



*Dehydrating Ground Beef – The secret to drying ground beef so that it is tender and not like gravel is to mix in ½ cup of fine bread crumbs per pound of meat before you cook it.*

# Dehydrating Ground Beef

Backpackers often call dehydrated ground beef “gravel” because it doesn’t rehydrate well. Solve this problem by adding bread crumbs to the meat before cooking it. Bread crumbs allow more liquid to penetrate the dried meat when you rehydrate it, so it turns out tender every time.

Use only lean or extra lean ground beef with fat content in the 7% to 15% range. Ground beef with 15% fat content is often labeled as Ground Round. Ground beef labeled as Chuck or Hamburger will have higher fat content. Grass fed beef is usually in the 7% to 10% range.

Some of the fat in the ground beef gets removed when you cook it. Some fat beads up on the surface of the meat while drying. Blot off the fat from the meat with paper towels after cooking and a couple of times while it dries. Starting with low fat meat and blotting off what you can during cooking and drying will minimize any risk of the meat spoiling after it is dried.

For each pound of beef, sprinkle ½ cup of finely ground bread crumbs over the meat. Work the bread crumbs into the raw meat with your fingers. Make bread crumbs by dehydrating bread slices for two to three hours and then grinding the dried bread in a food processor.

Break the meat into small pieces and cook in a frying pan over medium high heat until lightly browned and fully cooked, stirring continuously. Remove from heat and squeeze between paper towels to remove moisture.



*Above: Bell peppers drying skin side down.*

*Below: Diced onions. Dried white onions turn a little darker when dry (inset).*



# Fresh Vegetables

## Bell Peppers

Wash and cut peppers into ½” pieces, trimming away the white fleshy part on the inside. Place cut peppers on dehydrator tray in single layer with the skin side down and dehydrate at 125° for approximately six to eight hours.

**Yield:** 2 pounds of peppers (4 medium to large peppers before trimming) yields approximately 1 cup dry.

## Jalapeño Peppers

Wash peppers and cut into rings crosswise. The fleshy inside part and seeds can be removed or included for more heat. Dry in a single later at 125° for approximately six hours. Use with caution as the heat concentrates in the dried pepper. Use two to three slices per serving in meals where you want some heat.

## Onions

Peel off outer layer and dice onions into pieces about a ½ inch long. Separate any layers stuck together and spread out in a single layer on dehydrator tray and dehydrate at 145° for two hours. Reduce to 135° for six to eight more hours or until pliable. Move the onions around every couple of hours to speed up drying. Onions may stick to trays when drying. Using parchment paper may help if you have this problem with your dehydrator, but try to dry onions directly on the mesh trays. Onions smell pretty strong when drying, so you might want to open a window.

**Yield:** 1½ pounds of onions (2 large onions) yields approximately 1 to 1¼ cups dry.



*Potato Bark: Add flavor to mashed potatoes with vegetable, beef or chicken broth. Potatoes can be mashed with other vegetables like cauliflower or turnips. Other flavors like BBQ sauce can be added.*

# Potato Bark

Snack on potato bark like a chip while hiking or turn it into mashed potatoes for the evening meal. Create an unlimited number of thick and flavorful one-pot meals by combining potato bark with dried ham, chicken, or ground beef plus dried vegetables of choice. Enjoy plain with salt and pepper or blend additional flavors into it such as barbeque sauce.

## **Ingredients:**

2½ lbs Potatoes

16 oz. Fat Free Vegetable, Beef, or Chicken Broth

Salt and Pepper to taste, Garlic Powder optional

**Yield Dry:** 2½ pounds of potatoes yields approx. 2 cups bark weighing 5½ ounces.

Peel and boil 2½ pounds of potatoes until soft. Drain.

Mash potatoes with 16 ounces of fat free vegetable, beef, or chicken broth. Because fats and dairy products don't dehydrate well and can spoil, do not add any milk or butter. Add salt and pepper to taste and garlic powder, if desired.

Run the mashed potatoes through a blender until creamy.

**BBQ Variation:** Substitute 8 oz. of barbeque sauce for 8 oz. of the broth. This will give your meal a flavor like Brunswick Stew.

## **Barbeque Potato Bark**

### **Ingredients:**

2½ lbs Potatoes

8 oz. Fat Free Vegetable, Beef, or Chicken Broth

8 oz. Barbeque Sauce

Salt and Pepper to taste



Above: Making Potato Bark- Boil, Mash, Blend, Spread, and Dry.  
Below: Cheddar Mashed Potatoes



## **Dehydrate:**

Cover dehydrator trays with Paraflexx® non-stick sheets, parchment paper or the fruit leather inserts that fit your model dehydrator.

Pour a six inch puddle of potatoes and spread about an eighth inch thick with a spatula. Try to keep the thickness as equal as possible so that the potatoes dry evenly. 2½ pounds of mashed potatoes spread thinly takes up five 15 x 15 Excalibur trays.

Dehydrate at 135° until potatoes form a brittle sheet, about 8+ hours. Potatoes spread thickly or with uneven thickness will take longer to dry, but given a few more hours will turn out fine.

After about six hours of drying, peel the potato sheets off trays and flip them over so that the moister bottom side gets exposed to airflow for the last few hours of drying. If the potatoes don't peel off easily, wait a little longer before flipping them over. Dried sheets of potatoes will easily snap into pieces for packing.

## **Cheddar Mashed Potatoes**

	<b>Serving Size</b>	
	<b><u>1 Regular</u></b>	<b><u>1 Large</u></b>
Potato Bark	½ Cup	¾ Cup
Powdered Milk	1½ tsp	2 tsp
Cheddar Cheese Powder	2 tsp	1 Tbsp
Water to Rehydrate	¾ Cup	1 Cup
Approx. Calories	275	410

## **Prepare Mashed Potatoes or Cheddar Mashed Potatoes:**

Combine one part potato bark with one part water. Soak five minutes and then heat gently for ten minutes. Stir in milk and cheese powders. Add more water a tablespoon at a time to desired creaminess.





*Kickin' Veggie Mac & Cheese*

# Kickin' Veggie Mac & Cheese

<b>Ingredients:</b>	<b>Serving Size</b>	
	<b>1 Regular</b>	<b>1 Large</b>
Macaroni	½ Cup	¾ Cup
Dried Cherry Tomato slices	¼ Cup	⅓ Cup
Dried Mixed Bell Peppers, Onions, Mushrooms	¼ Cup	⅓ Cup
Cheddar Cheese Powder	1⅓ Tbsp	2 Tbsp
Powdered Milk	1 Tbsp	1½ Tbsp
Taco Seasoning	½ tsp	1 tsp
Optional - Dried Jalapeño Pepper	1 - 2 Slices	2 - 3 Slices
Salt & Pepper to taste	Pinch	Pinch +
Water to Rehydrate	1¼ Cups	1¾ Cups
Approx. Calories	354	520

## **At Home:**

Use store-bought packets of taco seasoning or make your own by combining 1 Tbsp. Chili Powder, 1½ tsp. Ground Cumin, ¼ tsp. Garlic Powder, ¼ tsp. Crushed Red Pepper, ¼ tsp. Dried Oregano, ¼ tsp. Salt. Makes 5½ teaspoons.

Combine and pack cheese, milk, and taco powders in a small plastic bag. Enclose with other ingredients in plastic bag.

**Variation:** For a higher protein vegetarian meal, replace some of the vegetables with dried black beans.

## **On the Trail:**

Combine all ingredients except cheese, milk, and taco powders with water in pot and soak five minutes. Light stove, bring to boil, and cook for two more minutes. Remove from stove, stir in cheese, milk, and taco powders. Insulate pot, wait ten minutes.



*Grahma Nanna Nilla Pudding – Shown with crumbled graham crackers. Try Annie’s Honey Bunny Graham crackers for a graham cracker without partially hydrogenated oil.*

# Grahma Nanna Nilla Pudding

<b>Ingredients:</b>	<b>Serving Size</b>	
	<b>1 Regular</b>	<b>1 Large</b>
Annie's® Honey Bunny Grahams or any Graham Cracker Pieces	½ Cup	¾ Cup
Dried Bananas	½ Cup	¾ Cup
Instant Pudding, Vanilla	2 Tbsp	3 Tbsp
Powdered Milk	2 Tbsp	3 Tbsp
Water	1 Cup	1½ Cups
Approx. Calories	409	612

## **At Home:**

Pack each ingredient into a separate small plastic bag. Use 2 x 3 bags for the milk and pudding powders and 3 x 5 or Glad snack-size bags for the grahams and bananas. Enclose all bags in a larger zip lock bag to stay organized.

## **On the Trail:**

Combine dried bananas with half of the water in pot. (½ cup water for regular serving or ¾ cup for large serving) Light stove and warm for ten minutes over low flame. No need to boil – you just want the bananas to rehydrate and warm up.

Combine powdered milk with other half of cold water in a separate pot or cup and stir until mixed. NIDO® Instant Dry Whole Milk works well. Add instant pudding mix and stir briskly until smooth. Pudding will set in about five minutes.

Spoon out warm bananas over pudding. Top with Annie's Bunny Grahams or crumbled graham crackers. Drizzle remaining banana juices on top.



*Above: A trip menu – each row is a day and columns are breakfast, lunch, supper, side, dessert and snacks.*



*Above: Individually packed meals, sides, desserts and snacks.  
Below: Vacuum sealed daily rations*



# Preparing & Packing Food

The week before a backpacking trip can be hectic, so it's good to finish drying and packing food a week in advance.

Write up a menu for each day including meals, sides, desserts, and snacks. Break the recipes down into ingredients and make a list of the total amount of dried food you will need. Refer to the estimated yields listed in the dehydrating instructions of this book to determine how much of each food to buy.

Allow a day of dehydrating for each day of your trip plus one week. For example, if your trip is seven days long, begin purchasing and drying your food fourteen days in advance. Allow extra days if you have a low-capacity dehydrator. Drying the food won't take up all your time – after a little prep work the dehydrator will do the time-consuming drying while you are free to do other things.

Dry the food in double shifts. Prep food in the morning, such as slicing bananas, and place them in the dehydrator. You are free to go about your business for the rest of the day. Most foods will be dry by early evening. Prep another load, such as diced tomatoes, and dry them overnight. A timer with automatic shut-off is useful when you are away from home or sleeping. Some dehydrators come with this feature or you can plug your dehydrator into an appliance-rated timer purchased separately.

After you dry the individual foods, store them in glass jars with tight-fitting lids. Jars protect your dried food at home from humidity, moths and mice. Recycled jars work well. If storing dried food in Ziploc bags at home, place the bags inside big pickle jars or large Tupperware-type containers with good lids.