

The Two-Pot Meal

When your ranger asks you if you want to use the two-pot meal system, don't hesitate - say "YES!" loud and clear. Properly preparing the hot, hearty and tasty evening meal is critical to maintaining an up-beat crew.

The Process: First, measure into one covered eight-quart pot the appropriate amount of water for all elements of the supper that will be prepared in the pot and bring to a boil. Stay a bit under the directed amount of water. If the resulting meal is too dry, water can always be added. But if the meal turns out like soup, there is little that can be done to improve it. Before adding food, use this clean boiling water to re-sterilize each crew member's already very clean eating utensils. Recall from the *Cup, Spoon and Bowl Watchu Gram* that all utensils were cleaned and sterilized last evening after dinner.

Then, the supper/dinner packages containing all the elements of the evening meal (main course, side dish, soup) are emptied together and in total into the boiling water. That is, everything but desert goes into the boiling pot. Meals with mashed potatoes are a special case - an alternative is to prepare them in individual bowls exactly like oatmeal in the morning, using boiling water from the pot before adding the other ingredients, and eating them as an appetizer while the rest of the meal hydrates. Stir the ingredients thoroughly, let sit for the required length of time, and the delicious meal is ready. The crew eats the meal, totally devouring every morsel of food in their bowls and the cook pot until the bowls and cook pot are free of solid waste. Meanwhile the pot lid, which is also the frying pan, or individual cups can be used to prepare the desert if it is not something like cookies that are eaten right out of the package. You won't fry anything in the frying pan.

Clean-Up: While the meal is rehydrating and eaten, the second pot is put on the stove, about half to three-quarters full, to boil water for clean-up. When the meal, beverage, and desert are totally consumed, clean up begins. The cook pot, which was used to prepare the meal and is now free of solid waste, is filled with warm soapy water (some of the boiling water from the second pot added to unheated crew water.) This pot is used for washing all crew member utensils, cups and bowls. The second, unused clean eight-quart pot stays on the stove to provide boiling water for rinsing and sterilization - it must have enough water to completely immerse the cups and bowls. A 30-second dunk will take care of the sterilization. Be careful with your dunking. You don't want to spritz anyone with the boiling water. Nice and easy does it!

The crew utensils are also washed in the soapy water and rinsed in the boiling water. The water from the pots is then deposited in the sump, strained through the Philmont supplied "sump frisbee." Any solid waste on the frisbee is placed in the "yum-yum" bag. The pots and utensils are set out to dry by the sump. Since Philmont is always finding

better ways to protect your crew from the bears, your Ranger will give you the latest on the clean up and storage of crew utensils.

So what does all this buy the crew?

1. Fast, clean, efficient, and well prepared meals with very little solid waste to carry out in your "yum-yum" bag. Liquid waste will be deposited in the sump at your campsite.
2. Reduction of fuel consumption. The crew only requires two pots of boiling water per day. Topping off with 66 ounces of fuel at refueling opportunities will be more than enough.
3. Never a need to carry hot stoves since the stoves will cool overnight.
4. Cold stoves can be fueled in the morning, reducing hazard of fueling just before lighting. Remember, stoves are always placed on the ground when cooking or refueling. Never place the stoves on anything above the ground level.
5. Crew only needs to carry two eight-quart pots, one lid (fry pan with handle), one big cooking spoon, one pair of hot tongs, and one spatula.
6. And most important, cleanliness!

Summary: This whole process can be choreographed such that many of the above processes are going on simultaneously - see prior Watchu Grams on crew organization and operations. The whole works - meal preparation, a leisurely filling meal, and clean up - can easily be completed in 45 minutes or less.

Yes, sometimes the breakfast contains hot chocolate and/or oatmeal. Many crews save the hot chocolate for an evening treat. And you may find it advantageous to use the old "add cold water to the envelope and squeeze" approach for a quick get-away oatmeal breakfast. There may be times when the best approach is to get out of camp and on your way by rising early, striking camp, packing, policing your site, and then eating breakfast a half hour down the trail.

There may also be a few mornings when you would rather have a relaxed start; most often when you have a layover and will not be hiking that day, or are headed to an un-staffed camp for the night. The hot chocolate and hot oatmeal can be saved for such a day when your trail plan does not require a quick start and there will be time for the stoves to cool before putting them in your pack. Note that Philmont recommends that the three meals for a given day be eaten on the same day - if you set aside Breakfast 7 for a layover day, also set aside Lunch 7 and Dinner 7 for later that day.

***Note:** Your Ranger may teach a slight variation of the process described above where all the water for the meal and cleanup is heated in one pot, eating utensils are sterilized, and boiling water is added to the second pot containing the contents of the dinner packages. The remaining water in the first pot is then used after the meal for cleanup.*

Watchu Mountain Adventure: The Watchu Team will review the entire two-pot meal process during the Watchu Mountain Adventure. Bring the items specified in point #5 above and you will have the opportunity to practice the two pot system with real Philmont food.

Phil Fact: Charles Dawes, Vice President of the United States, 1924-1928, was Waite Phillips' guest at Rayado Lodge (today's Fish Camp) in July, 1928.

For friendship and fellowship at Fish Camp!

Charles Dawes

Washington, D.C.