

Let a campfire spark some hot cuisine

GABRIELLE FAGAN

CAMPING used to be the preserve of geeks in sandals - but this summer it's the cool choice for a break or a holiday.

Indeed, consumer trends watchdog Mintel recently reported a "surge" in short-break camping holidays, while membership of the Camping and Caravanning Club has increased by ten per cent in the past three years. So trendy has kipping under canvas become that campers can also buy Ted Baker blow-up mattresses and Cath Kidston sleeping bags.

Fashionable it may be, but the harsh reality is often basic cooking equipment which can be an excuse for serving up filling but unimaginative fare such as beans and sausages.

But even if you're just heading up the Pentlands with your tent for a weekend in the wild, or hiring a caravan at Pease Bay for the week, that doesn't mean your tastebuds have to suffer.

According to Lindy Wildsmith, author of *Eating Outdoors*, camping is a great chance to experiment and excite the palette.

"It's relaxing to escape the confines of the kitchen and the formality of eating around a table," she says. "Whether you serve a few choice sausages with a home-made relish or an exotic menu of grilled seafood, it's fun to cook on a fire and eat freshly-cooked food outdoors."

Her book is bursting with dishes that are perfect for everything from a casual barbecue to an elegant al fresco picnic, plus practical hints and suggestions on cooking well and safely when away from home.

"Eating outdoors is about making the most of what nature has to offer and turning something ordinary into something extraordinary. Simple snack or elegant meal, food always tastes better outside."

Of course, a lot of camp food does involve one-pot cooking, and, as a result, the whole process needs to be fairly brisk. Woks are a great utensil over a stove or open fire - and a measuring jug is a good addition to the rucksack.

But what to eat? According to 23-year-old Ali McFarlane, sales assistant at Tiso in Leith, rice and noodles are easy to carry, and the leftovers can be used again if you cook too much. Frozen peas and basic vegetables are widely available. It's also a good idea to take along Tabasco, soy sauce and Worcestershire Sauce for added interest.

"I go camping at least twice a month, and basically you can cook whatever you like. If you go to the Western Isles I'd recommend building a fire on a beach, collecting some mussels, wrapping them in tinfoil with butter and garlic. Lovely jubbly!

"Mostly it's Italian-style food I make because it's so simple. Risotto's dead easy and it's really nice and filling. Pastas are straightforward too and, when it's cold, stews are very simple to make. Really, you should try and steer away from the whole boil-in-the-bag thing."

The experts in camp food are still the Scouts and Girl Guiding Associations, who in Edinburgh, at this time of year, are either already out on camp or getting prepared for a few nights under canvas. Michelle Doig, 38, from Craigentenny, is well versed in camp food. Not only has she been eating it since a babe in arms - her father was a Boys' Brigade leader and her mum did the camp cooking - she now caters for the Guides of the 142nd unit at North Leith Parish Church when they go al fresco.

"You really can cook whatever you want when camping," she says. "There's no need to be restricted at all, as long as you plan in advance what you'll eat and take the correct equipment with you - you might not be able to get your hands on a garlic crusher if you don't take one.

"We still use open fires, which might mean we can't do pizza and chips, so instead we do pasta bolognese, chicken

curries, shepherd's pie, chicken with gravy and fresh vegetables, as well as making our own soups from scratch. It's real home-made cooking but outdoors.

"We also make pancakes in the morning, so you need to take flour, eggs and milk and syrup, but they do taste very good."

Another keen camp baker is Katie Munro, 23, who is involved with the Rainbows, Brownies and Guides at St Anne's Church in Corstorphine. "I can't remember the last time I cooked a sausage at camp," she says. "We try to be more adventurous and you can be when you use gas stoves. The girls like to make muffins and we have French toast for breakfast."

But there is some traditional camping food it's still good to wheel out according to Katie. "Nothing beats banana wrapped in foil with chocolate tucked down the middle," she says. Throw it on the bonfire embers and eat as the sun sets. Bliss.

• *Eating Outdoors* by Lindy Wildsmith, is published by Ryland Peters & Small, priced £16.99. Out now. For more inspiration, try *Campfire Cuisine* by Robin Donovan, Quirk Books, £9.99, (published in August) or *Cool Camping* by Laura James Collins, £9.99. Additional reporting by Gina Davidson

Recipe

Spiked tiger prawns with lime and chilli marinade (serves 4)

Ingredients:

12 raw tiger prawns, shell on
150g mixed salad leaves such as rocket, watercress, lambs' lettuce, radicchio or spinach
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
Extra virgin olive oil
12 wooden skewers, soaked overnight
For the marinade:
Finely grated zest and juice of one unwaxed lime
2tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 medium fresh chilli, chopped
Large pinch of ground mace
Sea salt

Method:

To make the marinade, put the lime zest and juice, olive oil, chilli, mace and salt in a small bowl and leave to stand for five to ten minutes.

Meanwhile, insert the pointed end of the skewer into the head of a prawn and push it out the tail, so that the prawn is straight. Lay it on a large piece of foil, then repeat with the remaining prawns. Rub the prawns with the marinade, wrap in foil and leave to marinate for one to two hours.

When ready to cook, open the foil parcel, lay the skewered prawns on a preheated barbecue and cook for five minutes, turning once, until the prawns turn pink. To make sure they are cooked, insert a sharp knife into a prawn. If it is still raw, cook for a little longer.

Alternatively, wrap the marinated prawns loosely in foil, put on a baking sheet and cook in a preheated oven at 220C/425F/Gas 7 for five minutes. Open the parcel and return the prawns to the oven, uncovered for five minutes.

Cover a large serving dish with the salad leaves, dress with a little salt and pepper and drizzle with olive oil. Lay the prawn skewers across the salad and serve with mango salsa.

This article: <http://living.scotsman.com/food.cfm?id=1025932006>

Last updated: 14-Jul-06 12:26 BST

Comments

Add your comment [http://members.scotsman.com/gateway.cfm?going_to=http%3A%2F%2Fliving%2Escotsman%2Ecom%2Ffood%2Ecfm%3Fid%3D1025932006%23commentForm]
To post a comment you will first need to [log in or register](http://members.scotsman.com/gateway.cfm?going_to=http%3A%2F%2Fliving%2Escotsman%2Ecom%2Ffood%2Ecfm%3Fid%3D1025932006%23commentForm) [http://members.scotsman.com/gateway.cfm?going_to=http%3A%2F%2Fliving%2Escotsman%2Ecom%2Ffood%2Ecfm%3Fid%3D1025932006%23commentForm]

Ads by Google

[Secret Restaurant Recipes](#)

Tasty and mouth watering dishes Learn to cook your favorites!
penny1jan.2cook.hop.clickbank.net

[Huge recipe database](#)

Great recipes from celebrity chefs Everyday eating to posh bites
www.agalinks.com

[Lose 20 lbs in 3 Weeks](#)

Amazing Chinese fat-loss secret. As seen on Oprah & 60 Minutes.
www.WulongForLife.com
