

By Brigitte Magenheim, ASM, Troop 889

The troop is organized in patrols and the scouts will sleep and cook as a patrol. There are several cooking related requirements in FCE (First Class Emphasis). Tenderfoot requires a scout to assist the cook in a meal. Second class requires each scout to cook a meal over an open fire. First class requires a scout to be the “cook” which entails purchasing the food (pursuant to a menu planned by the patrol) and “cooking” a breakfast, lunch and dinner. At all of our campouts from now on (except summer camp) one of the new scouts will be assigned this title of “cook.” It can be intimidating for the parents as well as the scout.

Each patrol has a chuck box that is supposed to have the basics: Coleman propane stove, cook kit that has assorted nested pots, one of which has an attachable handle and serves as a frying pan, cutting board, oven mitt, utensils like paring knife, spatula, spoon, potato peeler, can opener. Anything else will have to be brought from home or donated to the chuck box. You will see an assortment of items that various patrols have accumulated. Not all boxes have plastic bowls, but the cook kit pots will serve that function. (If the patrol has elected to make pancakes or scrambled eggs, you might want to consider loaning out one of your teflon coated pans from home.) (I made sure that my son cooked all his assigned meals at home the weekend before and then I let him bring any special pots he used so he would feel more comfortable knowing he had the right sized items and knew how to use them.) Matches are kept in the adult box or in the troop quartermaster box and only given to the scouts to light their stoves or start a fire.

Scouts should bring their own eating kit. This can consist of a Frisbee (Mr. Sartin’s preferred plate) to a heavy plastic plate/bowl to odds ‘n ends like I use to a real mess kit. All they really need is some sort of plate, bowl, cup and knife, fork, spoon. I put my name on everything either directly on the items or on duct tape) and stick it all in a large ziplock. Some people have mesh bags for their gear and then hang them so they air out. The troop will bring some paper products because scouts forget their gear. It is self-perpetuating, however, because scouts know there will be paper, they deliberately do not bring their gear so they have nothing to wash. Scouts will have to use their own items if they go backpacking because all trash has to be hauled along so we have to get back to camping the “boy scout way” and be friendly to the environment as well.

Menus may be rather sketchy. For example, the “cook” may say pancakes, juice, sandwiches, cookies, chips, spaghetti, dessert, drinks, cereal, donuts, and milk. You then have to fill in the gaps, including basic condiments like Pam or vegetable oil, syrup, mayo and mustard. Do not assume anything. There is no common supply. If you don’t bring it, you don’t have it. I would extend that to foil, paper towels, ziplocks. These items should be left in the chuck box, but since this is the first trip for the new patrols they need to be purchased. We tend to throw leftovers out because there is no way to store them. Paper towels notoriously get left out and get either rained on or the dew gets to them. Foil is worth its weight in gold because someone always is asking for it. A lot of these items I will just bring from home if there are only a few people to cook for. Unfortunately we tend to repurchase the same items over and over. Every campout a patrol buys mayo, mustard, catsup. The cook will bring any leftovers home and I started collecting an assortment of partially used condiments. Now I just grab whatever is in the refrigerator and try to reuse items that were purchased for the troop. My advice is try not to

overbuy and use up whatever you can. The new scout patrols will have great attendance especially in the beginning but the numbers may tend to drop in future campouts.

The troop will bring filled water coolers. Powdered drink mixes always work if the scouts mix the drink in their own cup. The troop has ice chests available for each patrol to use for perishable items (we get the ice from the church as we leave) so you don't need to buy ice.

DO NOT BRING DRY ICE ON THE CAMPOUTS!!!!

Also you can use an ice chest for dry food as well so it is safe from the elements and the critters. They are stored in the church closet and accessible the day we leave or pick one up at a troop meeting earlier if you want.

There tends to be an eating frenzy mentality in the patrols. If you put out a package of cookies, it is almost like watching the struggle between the strong and the weak. If you hesitate or hold back you are apt to be without. It is up to the cook to handle portion control. If you purchase cookies and doing the math would allow each person 3 cookies, tell them they can only take three cookies PERIOD. This is especially important when parceling out hot dogs or hamburgers. Tell them how many they can have and then if everyone has their fill, the extras can go to whoever whines the most.

My rule of thumb is to try to keep the costs down to a maximum of \$15 per scout per campout. If you can feed the scouts and it comes out less, great. Don't buy for gourmet meals. The boys need to learn to be thrifty and there may be someone in the group that won't appreciate the added expense if you get extravagant. Sometimes the troop provides the main meal so you have to scale back accordingly. Do put in a few snacks especially for Friday night since we leave for camp after dinner and it is a long time until breakfast.

When in doubt, ask one of us old-timers. I have a year under my belt, but Josh seems to volunteer for cook a lot so we both have gotten better at it. Just make sure the "cook" knows what is supposed to go with each meal, how to prepare it and how to portion it out (if need be). Have him ask for help if he needs it. We adults try to stay out of the way, but will be there for advice if asked and to make sure scouts are safe.

Hey, no one can starve in two days so the scouts may come back a little dirty and hungry, but it's nothing that a bar of soap and a raid of the refrigerator can't fix.

A final list of who is attending the campout will be distributed to the troop following the troop meeting (the meeting held the same week we camp). If the shopping is done on Wednesday or Thursday, it should be for the number of boys that said they were going. Adults have been eating separately from the scouts but the adult advisors will probably be eating with the new patrols. We will make sure our names are in the final list that the "cook" gets prior to shopping. Keep the receipts and give them to Gary Metzger at a troop meeting. Also give Gary a list of who you were buying for (i.e. Moose patrol boys listed by name and adults). Gary will either give you a check to cover the cost you incurred per the receipt or debit your son's scout account for the full amount (if that is your choice). Then the entire amount is divided among those that were supposed to go and the credit comes out of each scout's account. As you can see, sign-ups

are important. If Johnny says he is going and then is a no-show, he will still be charged for his portion of the costs. If Johnny cancels prior to the last troop meeting and the "cook" has not bought the food then the shopping needs to be made for the lesser number of boys and Johnny does not get charged. If the way we handle this poses a hardship on anyone because of the timing or the number of people you are having to buy for, discuss this with Gary and other arrangements can be made (i.e. an advance). If you participate in the Kroger's program (talk to Jenny Champagne for details), use your card for your purchases and then you get a rebate back into your son's scout account just for shopping at Kroger's and being the "cook."