

A person wearing a dark cap is looking towards a large, bright campfire at night. The fire is made of logs and is the primary light source in the scene. The person's face is partially visible in the background, looking towards the fire.

The
**Chopping
Block**

CAMPFIRE COOKING

GUIDE & RECIPE COLLECTION

How to Eat Well
in the Wilderness

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INTRODUCTION TO CAMPFIRE COOKING

Unplugging and heading into the wilderness is one of the most authentic ways to see the country. If you've never camped before whether it's due to fear of animals, insects, lack of restrooms or simply dirt, we think you should venture out on a camping trip at least once in your life. And while you will resort to different tactics in your campfire cooking than you do in your kitchen at home, you can still enjoy delicious food in the wild. In fact, campfire cooking can be downright civilized!

CAMPING VS BACKPACKING

The first distinction we need to make is the difference between camping and backpacking. When we refer to camping, we typically mean car camping where you have access to your vehicle, a fire pit and most likely also water, electricity and sometimes even restrooms and showers. A lot of the recipes and tips provided in this guide will refer to camping cooking, since we're assuming you can easily lug some cast iron around with you in the car rather than on your back.

However, we'll also address tips and tricks for backpacking cooking. While backpacking, it's essential to think about weight and quantity of your food and equipment since you'll be carrying it with you.

The rules are certainly different when backpacking, and we'll do our best to make the distinction between the two when discussing cooking techniques.

Regardless of what type of camping interests you, you'll learn a lot about cooking over an open flame in this guide. You will also receive step-by-step instructions on how to get a fire going, equipment recommendations, recipes designed for a campfire as well as shortcuts and tips along the way.

We hope it inspires you to head outdoors and get cooking!

PLANNING YOUR TRIP

No matter what type of trip you are planning, preparation is key. It could mean the difference between forgetting a valuable piece of equipment that could be life saving or simply sacrificing some of the creature comforts of home. Make a list of cooking equipment and food you will need to bring for the duration of your trip. Plan out all meals ahead of time, including snacks (because who doesn't need snacks when camping?), and portion them out when necessary. Make a list of every ingredient needed and use that as your shopping list.

Take care of any heavy chopping or marinating before you leave home and put all of the food in plastic Ziploc bags to keep it fresh. If you are bringing dry ingredients that should be mixed with water such as pancake batter or oatmeal, write on the bag how much you'll need. The less prep work you have to do onsite, the better.

Planning out your meals in advance is crucial when backpacking because you don't want to carry any excess weight. Backpackers will measure exactly how much coffee, creamer and sugar they need, even down to the teaspoon. That's not necessary when car camping, but when you are backpacking, an ounce times 20 or 30 starts measuring up to pounds and that affects your pack.

If you go camping frequently, it helps to keep all of your camping equipment and supplies (dinnerware, paper towels, dish soap, etc.) in a sturdy rubber container. This way everything is ready to go when needed.





HOW TO LIGHT A FIRE

Some of the best cooking tools an outdoor cook has at their disposal are simply items you will find at your campsite or in the woods, such as rocks, wood, leaves and sticks.

WOOD

Wood is our primary flavor source in campfire cooking so make sure you understand the rules around wood at campsites, which is usually never bring your own wood. You might be tempted to bring some wonderful fruit wood from the city or your backyard, but you need to resist that temptation as it can be harmful for the forest. Wood can carry insects and infestation to your campsite, so leave your wood at home and buy it from the nearest gas station or at the campsite itself so that you ensure you're using local wood.

Stay away from pine. It's great to start a fire but has an unpleasant flavor. Most any other hardwood will give you a pleasant flavor for cooking. It's actually the gas that burns in the wood and emits smoke that gives campfire cooking its special appeal.

You'll need multiple types of wood in order to build a successful fire:

- **Tinder** – This is small twigs, wood shavings, dry leaves or grass, dry needles, bark or even dryer lint. These materials start to burn immediately with a lighted match.
- **Kindling** – small sticks, 1 inch around or less
- **Fuel** – larger wood that keeps the fire going

Before starting a fire at your campsite, make sure that campfires are allowed in the current conditions. Park Rangers will be more knowledgeable about the area and may institute fire restrictions. The goal of restrictions is to reduce the possibility of accidental human-caused fire that could threaten visitors and the forest during times of high fire danger. To avoid a surprise, check this information before you travel and ask when you arrive at the campsite.

HOW TO LIGHT A FIRE

GETTING STARTED

Charcoal is certainly an acceptable way to start your fire or keep it going, but there are many other hacks to starting a fire. Some campers start fires using cotton balls that have been heavily coated in Vaseline. Just put them in a plastic bag and pull a little corner of the cotton ball off and use this to light your fire easily. Another fire lighting trick that uses waste is to stuff cardboard toilet paper rolls with dryer lint!



IGNITE

The next step is to put together a small pile of dry leaves (your tinder) and pull a few small pieces off of the cotton ball and place those on top of the leaves and light.



ADD TWIGS

Gradually build up the fire by adding small twigs and/or kindling next.



HOW TO LIGHT A FIRE

KEEP IT GOING

As soon as the twigs start to glow, add some of your larger wood pieces over the top.



ADD PIECES OF WOOD

Gradually start to add more larger pieces of wood to keep the fire going. Remember that fires need three elements to burn: fuel, heat and air. Once one of those is removed, the fire will go out.



ONCE THE FIRE IS READY

Once the fire is going, you can strategically place rocks to aid in cooking. Rocks can be used directly in the fire to cook on or on the perimeter of the fire for indirect cooking or even for keeping food warm. Warming a loaf of bread, making a quesadilla, warming a wheel of brie cheese, baking a cobbler or biscuits, cooking eggs, keeping your coffee warm can all be accomplished easily by placing your food on a hot rock on the perimeter of the main fire.



HOW TO LIGHT A FIRE

ROCK PLACEMENT

Placing a big rock or two in the center of your fire gives you a nice diffused heat for setting a pot on to cook rice, boil potatoes, make your coffee, heat up some soup or dehydrated camp chow.



SEE IT IN ACTION

In this fire, a tea kettle sits on a rock on the perimeter of the fire as well as a large stone on the fire for direct cooking. You could also add a grate from your grill and prop it up with rocks or bricks for maximum cooking surface. Your grill grate is the perfect place for your skillet to cook bacon, pan fry fish or steak or fry some potatoes. You can also cook many things directly on the grates, such as steaks, potatoes, hamburgers and chicken.



FIRE SAFETY

There are definitely safety precautions you need to take when building a campfire:

- Never build a fire near tents or flammable items.
- Never use flammable fluids like gasoline to start a fire.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- Only build a fire as big as you need.
- When you are done with the fire, completely extinguish it.
- Scatter the ashes and/or embers outward.
- Pour water over the fire pit. Stir with a stick. Repeat.
- Drench charred logs. Repeat until everything is cold.

Be respectful of the outdoors and return your campsite to the same state that Mother Nature intended it to be. By camping and cooking conscientiously, you can leave your site looking as if you were never there.

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

There are a few creature comforts that make campfire cooking more approachable and your results that much more consistent. When you have the luxury of bringing your items in a vehicle rather than on your back, you can pack up all of the cast iron you want! Really, there's just a few essential pieces you need to have a successful cookout.

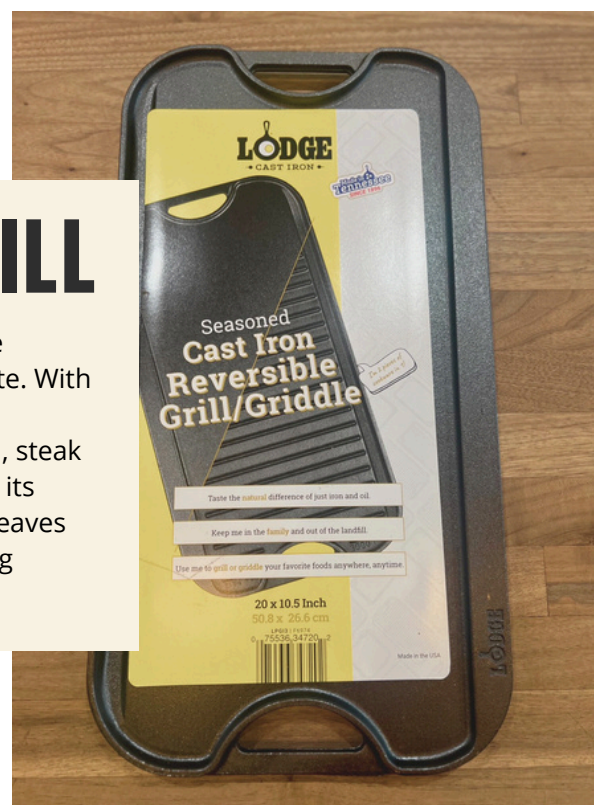


CAST IRON SKILLET

If you only bring one piece of cookware with you camping, it needs to be a cast iron skillet. We love the 12" skillet by Lodge because it conducts heat evenly, retains heat for a long time, and is versatile: you can bake, sear, sauté and fry in cast iron. Plus, it's already seasoned, sturdy, inexpensive and super easy to clean! Available at TCB.

REVERSIBLE GRILL

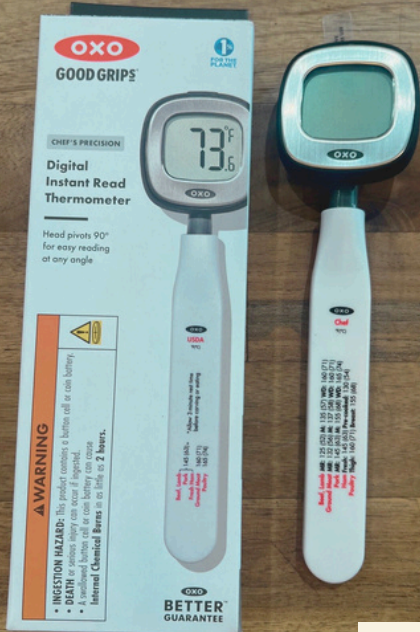
You'll get double the use out of this Lodge reversible grill and griddle at your campsite. With its large cooking surface, the grill side can accommodate skewers of shrimp, chicken, steak and vegetables, or several cuts of fish. On its reverse side, the smooth griddle surface leaves plenty of room for quick searing or making pancakes and bacon. Available at TCB.



DUTCH OVEN

The best part about cast iron is that it can be used indoors, on the grill and even directly on the red hot embers of a campfire. From boiling water to cooking a big batch of beans, the Lodge Dutch Oven is an essential piece of camping cookware. Just remember to bring a pot lifter to safely move the pot from the fire.

ESSENTIAL TOOLS



INSTANT READ THERMOMETER

A thermometer is the only completely accurate way to tell when meat is done, whether at home or in the wilderness. Oxo's instant read thermometer provides quick, accurate measurements in large, easy to read numbers for cooked meat by inserting the probe. The pivoting head allows reading temperature from any angle. Available at TCB.

SKEWERS

Meat and veggie kebabs go well on campfires, so skewer your ingredients on these Charcoal Companion Stainless Steel Flat Skewers. The wide, flat design accommodates larger cuts of meats and vegetables while helping to prevent food from spinning. The built-in looped handles make for easy turning. Available at TCB.



LONG TONGS

We love OXO 16" tongs because they are long enough to keep your hand clear of the fire's searing heat and the occasional flare-up. They're made of thick, heat-resistant stainless steel which makes them sturdy enough not to bend when lifting heavy cuts of meat. They are also easy to hold thanks to silicone grips on the handle. Available at TCB.

BACKPACKING EQUIPMENT

The equipment in this section is most suited for backpacking, though campers may want to incorporate some of these items into their camping supplies to save space.

FOOD STORAGE

A lot of campers will hang their food in trees to keep it safe from animals, but bears have figured this out. Instead, consider a food storage barrel. This is a 5-gallon Bear Vault 450 which is designed to withstand the force of a bear so it can be left right on the ground. It also holds 90% of the dry food you would take on a backpacking trip. Protecting your food source isn't as critical if you are car camping, but it could be life-changing if it disappeared to pests while backpacking.

DINNERWARE

Dinnerware should be lightweight, BPA-free and easy to wash. If you are backpacking, space is a consideration so you want to make sure your plastic forks/spoons, plates, and water bottles are small enough to transport. If you are car camping, this isn't as big of a concern but you want everything to fit nicely in a bin that's not too heavy to carry from your vehicle.

COLLAPSIBLE COOKWARE

Backpackers love collapsible pots, which when compacted is only one inch tall. Pop it up and it can hold a gallon of water.





BACKPACKING EQUIPMENT

FOOD & WATER STORAGE

If you are camping at a campsite, you likely have access to fresh water. But if you are backpacking, you'll need to bring a water filter and water container. Some packs can expand to hold several gallons of water that will be filtered from lakes and streams. You will also need an insulated food pack to keep certain foods cold. Some packs can keep food cold and even frozen for several days in the wild. The food should be kept at a temperature below 40 degrees, but it's important that you don't use any food that feels warmer than it would be in a regular refrigerator.



PORTABLE STOVES

It's always a good idea to bring a backup portable stove when camping. There could be fire restrictions, the ground or firewood could be too wet to start a fire or you could be short on time and/or energy. In all of these scenarios, a portable stove comes in handy. Stoves come in a variety of models, from fancy two-burner editions to a simple versions that fold down to the size of a matchbox car. If you are backpacking, you'll want the most compact model as possible and a few small butane tanks.



You'll need lightweight aluminum pans for cooking on these small stoves. Also, note that the flame is very intense in one spot so you really have to move the pan around as you cook to avoid burning.

CAMPING RECIPES





CAMPING RECIPES

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BREAKFAST

PAGES 17-22

Breakfast is probably the most approachable meal to take on for novice campfire cooks. If you are lucky enough to wake up to embers from the fire the night before, they will ignite your new wood easily. Wake up and get the fire going right away, so you can get water boiling for coffee. You can put that on a stone or right in the fire or even on your rack over the fire.

Bacon and eggs are probably the most common breakfast and a great use of your cast iron skillet and/or griddle. Cook your bacon on the hot side of the fire and your eggs on the indirect heat source, where the fire is low. There are lots of other easy breakfast options such as yogurt, fruit, granola, instant oatmeal or Cream of Wheat. Or, try:

Overnight Oatmeal Raisin Pancakes
Chilaquiles Rojo with Eggs
Baked Egg Skillet with Vegetables

LUNCH

PAGES 23-31

A campfire lunch can be as simple or as complex as you want to make it. Hot dogs are always a popular choice, especially if the kids can roast them over the open fire with sticks or skewers.

A jar of peanut butter is always useful on a camping trip either for snacks or meals. Instead of lugging a loaf of bread along to get squished, try using pita bread or tortillas for sandwiches and wraps. Tortillas also work for a quick quesadilla lunch. Or, try:

Smash Burgers with Cheese & Grilled Onions
Quinoa & Black Bean Burgers
Sloppy Joe's
Grilled Cumin-Spiced Sweet Potatoes

CAMPING RECIPES

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DINNER

PAGES 32-48

Dinner is where you can get creative with your campfire cooking. Burgers and brats will always be favorites since they are easy to pull off, but there is no limit to what you can grill on a campfire. Steaks, chicken, pork - they all work just as well over an open campfire as they do on the comfort of your grill.

Here's a tip for seasoning, storing and transporting your meat: combine the seasoned meat and marinade or brine in a Ziploc bag and freeze it. It will serve as extra ice for your cooler as it thaws. If you need it thawed more quickly, just remove from the cooler. This technique works great for flank steak, chicken and pork chops since the marinade/brine will help tenderize the meat.

If you need easy side dish ideas, wrap corn on the cob and whole potatoes in foil and cook in the fire's embers. Be sure to count how many food items you put in the fire because the foil becomes covered with ash and blends in well with the coals. You wouldn't want to leave a hot potato behind!

Give these recipes a try:

Steak Tacos

Grilled Avocado & Charred Jalapeno Guacamole

Charred Corn & Peppers

Fish Hobo Packs

Grilled Vegetable and Cous Cous Salad

Bulgogi Lettuce Wraps

Grilled Red Cabbage & Fennel Slaw

Garlic & Herb Grilled Chicken with Cucumber-Dill

Yogurt Sauce

Dutch Oven Cornbread



CAMPING RECIPES

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DESSERT

PAGES 49-52

The most traditional campfire dessert is S'mores. There's certainly nothing wrong with a melty marshmallow and chocolate on graham crackers! But there are other options to satisfy your sweet tooth at the campfire. Try one of these recipes:

Campfire Strawberry Cobbler

Grilled Pound Cake with Blueberry Sauce

Grilled Seasonal Fruit with Bourbon Butter Sauce

CLEAN UP

For clean up after cooking, a water source is extremely helpful. Heat a pot of water on the fire as you finish cooking that you can use to clean up with. Bring dish soap and a small tub and sponge for washing dishes.

If you need to scour any pots and pans, use a crumbled ball of foil. And as we've mentioned before, be sure to leave your campsite in the same pristine condition it was when you arrived.

BREAKFAST



OVERNIGHT OATMEAL RAISIN PANCAKES

Yield: 9 servings

2 cups quick cooking oats
2 cups low-fat buttermilk
2 eggs, beaten
2 tablespoons neutral oil
1/2 cup all purpose flour
2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/3 cup raisins
Oil or butter for skillet

1. In a Tupperware container, mix together the oats, eggs, oil and buttermilk. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
2. In a Ziploc bag, mix flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, raisins and salt.
3. Just before cooking the pancakes, mix together the wet and dry ingredients.
4. Pour batter onto a preheated cast iron skillet that has been lightly oiled or buttered and cook for approximately 2 - 3 minutes per side on the cooler side of the fire.

These overnight Oatmeal Raisin Pancakes are a great breakfast choice because they can be pre-mixed at home so all you have to do is ladle them into the buttered or oiled skillet.

CHILAQUILES ROJO WITH EGGS

Chilaquiles make a great camping breakfast because they're hearty, flavorful, and can be easily cooked in one skillet over a campfire. They use pantry-friendly ingredients like canned tomatoes, tortilla chips, and eggs, making them ideal for outdoor cooking with minimal prep.

Yield: 4 servings

Active time: 25 minutes

Start to finish: 40 minutes

2 tablespoons high-heat, neutral oil
1/2 onion, medium dice
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon ancho chili powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
One 28-ounce can crushed tomatoes
2 canned chipotle chilis, finely chopped
1 cup chicken stock, vegetable stock or water
Salt and pepper to taste
2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, rough chopped
8 ounces corn tortilla chips

3/4 cup Chihuahua cheese, grated

2 tablespoons butter
8 eggs
2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, rough chopped

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See our How to Light a Fire, page 5.

2. Set a grill grate over the medium fire and set a cast iron pan on the grill grates. Allow to get hot.

CHILAQUILES

ROJO WITH EGGS

3. Add the oil and gently sauté the onions until lightly caramelized. Add the garlic, chili powder and cumin, and cook until aromatic, about 1 minute.

4. Stir in the tomatoes, chipotle chilis and stock, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil and reduce to a simmer. Cook until the sauce is slightly thickened.

5. Check the seasoning and stir in the cilantro.

6. Gently stir in the tortilla chips to ensure they are well coated. Top with the cheese, cover with foil, move the pan to a cooler part of the grill and allow the cheese to melt.

7. While the cheese is melting, prepare the eggs. Set a pan on the hot side of the fire and add the butter. Crack the eggs into the pan and cook to your liking.

8. Spoon the Chilaquiles onto your plate, top with the eggs followed by a sprinkling of cilantro.



BAKED EGG SKILLET WITH VEGETABLES

Yield: 4 servings

Active time: 35 minutes

Start to finish: 45 minutes

3 tablespoons butter
1 red onion, thinly sliced
1 bunch chard, stems cut into medium dice and leaves cut in chiffonade
2 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 to 1 teaspoon red chili flakes
1 yellow squash, medium dice
1/2 pint cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
2 tablespoons fresh dill, rough chopped
1 cup parmesan cheese, grated
Salt and pepper to taste
8 eggs

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See our How to Light a Fire, page 5.
2. Set a grill grate over the medium fire and set a cast iron pan on the grill grates. Allow to get hot.
3. Add the butter and sauté the onion and diced chard stems until lightly caramelized, 6 to 7 minutes.
4. Mix in the garlic and chili flakes, and cook an additional 30 seconds or until aromatic.
5. Stir in the yellow squash, and sauté until softened.

BAKED EGG SKILLET WITH VEGETABLES

6. Add the tomatoes and chard leaves, and cook until the greens are wilted.

7. Mix in the dill and 1/2 cup of the parmesan cheese, and season with salt and pepper to taste.

8. Use a spoon to create eight shallow wells in the vegetable mixture to hold the eggs. Crack an egg into each of the wells, and sprinkle them with salt and pepper. Cover the pan with a lid or foil, and bake until the egg whites are set and the yolks are still a bit loose, about 10 minutes, or up to 15 minutes for well-done yolks.

9. Top with the remaining parmesan cheese, and serve.

This recipe makes an ideal camping breakfast because it's hearty, nourishing, and cooked all in one cast iron pan—perfect for a campfire setup. It features a mix of fresh veggies, herbs, and protein-packed eggs, providing energy for the day ahead, while the simple steps and minimal cleanup make it stress-free and satisfying for campers of any skill level.



LUNCH



SMASH BURGERS WITH CHEESE & GRILLED ONIONS

Smash burgers cooked on a cast iron grate or griddle over a campfire make for an irresistible camping lunch - they develop a crispy, caramelized crust from the direct heat while staying juicy inside. It's a fun, no-fuss meal that brings everyone together around the fire with big flavor and minimal cleanup.

Yield: 4 burgers

Active time: 40 minutes

Start to finish: 40 minutes

For the sauce:

1/2 cup mayonnaise
3 tablespoons ketchup
2 tablespoons yellow mustard
1 tablespoon sweet pickle relish
Hot sauce to taste
Salt and pepper to taste

For the onions:

1 onion, sliced into rounds
1 tablespoon high-heat, neutral oil
Salt and pepper to taste

For the burgers:

1 1/2 pounds ground beef
Salt and pepper to taste
2 tablespoons high-heat, neutral oil
4 slices cheddar cheese
4 burger buns, warmed

SMASH BURGERS WITH CHEESE & GRILLED ONIONS

- 1 Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See [How to Light a Fire](#), page 5.
 2. Set a grill grate over the medium fire and set a cast iron pan or griddle on the grill grates. Allow to get hot.
 3. To make the sauce, whisk together all of the ingredients and season with salt and pepper to taste. Set aside.
 4. To grill the onions, place the onion on a sheet tray and brush with oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
 5. Grill the onions right on the hot grill grates until well marked. Flip and repeat. Set aside.
 6. To prepare the burgers, form the ground beef into four meatballs and flatten into 1-inch disks. Season both sides with salt and pepper to taste.
 7. Place the ground beef patties on the hot griddle or pan, and use a spatula to smash the burgers into a 1/4-inch patty.
 8. Cook the burgers until golden brown with caramelized and crisp edges, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip, top the burger with cheese, and continue to cook until golden brown and crisp around the edges.
 9. Spread the warmed buns with the sauce, top with the burger and grilled onions. Enjoy while hot.
-



QUINOA & BLACK BEAN BURGERS

Yield: 6 burgers

Tip: Make these burgers ahead of time, freeze and bring on your camping trip in Ziploc bags. Allow to defrost in your cooler or insulated pack and cook over indirect fire in a cast iron skillet.

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil	2 cloves garlic, minced
1 onion, medium dice	1/2 cup fresh cilantro, packed
1/2 cup quinoa	3/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1 cup water	1/4 teaspoon cayenne
1 cup cooked or canned black beans, drained and rinsed	Salt and pepper to taste
1 1/2 tablespoons soy sauce	1/4 cup all-purpose flour
3/4 cup walnuts	1 cup panko breadcrumbs
	2 eggs, lightly beaten
	Oil, for brushing the griddle

1. Heat a sauté pan over medium heat and add the olive oil. Sauté the onion until lightly caramelized, 5 to 6 minutes. Stir in the quinoa and toast for 1 minute.
2. Add the water, bring to a boil, and then lower the heat to a simmer. Cook, covered, until the water is absorbed, 18 to 20 minutes. Remove from the heat and rest, covered, for 10 minutes.
3. Place the cooked quinoa in a food processor and add the black beans, soy sauce, walnuts, garlic, cilantro, cumin and cayenne. Process until finely chopped. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer to a mixing bowl and fold in the flour, panko and eggs.
4. Form rounded 1/2 cups of mixture into six (3 1/2 inch diameter) patties, and set them on a parchment-lined tray. Chill at least 10 minutes. (Patties may be individually wrapped and frozen at this point which is ideal for camping.)

QUINOA & BLACK BEAN BURGERS

5. Heat a cast iron skillet on your campfire and brush with high-heat neutral oil. Place the burgers in the skillet, and cook over indirect heat until browned and crisp on the outside and warm all the way through, about 5 minutes per side.

6. Place the burgers on a platter and serve on buns.



SLOPPY JOES

Sloppy Joes make an ideal campfire lunch—easy to prepare in one pan, hearty enough to satisfy hungry campers, and packed with nostalgic, saucy flavor. Whether served on toasted buns or eaten straight from the skillet, they're a warm, comforting classic that's perfect for fueling outdoor adventures.

Yield: 4 servings

Active time: 20 minutes

Start to finish: 50 minutes

1 tablespoon high-heat neutral oil
1 pound ground beef
1 small onion, medium dice
1 clove garlic, minced
1 cup ketchup
1 cup water
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons brown sugar
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
4 sesame seed buns
Sliced pickles

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See our [How to Light a Fire](#), page 5.

2. Set a grill grate over the medium fire and set a cast iron pan on the grill grates. Allow to get hot.

SLOPPY JOES

3. Add the oil and sauté the beef, breaking it up with a spoon, until golden brown and cooked through. If there's a lot of fat left in pan, drain all but 2 tablespoons.

4. Stir in the onions and continue to cook until softened. Mix in the garlic, and cook an additional minute.

5. Add the remaining ingredients and mix well. Bring to a boil and then simmer over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until the liquid is cooked down, about 30 minutes.

Tip: Measure all of the wet ingredients together in a sealable bag while you're still at home!

6. Serve in warm sesame seed buns with pickles.

GRILLED CUMIN-SPICED SWEET POTATOES

Yield: 4 servings as a side

Active time: 25 minutes

Start to finish: 40 minutes

3 sweet potatoes, cut into 3/4-inch rounds

2 tablespoons high-heat neutral oil

2 teaspoons lightly crushed cumin seeds

Salt and pepper to taste

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See our How to Light a Fire, page 5.

2. Set a grill grate over the hot fire, and allow it to get very hot.

3. Toss the sweet potato slices with the oil, cumin seeds, and season with salt and pepper to taste.

4. Place the sweet potatoes on the hot grill grate and cook until nicely caramelized on both sides.

5. Move the potatoes to a cooler side of the grill and continue to cook until the potatoes are knife tender, an additional 10 to 15 minutes or so.



DINNER



STEAK TACOS

Yield: 4 servings; 8 tacos

Active time: 20 minutes

Start to finish: 50 minutes

1 to 1 1/2 pounds flank steak
1 to 2 tablespoons chipotle dry rub
or any other favorite spice rub
2 tablespoons garlic oil
Salt as needed

8 corn tortillas, wrapped in foil
and heated in a warm part of the
fire pit
1 ripe avocado, thinly sliced
Your favorite salsa
1 cup queso fresco, crumbled

1. Rub the flank steak with the chipotle rub and garlic oil to coat. Allow the flank steak to marinate for at least 30 minutes or up to 2 hours. Check the label of your spice rub! If it contains salt, then you don't need to add any additional to the steak.
2. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See our How to Light a Fire, page 5.
3. Set a grill grate over the hot fire, and allow it to get very hot.
4. Grill the steak right on the grill grate over the hottest part of the fire until golden brown and caramelized, 4 to 5 minutes. Flip the steak over and continue to cook until done to your liking. An internal temperature of 125° is ideal for medium rare.
5. Allow the steak to rest for 5 minutes on a cutting board with a juice groove.
6. Cut into thin slices against the grain and serve nestled into warm tortillas (wrap in foil and heat on fire) with salsa, queso fresco, Grilled Guacamole (recipe follows) and Charred Corn and Peppers (recipe follows).



GRILLED AVOCADO & CHARRED JALAPEÑO GUACAMOLE

Yield: 4 servings; 8 tacos

Active time: 20 minutes

Start to finish: 50 minutes

2 jalapeños	Lime juice to taste
2 large or 3 small avocados, halved and pitted	2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, rough chopped
1 to 2 tablespoons high-heat, neutral oil	1 plum tomato, small dice
Salt and pepper to taste	Salt and pepper to taste
	Tortilla chips

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See How to Light a Fire, page 5.
2. Set a grill grate over the medium fire and allow to get hot.
3. To char the jalapeños, place them right on the hot grill grates, and cook on all sides until blackened in multiple spots all around. Transfer to a cutting board and allow to cool. Once cool, deseed the charred jalapeños, rough chop and set aside.
4. Brush the cut sides of the avocado with oil, and season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Place the avocados on the grill, cut side down, and cook until caramelized. Give the avocados a 90° turn, and continue to grill until you have a criss-cross grill pattern. Remove the fruit from the grill, and allow to cool.
6. Once cool, remove the meat from the avocados and place in a bowl.
7. Add the lime juice and mash with a potato masher or fork until smooth.
8. Fold in the charred jalapeños, cilantro and tomatoes, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve with tortilla chips and/or on tacos.

CHARRED CORN & PEPPERS

Yield: 4 servings as a side

Active time: 30 minutes

Start to finish: 30 minutes

2 ears corn, shucked
1 to 2 tablespoons high-heat
neutral oil
1 red bell pepper, seeded and cut
into 2-inch pieces
1 jalapeño, seeded and halved
lengthwise
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin

2 cloves garlic, minced
2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, rough
chopped
1 lime, zested
Lime juice to taste
Extra virgin olive oil to taste
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See our How to Light a Fire, page 5.
2. Set a grill grate over the hot fire, and allow it to get very hot.
3. Brush the ears of corn with just enough oil to coat. Season with salt and pepper.
4. In a medium-size bowl, toss together the red peppers and jalapeño with just enough oil to lightly coat. Stir in the cumin, and season with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Grill the vegetables right on the grill grate over the hottest part of the fire until charred and tender. Remove from the heat and allow to cool.
6. Cut the kernels off the ears of corn, and place in a bowl. Thinly slice the grilled jalapeño, and add to the corn along with the red pepper.
7. Stir in the garlic, cilantro and lime zest. Season with lime juice, olive oil, salt and pepper to taste.
8. Serve warm or room temperature.





FISH HOBO PACKS

Foil packets, or "hobo packs," are a versatile and no-fuss way to cook full meals over a campfire -think of them as the rustic cousin to the French "en papillote" method. You can mix and match ingredients like aromatic veggies (onions, garlic, carrots), a starch (potatoes or sweet potatoes), a protein (fish or chicken), herbs, and a bit of oil or butter. Wrap everything tightly in foil, place it on the grill grate, and let the fire do the work. Just be sure your ingredients are chopped to similar sizes for even cooking.

For a more natural twist, you can swap foil for leaves to create steam-cooking packets that add earthy flavor to your food. Banana leaves, corn husks, grape leaves, and even foraged options like sorrel or walnut leaves work well - just bundle with wet twine and cook above or beside the fire.

Whether you go the foil or leaf route, the best part is there's no pan to scrub - just delicious, mess-free campfire cooking.

Yield: 4 servings

Active time: 25 minutes

Start to finish: 40 minutes

For the citrus butter:

- 1 stick butter, room temperature
- 1 tablespoon lemon zest
- 1 tablespoon orange zest
- 1 tablespoon fresh parsley, rough chopped
- 1 teaspoon fresh dill, rough chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

For the fish packs:

- 1/2 bulb fennel, very thinly sliced
- 1 zucchini, sliced into thin rounds
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced
- 2 tablespoons capers
- Four 5- to 6-ounce flaky fish fillets such as bass, halibut or salmon
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 sheets of foil

FISH HOBO PACKS

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See our How to Light a Fire, page 5.
2. Set a grill grate over the hot fire, and allow it to get very hot.
3. Combine the stick of butter, zests and herbs in a small bowl and mix together with a spoon or spatula. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Lay the 4 sheets of foil on your picnic table. Evenly distribute the fennel between the foil followed by the zucchini and then the shallots. Sprinkle the vegetables with salt and pepper to taste.
5. Season the fish with salt and pepper and pepper, and place on top of the vegetables.
6. Place a dollop of the butter on top of the fish followed by a sprinkling of capers.
7. Fold the foil around the fish and vegetables to ensure none of the ingredients can escape.
8. Place the foil packs, vegetable side down, in the fire pit right on the edge of the hot embers. Cook until the fish is cooked through and the vegetables are lightly caramelized.



GRILLED VEGETABLE & COUS COUS SALAD

Yield: 4-6 servings as a side

Active time: 35 minutes

Start to finish: 35 minutes

1 red bell pepper	1 cup couscous
1 medium-size zucchini, quartered lengthwise	1/2 cup artichoke hearts, quartered
1/2 red onion, cut into 1/2-inch rounds	2 tablespoons fresh parsley, rough chopped
1 bulb fennel, cut into 1/2-inch-thick slices	1 tablespoon fresh mint, chiffonade
2 to 3 tablespoons high-heat neutral oil	1 lemon, zested
Salt and pepper to taste	Fresh lemon juice, to taste
1 cup water	Extra virgin olive oil, to taste

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See our How to Light a Fire, page 5.

2. Set a grill grate over the hot fire, and allow it to get very hot.

3. Place the pepper on the hot grate and cook, turning occasionally, until the skin is completely blackened on all sides. Place the pepper in a bowl, cover with plastic wrap and allow to steam for 15 minutes or more.

4. While the pepper is roasting prepare the other vegetables. Brush the zucchini, onion and fennel pieces with the oil, and season with salt and pepper. Grill the vegetables on the hot grate until the first side is caramelized. Flip and repeat. Set aside to cool.

Tip: Use a grilling basket for the onions if the grill grates are spaced far apart. This will prevent the onions from falling through the grates and into the fire.

6. To cook the couscous, bring the water to a boil. Combine the couscous and a pinch of salt in a large bowl. Pour the boiling water over the couscous. Cover with a plate or plastic wrap, and allow to steam for about 5 minutes or until all of the water has been absorbed. Uncover and fluff with a fork.

7. Remove the skin and seeds from the roasted pepper, resisting the urge to rinse it. Cut the pepper, zucchini, fennel and onion into medium dice. Add the vegetables to the bowl with the couscous, along with the artichoke hearts, herbs and lemon zest, and toss to combine.

8. Dress the salad with lemon juice and olive oil, salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or room temperature.



BULGOGI LETTUCE WRAPS

This recipe works well for camping because it's mostly prepared in advance, requires minimal equipment, and uses the open flame to enhance the flavor of the marinated beef. The fresh lettuce wraps and tangy cucumbers keep the meal light, refreshing, and easy to assemble outdoors.

Yield: 4 servings

Active time: 45 minutes

Start to finish: 1 hour, 45 minutes

For the marinade and dipping sauce:

1 tablespoon ginger, freshly grated
4 cloves garlic, minced
4 scallions, thinly sliced on the bias
3 tablespoons brown sugar, firmly packed
1 teaspoon black pepper, freshly ground
1/2 to 1 teaspoon sambal
1/2 cup soy sauce
3 tablespoons mirin
2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil
1 1/2 pounds rib eye steak, cut into 1/4-inch slices

For the cucumbers:

1 seedless cucumber, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced
1 teaspoon salt
1 1/2 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1/4 cup rice wine vinegar
1 teaspoon sesame oil
2 teaspoons sesame seeds, toasted
Sambal to taste

12 Boston or red leaf lettuce leaves
2 tablespoons peanuts, toasted and rough chopped

1. In a medium-size bowl, whisk together the ingredients for the marinade/dipping sauce. Add additional sambal, if desired.
2. Pour enough of the marinade to fill a ramekin, and set aside. This will be used as the dipping sauce.
3. Place the beef in a gallon size resealable bag with the remaining marinade. Toss to coat the meat, and marinate, refrigerated, for up to 1 hour.

BULGOGI LETTUCE WRAPS WITH SWEET & SOUR CUCUMBERS

4. While the beef is marinating, prepare the cucumbers. Mix together the sliced cucumber with the salt, sugar, soy sauce, vinegar, sesame oil, sesame seeds and sambal. Mix well and allow to marinate for about 20 minutes before serving.

5. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See *How to Light a Fire*, page 5.

6. Set a grill grate over the medium fire and allow to get hot.

7. Remove the beef from the marinade and grill each piece until the first side is golden brown and caramelized, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip and repeat. Set aside on a platter.

8. To assemble the lettuce wraps, place 2 to 3 slices of grilled beef in each piece of lettuce followed by a spoonful of the cucumbers. Garnish with a sprinkling of peanuts and serve with the remaining dipping sauce.



GRILLED RED CABBAGE & FENNEL SLAW

Yield: 4-6 servings as a side

Active time: 30 minutes

Start to finish: 30 minutes

2 tablespoons high-heat, neutral oil
1/4 head red cabbage, core in tact
1 head fennel, cut into quarters, core in tact
1 carrot, peeled and grated
2 scallions, thinly sliced on the bias
1/3 to 1/2 cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
Pinch granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon celery seeds
Hot sauce to taste
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See *How to Light a Fire*, page 5.
2. Set a grill grate over the medium fire and allow to get hot.
3. Brush the cut sides of the cabbage and fennel with oil, and season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Cook on the hot grill until slightly charred, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Note: You still want the cabbage and fennel to have a slight crunch. Remove from the grill, and once cool enough to handle, cut out the cores and slice into thin strips.
5. Place into a bowl and stir in the remaining ingredients. Allow to sit for 20 to 30 minutes to combine the flavors before serving.



GARLIC & HERB GRILLED CHICKEN

This dish is perfect for campers looking for a no-fuss, classic crowd-pleaser that's packed with fresh, herbaceous flavor and minimal prep. These chicken breasts go straight from the grill to plate, making them ideal for campers who want a straightforward, wholesome meal with rustic charm and very little cleanup.

Yield: 4 servings

Active time: 25 minutes

Start to finish: 55 minutes

2 cloves garlic, minced
1 lemon, zested
1 teaspoon fresh oregano, rough
chopped
1 teaspoon fresh rosemary, minced
1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
4 chicken breasts, boneless and skinless
Salt and pepper to taste

1. To make the marinade, measure together the garlic, lemon zest, oregano, rosemary, cayenne pepper and olive oil in a gallon size resealable bag.
2. Place the chicken in the bag, making sure the marinade evenly coats the chicken. Allow to marinate for at least 30 minutes, but overnight is best.
3. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See [How to Light a Fire](#), page 5.
4. Set a grill grate over the medium fire and allow to get hot.
5. Remove the chicken breasts from the marinade, and place on a plastic wrap or foil-covered sheet tray. Season with the salt and pepper to taste.

GARLIC & HERB GRILLED CHICKEN

6. Grill the chicken over direct heat, presentation side down, until well marked, 3 to 4 minutes. Flip and repeat. Continue cooking the breasts until the internal temperature reads 155° on a meat thermometer.

Tip: If the chicken breasts are thick, move them to a slightly cooler part of the grill, so they can cook all the way through without getting too dark.

4. Remove the plastic wrap or foil from the sheet tray, and place the grilled chicken breasts on the clean tray. Allow the chicken to rest for 5 to 10 minutes.

5. Serve the grilled chicken with Cucumber-Yogurt Sauce (recipe follows).

CUCUMBER-DILL YOGURT SAUCE

Yield: 1 1/2 cups

Active time: 10 minutes

Start to finish: 40 minutes

1 cup plain or Greek-style yogurt
1/4 seedless cucumber, thinly sliced or coarsely grated
1/2 shallot, minced
1 tablespoon fresh dill, rough chopped
Lemon juice to taste
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Mix together all of the ingredients for the sauce.

2. Chill for 30 minutes to blend flavors.



DUTCH OVEN CORNBREAD

Using a Dutch oven will allow you to expand your outdoor cooking past simple grilling. These heavy cast iron pots give you the flexibility to make many dishes you probably wouldn't think would work for outdoor cooking such as soups, stews and braised dishes.

Most Dutch ovens come with a tight fitting lid. Some have a wire handle that allows you to lift the whole pot or hang it from a tripod over your fire. Some made specifically for campfire cooking have feet that allow you to sit it directly over charcoal or burning embers on the ground. You can even shovel additional hot coals from the fire onto the top of the lid to create an oven-like atmosphere.

Be sure to bring a pot lifter or have access to a sturdy stick to remove the pot from the fire. You'll also want to make sure you have a heavy duty quality Dutch oven that can handle the heat!

Yield: 8 servings

Active time: 15 minutes

Start to finish: 45 minutes

1 cup cornmeal
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon fine sea salt
1 1/2 tablespoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
2 scallions, thinly sliced on the bias
1/2 cup cheddar cheese, grated
2 eggs
1/3 cup neutral oil
1 1/2 cups buttermilk

Tips: Measure all of the dry ingredients and place them in a sealable bag while you're still at home! Whisk together all of the wet ingredients and place in a sealable bag while you're still at home. Just be sure to keep in a cooler with ice.

It's always beneficial to set up a two-zone fire. This means that one side of the fire is hotter while the other is medium. This will allow you to bake your cornbread on the medium side while you grill protein on the hotter side. This setup comes in very handy for many cooking applications!

DUTCH OVEN CORNBREAD

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See our How to Light a Fire, page 5.
2. Set a grill grate over the medium fire.
3. Butter or oil a cast iron Dutch oven with a lid. Set the pan on the grill grate so the pan can get hot before you pour in the batter.
4. Combine the cornmeal, flour, sugar, salt, baking powder and baking soda thoroughly in a large mixing bowl. Toss in the scallion and cheese.
5. In a separate mixing bowl, beat together the eggs, oil, and buttermilk.
6. Add the wet ingredients to the dry, and mix until just combined. Pour the batter into the hot pan and cover with the lid.
7. Bake until firm and golden brown around the edges, 20 to 25 minutes. Slice into wedges or squares to serve.



DESSERT



STRAWBERRY COBBLER

Forget your usual campfire treat - this Campfire Strawberry Cobbler is a rustic, crowd-pleasing dessert that's as comforting as it is unexpected. With bubbling, cinnamon-kissed strawberries and golden biscuit topping baked right in the coals, it's a sweet, satisfying upgrade from traditional s'mores.

Yield: 10 servings

Active time: 20 minutes

Start to finish: 90 minutes to 2 hours

For the biscuit topping:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon baking powder
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 1/4 cups heavy cream

For the filling:

6 cups strawberries, hulled and halved
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup all-purpose flour or cornstarch
1/2 to 3/4 cups granulated sugar
Pinch salt

1/4 cup melted butter or oil

1. Set a stone or brick directly near campfire. Once the fire has some good red coals and a manageable flame, it's time to put together your cobbler. Keep the fire tended adding wood regularly to keep it hot.
2. For the topping, combine all of the dry ingredients. You can do this at home and take all the ingredients in a Ziploc baggie to your campsite. Pour the cream directly into your Ziploc baggie if you don't have a bowl and just mix it by squeezing the bag on the outside until it's combined. If you have a bowl and spoon, use that to mix as it is much easier.
3. Combine all filling ingredients and place in a generously buttered or oiled Dutch oven.
4. If you have used a Ziploc bag, cut the tip off and squeeze about 1/4 cup dollops over the top of the fruit leaving a 1/4-inch space between each biscuit. If you are using a spoon, just dollop the mix with that. Brush the dough tops generously with melted butter or oil.
5. Place the dish on the stones or bricks next to the heat source. Put the lid on the Dutch oven bake until filling is bubbling throughout and top is golden, about 90 minutes to 2 hours. Rotate the dish once or twice during baking to ensure even cooking. Serve warm or room temperature.

GRILLED POUND CAKE WITH BLUEBERRY SAUCE

Yield: 4 servings
Active time: 20 minutes
Start to finish: 20 minutes

For the blueberry sauce:

1 tablespoon butter
1 pint (12 ounces) blueberries
1/3 cup granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon cornstarch
1/2 lemon, juiced

4 slices pound cake

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See *How to Light a Fire*, page 5.

2. To make the blueberry sauce, measure together the butter, blueberries, sugar, cornstarch and lemon juice in a saucepan.

3. Set the pan on the grill grates, and bring to a low boil. Gently stir until the berries soften and release their natural juices, about 5 minutes. The consistency should remain a bit coarse. Remove from the heat, and allow to cool for at least 10 minutes before using.

4. While the sauce cools, grill the pound cake. Place the pound cake slices directly on the grill grates, and grill until golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes. Flip and repeat.

5. Transfer the grilled slices of pound cake to plates and serve with the blueberry sauce.



GRILLED SEASONAL FRUIT WITH BOURBON BUTTER SAUCE

Yield: 4 servings
Active time: 20 minutes
Start to finish: 20 minutes

1 pound season fruit, prepped as needed
1 tablespoon high-heat, neutral oil
2 teaspoons granulated sugar
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/2 stick unsalted butter
1/4 cup bourbon
1/2 cup brown sugar
Lemon juice to taste

1/2 cup toasted nuts of your choice, rough chopped

1. Build a fire at your campground and allow the fire to cook down until it is of a medium heat. See How to Light a Fire, page 5.
2. Set a grill grate over the medium fire and allow to get hot.
3. Place the fruit in a bowl, and toss with the oil, sugar and cinnamon.
4. Grill directly on the grates until caramelized, 2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer to bowls.
5. To prepare the sauce, melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat until foamy. Whisk in the bourbon and brown sugar, and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Simmer until the sauce is thick and glazy. Finish with a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.
6. Drizzle the fruit with the bourbon-butter sauce, and top with a sprinkling of the nuts.



GET CAMPING

Now that you have the basics of campfire cooking down, there's no better way to practice than by getting out there in the wild and giving it all a try. Having solid grilling skills will definitely help the next time you are cooking over an open flame, so check out our grilling classes at Lincoln Square.

[Sign Up for a Grilling Class](#)

This camping guide is just the beginning - take these recipes, tips, and techniques with you on your next outdoor adventure, and turn any campsite into your own open-air kitchen.

ABOUT THE CHOPPING BLOCK

At The Chopping Block, our mission is to empower home cooks of all skill levels to feel confident, capable, and inspired in the kitchen. Whether you're just starting out or looking to refine your technique, our chef instructors break down the fundamentals into approachable, hands-on lessons that are as fun as they are educational. From mastering knife skills to creating balanced, delicious meals your family will love, we're here to make cooking feel less like a chore and more like a joy. Join us, and discover how cooking at home can be simple, satisfying, and truly rewarding.

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