



food for thought

'Food' is one of the most searched for terms on the DofE website. It's an area that can catch out participants and their parents the day before an expedition as they try to remember what it is they should be buying. We asked *Expedition Guide* author **Alex Davies** to give some advice...

Apart from the essential nature of fuel and energy, how food and meals are approached can set the expedition tone and bring the team together.

Cooking does not have to be a team activity but it can greatly enhance the expedition. Even if participants plan their own food it's best to ensure they cook and eat at the same time.

Ensure the team agrees their food well in advance of the expedition, having thought about how to reduce weight and bulk. They should agree who is responsible for getting and preparing the food – it may just be their personal food or they may be responsible for a day each.

Motivation

The food on an expedition can lift a team's spirits. Participants should choose food they like, or will be glad to see at the end of a day's hiking. 'Homely' foods like chilli con carne, casserole, curry, pasta and desserts like sticky toffee pudding or chocolate sponge can be a benefit, as can a hot breakfast. Sweets and snacks that can be shared are great as the team will enjoy them together.

It's a good idea to plan to have the best/favourite meal on the penultimate day of the expedition

when teams are at their most tired. A fast, easy-to-cook meal is good here so it can be the best time to use a ready-to-eat expedition meal.

Training

Dedicate training sessions to food and focus on it as a team activity.

Many participants may not realise how many calories they will need to consume during their expedition. This is a great opportunity to talk about healthy eating and living.

Link a training session to their Physical section and bring in a range of foods and drinks and pick out which are good for every day, for sports and expeditions. They will need to prepare a balanced menu for their expedition, even if they prefer 'grazing' to a lengthy lunch stop.

The best training is done by cooking meals. An early indoor session can work well to get participants thinking about the weight of food, preparation time, cooking time and so on (as well as managing their expectations of what to expect while on expedition).

Getting the message across to their parents can be really important. If you're running a local training session, have the teams cook at the end with parents arriving at the end to taste the food, or even be there for all the cooking.

Emergency rations

Every participant needs emergency rations. It does not have to be much (particularly at Bronze) but it is an essential part of participants thinking about risk management and preparing for their expedition.

A good ration pack should include a favourite high energy snack (Snickers and Mars bars work well or, in hot weather, Kendal Mint Cake), sweets (such as Haribo, wine gums fruit pastilles, raw jelly cubes etc.), energy drink powder/hot chocolate sachets and a substantial filling snack like a flapjack.

Keep it all in a waterproof bag or container. Emergency rations can be a treat at the end of an expedition, but to save money reuse the one from practice expeditions for the qualifying expedition.

For more advice about expedition food see page 115 of *The DofE Expedition Guide*, visit www.DofE.org/go/food and the Beyond the Beaten Track page www.DofE.org/go/vestey.

You can find Beyond the Beaten Track ready-to-eat specialist expedition food in Cotswold Outdoor and use your DofE Reward Card to get your DofE discount.

