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# **The Canoeist’s Grub Box: How to Cook while you Cruise in your Canoe**

## Everything you need in one box

For canoe cruising a certain amount of food supplies and the necessary utensils for cooking should be carried in a single box or chest, so that when one cooks a meal on board he may have in one receptacle everything necessary for preparing a meal, and when going ashore for his repast he can take in his hands everything requisite at one journey.

If on a long cruise the large portion of his food supply may be kept in different parts of the canoe, but the box should contain sufficient for at least three meals, and can be replenished from the larger store when stopping for the night or at a camping place for any length of time. The larger the box that his stowage room will allow the greater will be the comfort of the canoeist.

## Building your Grub Box

The box may be made of wood, tin or galvanized iron. The former costs but little, can be made by the cruiser himself, and if properly made and properly taken care of, should answer the purpose; but a box of either japanned or painted tin or galvanized iron will stand much knocking about without fracture, and is therefore preferable when its expense is no objection. Of course it must be water-tight, and if made of wood the nicest joining and dove-tailing must be done, and it should be varnished inside and out with shellac or boat varnish.

Arbitrary dimensions cannot be given because of the varying sizes of canoes and the different amounts of provisions carried on cruises, therefore let each canoeist first determine what amount and variety of eatables he will carry, and then construct the box according to his needs and his stowage room in the cockpit.

### **Best grub box materials**

If made of wood quarter inch or 5/16 stuff (pine) will do, and if the box is to be used as a seat the top and bottom pieces should be heavier, say 3/8 of an inch. The cover should be two inches deep and the handle by which the box is carried should be a thin, wide, flat strap tacked to the cover. If the box is not used as a seat but is stowed under the deck it will be found an advantage to have the flanges of the cover fall over the side pieces of the box and the strap tacked to one end piece, carried over the cover and fastened by a hook to an eye in the other end piece in reach of the hand, so that the cover may be removed and articles obtained from the box without taking it from under the deck. If used as a seat the cover may be hinged on one side and two hooks fastened at the ends on the other, and for the back rest two pieces of three-quarter inch pine are screwed to the sides, running aft horizontally six or eight inches from the aftermost end of the box, holes being bored in them an inch apart "athwartship" and cut opposite each other, through which a quarter-inch brass rod is passed for the back rest to play on. As the lower end of the back rest strikes the end of the box near the floor when in use, it may be "slanted" as inclination demands by changing the brass rod from one set of holes to another.

### **Keep it water tight!**

To carry the provisions in the box so that they will not mix or spill, several water-tight tins should be used. The Consolidated Fruit Jar Company, 49 Warren Street, New York, makes tin screw-tops for jars and canisters that are perfectly water-tight. Send for several of these tops, of assorted sizes, and have a tinsmith make the tin cans of the dimensions you desire, so that they will nest in the box closely. The same company will also furnish you with a pint or quart earthen jar with water-tight screw-top, in which butter may be kept sweet for a long time in hot weather, and which may be enveloped in a net and lowered to the bottom of the river or lake without fear of its leaking.

In the tin cans may be carried coffee, tea (or cocoa), sugar, flour (or meal), rice and alcohol. (A special screw-top is made for fluid cans.) Pepper and salt are in small spice boxes with two covers, the one underneath being perforated. Eggs are safest carried in the tins with the flour, coffee and rice; bread and bacon (or salt pork) are wrapped in macintosh and put near the top of the chest; the vinegar goes in a whisky flask (mark it to avoid mistakes), and canned goods, condensed milk, baking powder, etc., in their own cans.

### **Supplies that fit**

The alcohol stove and utensils necessary to cook a meal should go in the box, such as coffee pot, cup, fork, knife, spoon, frying pan and plates. The coffee pot should be of small size, with handle and lip riveted. If soldered, they are likely to melt off. Cups or plates should be of tin or granite ware. The fork and knife have their sheaths of leather inside the box cover. The plates should nest in the frying pan, which should have no handle, and is fastened inside the chest cover by two buttons, so that it may be readily released. Next the knife and fork have a sheath for a pair of small blacksmith's pliers. This instrument serves as a handle to the frying pan and a lifter for everything on the fire, and can always be kept cool. A three-quart tin or granite ware pail is necessary for stews, and two smaller ones may be nested in it, of two-quart and three-pint capacity, respectively. Put the can of condensed milk in the smallest pail. It will be out of the way, and won't make the rest of the things in the chest sticky.

If you carry potatoes, onions or other vegetables, always have enough in the chest for three meals. The surplus supplies of provisions, such as vegetables, extra bread, crackers, flour, meal, pork or bacon, etc., should be carried in waterproof bags, and they can then be stowed wherever necessary to properly trim the canoe. These waterproof bags may be used also for clothing and blankets. They are made of unbleached muslin, sewn in a lap seam, with a double row of stitches. When sewn they are dipped in water and slightly shaken to remove the drops, and then while wet a mixture of equal parts of boiled oil, raw oil and turpentine is applied to the outside with a brush. This takes about a week to become thoroughly dry, and then another coat is put on without dampening the cloth, and if a little liquid drier is added to the mixture, this coat will dry in four or five days.

Having prepared several bags, the provisions, clothing, blankets, etc., are put in the bag, and its mouth is inserted in that of another bag of the same size, the latter being drawn on like a stocking as far as it will go. If several bags are used instead of one or two large ones, the canoe can be trimmed and packed to better advantage.

## Building a canoe stove

A canoeist's portable oven is made of two small basins, one of which has "ears" riveted to its rim, so that when it is placed bottom up on the other the ears will spring over the rim of the second basin, thus making an oven that is not air-tight, allowing gases to escape. The basins should be made of sheet-iron, and, as their interiors can easily be kept clean, they answer very well for soup dishes. Instructions for baking in them will be given later on. These should not go in the provision chest, as they will smut everything with which they come in contact. Butter, I have found, keeps better in its jar outside of the chest than in. Outside, too, are kept a small jug of molasses, and a jug of fresh water, if cruising on the "briny."

There is no perfect canoe stove. The "flamme forcé" is probably as good as any. It takes up a little more room than the folding "pocket" variety, and it does not give more heat; but it burns for a longer time, and is not top-heavy when a heavy pot or pan is set on it. For cooking in large utensils have three of these flamme forcé alcohol lamps, light them and place them side by side, and you can cook in this way a dozen slapjacks at once on a big griddle, if you like. Danforth, the fluid man, makes a small canoe stove that would be preferable to all others if his fluid were obtainable at all the corners of the earth that canoeists frequent; but unfortunately it is not.

Beware of "folding stoves" to use ashore and burn wood in. They are the greatest possible nuisances—smutty, red-hot and cumbersome. Don't carry an oil stove. But if you really must, put the nasty thing in a large bucket, and only remove it from this receptacle when absolutely necessary.

## Selecting provisions for canoe cooking

Now as to eatables in general, besides what I have already mentioned, condensed milk is a good thing, but condensed coffee, condensed eggs and condensed beef are abominations. Self-raising or Hecker's prepared flour, wheat, rye, Indian or Graham, is easily made into bread and slapjacks. The directions come with the packages. Pilot bread will keep an indefinite time, and is not so unpalatable as hard-tack. Indian meal is very nutritious and easily made up, as it requires nothing to lighten it; scald it before using when it is not fresh. Canned tomatoes, corn, fruits, beans, soups, salmon, etc., are easy to prepare, and can be stored as ballast in the canoe. Mr. Hicks, of the Toronto Canoe Club, prepares certain kinds of food in cans for ballast as follows, according to the *American Canoeist*:

"Get a number of flat square tin cans made like oyster cans, of a handy size to lie under your floor boards. Then cook a turkey, some chickens, a sirloin of beef, etc. Cut the hot meat up into large dice-shaped pieces, and put it in the tins hot, then pour melted fat in till the tins are full, and then solder them tight. Get as much meat in as you can before putting in the fat. Put up fruit in square flat cans in the same way. There is your ballast, and heavy stuff it is. When the provisions run short let the crew feed on the ballast. The preparation described is far more nutritious than canned corned beef, is more palatable, and will keep indefinitely—that is, throughout a very long cruise."

I have not tried this method of preserving provisions, but the theory is excellent, and I do not see why it would not be a feasible scheme. The Brunswick canned soups are the cheapest made, are easily prepared and as wholesome as any; but I have known squeamish canoeists who would not use them because they didn't like the looks of the powder to which they are desiccated. Dried beef, corned beef, lemons and sardines make good additions to an outfit. Potatoes, onions and other vegetables should be procured en route as needed, if possible.

As it may puzzle some neophytes to know how much of each article of food to take on a cruise, I give below the exact amount of provisions I carried on a cruise of a week last autumn. I did not run short of anything at the end of the week, but I had not provisions enough left for three square meals: 1 lb. sugar (cut loaf); 1/8 lb. tea; 1 lb. flour; 1-1/2 lbs. crackers; 1/2 lb. lard; 1/2 lb. rice; 1/2 lb. bacon; 3/4 lb. coffee; 1 lb. butter; 1 can condensed milk; 3 loaves bread; 3/4 peck potatoes; 1/2 peck meal; 1 pint molasses; 2 oz. pepper; 1 bottle pickles; 1 bottle yeast powder; 1 qt. salt.