

By [Shane](#), on 04-07-2008 21:02

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A new thread on the message board on cooking techniques spurred me to put our "modified turkey bag" method of cooking and KP down for the site.

First the reasons we use this method of cooking:

- It is a very "clean" method of cooking in bear country. All of the dry ingredients are contained in a very small area of camp and are handled by only two people.
- It is a very simple method. Measure the right amount of water for your meal, add it to the dry ingredients, stir, and enjoy the crew's company for 10 minutes while dinner "cooks."
- We only heat water once. We heat enough water for both cooking and KP at the same time. The pot cozy will keep the KP water hot enough for KP for well over an hour. This allows for a great decrease in the volume of white gas used over the course of an 11 day trip.
- We believe in doing a proper KP after every meal, and KP with this method takes about 5 to 7 minutes.

Gear needed for our method:

- White gas stove (we use either an MSR Dragonfly or MSR Whisperlite)
- White gas container
- Two 8-qt pots
- Two 8-qt pot lids
- Two 8-qt pot cozies (click on [this link](#) to see how to make your own pot cozies)
- One small size turkey bag (oven cooking bag) for EACH meal
- One 1-gallon Zip Lock bag (if needed for dessert preparation) for each "wet dessert"
- Measuring cup
- Large spoon (we use the MSR Alpine folding spoon)
- Bowls and spoons (these are on our CREW GEAR list instead of personal gear list)
- Sponge square
- Camp Suds
- Extra bear bag or small ground cloth
- Sump frisbee
- Sump spatula

The cooking method:

The crew is taught the proper way to open and handle Philmont food bags. The main meal bag (the bag that is holding all of the individual meal ingredient bags) is opened with a knife very neatly down one side of the bag. This main meal bag will become an

outer wrapper again for the "YUM-YUM" bag (see later in the article). The individual meal ingredient bags are also opened very carefully. If these dry ingredients go into the dinner pot, they are opened OVER the dinner pot in order to stop any dry powder from spreading around the kitchen area (smellable mess). If the dry ingredients are part of a mixed dessert, they are opened over or in the appropriate mixing container (pot or ZipLock bag).

For meal preparation we work with a "wet" pot and a "dry" pot.

We put 6 or 7 quarts of water in the wet pot, start the stove, and bring this water to a boil. Once it is boiling, it is IMMEDIATELY removed from the stove (stove is turned off) and placed in a pot cozy. This boiled water is water for both rehydrating dinner and KP.

While the water is boiling, the cooks will place the dry pot in its pot cozy (the dry pot is currently empty). They will then line the dry pot with an empty turkey bag. The dry ingredients for dinner are then placed in the turkey bag lining the dry pot - carefully so that no dry powders are spread on the ground or up the sides of the turkey bag. The dry ingredients are covered until ready to add water for rehydration. The cooks pay special attention to figure out how much water is needed to rehydrate the meal.

Also, while the water is boiling, if there is a "wet dessert" (cheesecake, pudding, etc.) the cooks will use the 1-gallon ZipLock bag to mix the dessert in, then will set it aside in the shade to set up.

Once the pot of water has boiled and has been placed in the cozy, the cooks carefully measure out the correct amount of water from the pot of hot water and pour that water into the turkey bag holding the dry ingredients. Once the correct amount of water has been transferred, the cooks will stir the meal well, cover, and stir again after about 5 minutes. The cooks are trained to stir the meal without sloshing food around creating another smellable mess. Dinner is ready in 10 to 12 minutes. The remaining hot water in the wet pot should be covered with the pot lid and cozy cover. It will remain hot enough for KP for at least an hour.

Once the 10 to 12 minute rehydrating period has elapsed, we say Grace, and eat as a crew. The cooks dish out the food and eat last. The crew members assigned to KP eat first.

The Turkey Bag:

Once the turkey bag is as empty as possible using the serving spoon - which is usually VERY clean (very little food pieces left) - it is removed from the pot and becomes the evening meal's "YUM-YUM" bag (bag that gets the solid particles of food waste after KP and proper sumping). The bag is also large enough to place all of the individual meal ingredient bags in. Once the turkey bag is holding all of the solid food waste (remember that there should be very little of this) and all of the dinner trash, we tie the top of the bag

in an overhand knot, then we place this full turkey bag inside three of the Philmont meal bags (remember they were opened carefully at the beginning of meal prep). This is in essence quadruple bagging our wet & dirty trash. Each layer of this wrapping is closed up with a piece of electrical or duct tape to prevent leaking. This trash package is now ready for the bear bag overnight and for disposal at the next staff camp that accepts trash or next commissary.

The KP method:

Again, the terms "wet" pot and "dry"pot come into play.

The wet pot has not held anything except boiling water. It is therefore already clean and is suitable for using as a rinse container. It currently holds about 3 to 4 quarts of hot water.

The dry pot has been lined with a turkey bag. If the cooks were careful in their stirring and serving, the turkey bag should remain intact. The dry pot may have a bit of condensation under the bag, but it should be otherwise very clean. The dry pot will become our wash pot.

First, we have all crew members "human sump" their bowls and spoons as clean as possible. This has become a kind of competition for us, and the bowls and spoons given to the KP guys are pretty well clean.

The two pots and all of the dirty dishes are moved to the sump area for KP. We lay out an extra bear bag to use as a ground cloth for the clean dishes.

To prepare the wash pot, we put about a half-quart of cold water in the wash pot (dry pot), add two drops of Camp Suds, and add about a quart of the hot water in the "wet" pot to it. This way, the KP guys can put their hands in this water without too much discomfort.

The KP guys will use a small square of sponge to wash all bowls, spoons, the cooking spoon, the measuring cup (if needed) and any other dirty utensils. From the wash pot, the items are rinsed in the rinse pot, then placed on the bear bag to dry overnight. Once all of the small items are done, the wash pot is given a thorough cleaning, making sure there is no food stuff around the rim or on the outside of the pot. When the wash pot is clean, the water is sumped according to Philmont procedures using the sump frisbee and spatula. The rinse water is then used to rinse the wash pot and then sumped properly.

This method sounds long and complicated. Cooking usually takes us about 25 minutes and KP usually takes us about 5 minutes. All I can suggest is practice, practice, practice.

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