

Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expedition Training

Food and Menu Planning

Making sure you eat and drink enough of the right things is essential when you are on expedition, this is particularly so at Gold level when you are out for 4 days and 3 nights. Poor food and liquid intake can lead to participants getting ill, putting their other group members at risk and not completing the expedition.

When on expedition you should see food and drink as vital fuel to keep your body and mind going. You will be using up this fuel constantly during the day which is different to how we work in everyday life where exercise sessions are time limited. You must also keep your mind alert – you can imagine the scenario – you are nearing the end of a long day and are faced with difficult navigational conditions, if you haven't been eating enough you will be tired, grumpy and make fast poorly thought out decisions – which could lead to you having to walk even further – you can see a spiral of poor decisions leading to even more difficult decisions!

You must balance a number of things when planning your menu:

- Calories – you must be taking more calories than normal eg. 3000 + per day
- You should be balancing slow release carbohydrates with quick release, and also remembering the other vitamins, minerals and proteins that we need
- You have to carry all the food – avoid heavy and bulky items eg jars and tins. Your cooked meals should cook quickly or you will have to carry more fuel
- You will be using the same stove throughout the expedition – so think about how difficult and dirty your pans will be – burning bacon onto your stove on the first day is not going to make for easy washing up or good tasting meals
- You should cook at least one substantial hot meal a day
- Hot drinks at camp are a great source of liquid and also a morale booster
- You must take on at least 2 litres of water per day
- Some food will go off over time, make sure your food for days 2, 3 and 4 will last and anything from a chilled counter should be eaten within the first 24hrs
- Your food will need to be robust to survive in your rucksack. For example eggs are not a good idea and pitta bread is more robust than usual bread.
- Dehydrated food weighs a lot less than hydrated. Compare packs of dehydrated pasta with hydrated next time you're in a supermarket.
- Small re-sealable plastic bags are very useful.

Generally speaking breakfast and evening meal are the important ones with daytime food being a constant topping up of energy levels. I wouldn't necessarily recommend a big lunch stop with a number of smaller stops to snack being more effective.

A good, tried and tested, effective expedition menu would be:

Breakfast – Porridge with dried fruit eg apricots and 1 or 2 mugs of tea

Lunch – Pitta Bread with cheese and salami, cereal bars, biscuits, chocolate bars, 'Trail Mix' (nuts, raisons, dried fruit etc), Malt Loaf

Evening Meal – Cup-a-Soup, pasta or rice with sauce and you could add vegetables, tuna, salami, cheese etc, dried fruit or custard for dessert followed by hot chocolate and biscuits etc

You must also carry 'Emergency Rations' that you don't use – eg 2 or 3 Cereal or Chocolate bars taped up in a bag and at the bottom of your rucksack. These are for emergencies only, the Assessor will expect to see these at the end of your Assessment.

Cooking and eating is one of the more enjoyable sides of expedition life so don't be afraid to try something different and see what delights you can come up with on your stove!