs – i.e. lunch on day 7.

## Food Durability

It's not easy to know what will last and for how long, but with a few simple practices you can insure that you will have fresh food and ice for as long as possible. We estimate the durability of meals but we cannot know how long they will last in your care. Drain the coolers every day, and open coolers as little as possible - only in the shade or cool times of day. When possible, sort through the remaining produce and meat to assess its condition (ground or strip meats thaw faster than solid meats). Immediately use or toss anything that is about to spoil. On a trip as long as the Grand Canyon, strategic rescheduling of meals is absolutely necessary. Toward the end of the trip you will need to trim bad spots and leaves from produce and use the remainder. Choose canned or salted meats for late in the trip. Do not assume that because something appears on day 14 of your menu that it is guaranteed to last that long. There are no guarantees, and no substitute for your own good judgment.

# Planning Food for a Grand Canyon Expedition Cont'd

## Food Buy and Pack Choices

### The PRO Pack

If you have limited boat space, this pack is for you. Similar items are packed together, much like your pantry. Cans are in crates, condiments are in one box, breakfast supplies in another. Coolers are split into meat/frozen, dairy, and produce. Crates and veggie bags are used for some durable fruits and vegetables.

### Pros

- ▶ Makes efficient use of limited storage space by packing similar items together; for example - all the pasta is together, and all cookies are together.
- ▶ Canned goods are packed in crates and labeled with permanent ink markers so they don't take up valuable drybox space.
- ▶ Boxes empty evenly throughout your fleet.
- ▶ Ability to utilize fresh foods as they ripen, and respond to changes in the weather or your schedule. Meals can be easily rescheduled to utilize produce or meats that are about to spoil.
- ▶ Unused foods from early in the trip are kept in a logical location where they are at the disposal of cooks for future meals.
- ▶ This is the type of pack used by commercial Grand Canyon river outfitters; it makes sense for a trip of this duration.
- ▶ Less expensive to pack.

### Cons

- ▶ Someone must locate and pull supplies for each meal.
- ▶ It takes more time for group members to identify whose raft has what, so "shopping" takes time and initially, participation of the boatmen.
- ▶ Secure hatch space is needed for crates of cans, fruit, and veggie bags (PRO Rigs have drop bags with covered hatches, but your boat may not).

# Planning Food for a Grand Canyon Expedition Cont'd

## Food Buy and Pack Choices Cont'd

### The Combo Pack

If you have tons of boat space, this pack is for you. Dry and canned goods are packed in order of use and labeled Camp 1, Camp 2, etc. A "Camp" is dinner and next day's breakfast and lunch. Condiments are packed with the camp's food as well. Bread and eggs are packed in their own boxes (for protection) and some durable fruit and vegetables are packed in crates and veggie bags.

### Pros

- ▶ Canned and dry goods are quickly located in the Camp Box, requiring less time to locate.
- ▶ This pack has been used by many experienced private river runners because it is easy to get a meal started (just find the right camp box and shop in coolers for the meat/produce/dairy) and allows rookies to prepare meals without assistance from boatmen.

### Cons

- ▶ Uses more dry box space than the PRO Pack because the canned goods (which are waterproof) are in dry boxes and round and square items are packed together.
- ▶ Re-scheduling meals and finding extra needed supplies will be more difficult - if you run out of mayo you will have to dig into another camp's supplies to find it.

## The Sample Menus

### [PRO Classic](#)

Works for most appetites and has been used many times on the river. It is a proven crowd pleaser and includes all our favorite river meals, both meaty and vegetarian. .

### [PRO Classic II \(For Meat Lovers\)](#)

The PRO Classic with meat included in nearly every meal especially breakfast meats. This menu will satisfy the meat & potatoes fans, while having something for everyone

### [Quick and Easy](#)

Includes quick & light breakfasts, and a minimum of baked dutch oven meals. The intention is to keep you out of the kitchen as much as possible and leave more time to hike and watch sunsets.

### [Vegetarian](#)

Offers the best of the meatless meals and includes tofu, eggs and cheese.

[More Sample Menus.....](#)

## Planning Food for a Grand Canyon Expedition Cont'd

### The Sample Menus Cont'd

<a href="#">Summer Light</a>		Lighter meals for when it's too hot to eat!
<a href="#">Winter Hearty</a>		Hot Hearty meals to keep you warm from the inside out!
<a href="#">Veggie/ Meat Combo</a>		Try this when your group is split between vegetarians and carnivores – these meals are light on meat.
<a href="#">Rafting Gourmet</a>		These meals may take more time or culinary skill, but are well worth it

### Submit Menu

Mail, fax, e-mail or submit the [Menu Details Form](#) and, if you are supplying personal boxes and/or boats, include the [Food Container Worksheet](#). We'll then send you a menu and shop list of everything we plan to buy for your trip. Once your menu is final, we'll e-mail you a PDF copy of the Menu Plan containing your recipes and helpful information about outdoor food preparation - print this out to have as a back up copy. You will receive the second Menu Plan, with a shopping list annotated by our foodpacker as to the location of menu items, with your foodpack. Menus are final 30 days prior to launch. No changes after finalizing your menu.

### Delegating Food Responsibilities

You've got enough to do, make it easy on yourself and appoint a Food Pharaoh and a Menu Master to be in charge of food on the trip. Pick a couple of people who have experience running rivers, and love to cook as well. These people will be able to do a better job if they are informed well before the launch, and have time to read the Menu Plan and ask PRO questions as needed.

#### Food Pharaoh

Although the person running a raft is usually responsible for caring for the goods in said vessel, it's a great idea to have someone in charge of overall quality control... especially for fresh fruits and vegetables. It is unwise to assume this task will be managed by the group as a whole. Someone needs to be up-to-date on whether the melons are ripening fast and need to be used, or the broccoli is going and should be consumed tonight! Someone needs to be thinking about pulling out the steaks so they'll thaw in time for dinner. Someone needs to make sure the potatoes and onions didn't get wet in that ride through Sockdolager this morning. That someone is the Food Pharaoh.

# Planning Food for a Grand Canyon Expedition Cont'd

## Delegating Food Responsibilities Cont'd

### The Menu Master

Someone else needs to know the Menu Plan inside out. They need to know who's carrying what, whether the fire pan needs to be pulled out tonight, and who is on kitchen crew tomorrow. The Menu Master is not meant to be in the kitchen every night - but simply oversee food prep organization. It's great if the delegation of this task occurs before your launch - so the MM can review the Menu Plan and ask the PRO advisor any specific questions before you head downstream.





### Cooking Crews

Cooking crews are essential to guarantee everyone works and everyone plays. Crews of three or four are great; unless very experienced - two is too few; five and you'll be tripping over each other in the kitchen. Typically, one crew is responsible for the meals at one camp - i.e. dinner and breakfast - with lunch being prepared by all. Basic areas to be covered for dinner are: entree, side dishes, appetizers and/or desserts with dishwashing done by the entire group. Breakfasts are simpler to prepare and may not require the whole crew's participation.

## Dishwashing

Each cooking crew should include someone in charge of heating the dishwater, so it's hot and ready to use after the meal.

Your PRO kitchen uses a three chickee-pail (metal bucket) and one bail bucket wash set-up:

-  The first, a chickee pail, is hot with a dollop of soap to get off the "Gook".
-  The second is also a chickee pail with hot water and a dollop of soap to clean the dish.
-  The third chickee pail is hot, but without soap, to rinse the dish.
-  Finally, the fourth is a white plastic bucket with cold water and a capful of liquid bleach to sanitize the dish; leave the dish in the bleach rinse for at least one minute to give the bleach time to do its thing.

When the time comes for doing dishes move the General Trash bucket from under the Food Preparation Table down to the Dish Wash Table. Everyone will start the line by scraping scraps into the gray General Trash bucket, and then move down the line – Hot Wash, Hot Wash, Hot Rinse, Cold Bleach Rinse. The dish hammock, included in your PRO kitchen, should be hung from the serving table – drop dishes in to dry.

# Food Planning Checklist/Timeline

## Get started (3-12 months prior to launch)

Begin compiling a list of coolers and dryboxes (if any) that you are supplying for the foodpack. Let us know the sizes/dimensions of each. Use the [Food Container Worksheet](#) to help you get started.

Use the PRO [Food Preference Survey](#) to get specific food info on your group. If anyone has strict diet requirements - let us know. We'll talk over options for vegetarians, allergies, or other food restrictions.

Choose what type of ice you would like. PRO Ice is \$60/cooler, and block ice is \$40/cooler.

Find a volunteer for food planning if you don't want to do it yourself. This is a big job and it's fair to delegate. Send the Food Person the food info and this checklist.

## Choose Your Menu (three or more months prior to launch)

Choose between [PRO](#) or [Combo Pack](#) options. Your choice will depend in part on how much space you have to pack food; use the Food Container Worksheet (boats, coolers and dryboxes, complete with sizes/dimensions) to choose well.

Choose one of our [Sample Menus](#), [Modify an Existing Sample Menu](#) or [Build Your Own Menu](#) from the meals, side dishes, appetizers and desserts listed in the [PRO Menu](#).

Submit your Menu at least 60 days before your launch. Fill out the Menu Worksheets - [Menu Details](#), [Food Container Worksheet](#), and your choice of Sample Menu or the [Create Your Own Menu Selection Sheet](#) if you are building a menu from the [PRO Menu](#) - and email, mail or fax it to us.

## Fine Tune your Menu (one to three months before your trip)

After we receive your menu, we input your selections PRO sends, via e-mail, your Menu and Shopping List for final review.

Go over your Menu and Shopping List with a PRO Menu Advisor. Ask your list of questions and we will too.

Using the list of foodpack containers that you provide on your [Food Container Worksheet](#), PRO compares the food volume with the containers that we are supposed to pack it into. We will discuss volume and storage, and suggest changes if needed.

You may change the number of portions until it is final.

## Food Planning Checklist/Timeline Cont'd

### Finalize Your Menu (one month before launch)

One month before your trip is the menu DEADLINE your menu must be final.

Ship or deliver your dryboxes and coolers to PRO to arrive *at least 3 weeks prior to the launch*. Earlier is better in case shipping is delayed; we can store things for you. Coolers need to be at PRO at least 3 weeks prior to the launch date to be deep-frozen with PRO Ice.

Receive a PDF copy of your Menu Plan. This is the Menu and Shopping List, Pull Lists, Recipes, and a section with tips on cooking with Dutch Ovens, making coffee and more. Print this out if you would like to have a back up copy – we will give you these in a three ring binder at Lees Ferry.

Place your alcohol order with [Cork and Bottle](#) at least two weeks prior to your launch, .

Final payment (for the entire contract) is due.

### Rig Day

PRO will provide you with a copy of your Menu Plan with a Shopping List that has been annotated by the foodpacker with the exact whereabouts of every item.

The PRO Advisor will orient you to the foodpacking system.

Get a detail-oriented person to fill out your Boat Maps to keep a record of where each food box gets loaded. The Boat Maps are in plastic sleeves in the front of the Menu Plan.

Load the Lunch Box and apples/oranges for lunch on rafts where you can access them during the day.

### Launch Day

Check in the [Lunch Box](#) (a 20mm rocket box) to see what condiments & basic lunch staples are already packed, and evaluate what you'll need to pull.

Make sure you'll be able to get to the lunch box at lunchtime!

You may need to pull meat/avocado pulp from the cooler to thaw, locate bread if needed, and any other supplies for your first lunch. It's a lot easier to get an onion before the boats are rigged!

Hit your first camp, and start figuring out your kitchen.

## Food Planning Checklist/Timeline Cont'd

### Down River

Get a feel for how much food your group actually eats, and avoid overcooking. It's easier to store uncooked than cooked rice. Cook only what you think you'll eat. Supplies you don't need can be saved for future meals.

Use vegetables and fruits that are ripening first.

Reschedule meals or side dishes as needed.

Thaw meats as needed.

Use thawed ground meats as soon as possible.

Consolidate coolers as soon as possible, during the cooler and shadier times of day.

Drain your coolers daily. Ice will last much longer if there is no water to conduct the heat from the side of the cooler to the ice.

Check your onions & potatoes every time you open them and dry them when they feel moist. They are packed in black drybags and the veggies create their own moisture, causing them to mold if not properly dried. To dry them, spread the veggies out on a dry clean boat deck in the sunlight and remove any that have rotten spots. Hang the black bag where it can dry out also.