

How to make: Foil Dinners

Prepping Your Dinner

- **Use heavy duty foil.** Stronger foil prevents rips and leaks. It also protects your meals from getting ashes in them. If you only have regular foil, double or triple wrap your meal.
- **Seal foil packets with foil folds.** I know our first inclination is to crunch the sides of the packet closed, but doing this sometimes causes the juices to come out. Always fold the excess foil to make sure everything stays put.
- **Make sure your foil is large enough for your meal.** Most individual dinners need a piece of heavy-duty foil about 12 x 18 inches.
- **Get cooking spray.** Always spray the foil to prevent sticking.
- **Put meat on the bottom of the packet.** Meats take the longest to cook. If you're using pre-cooked meat, like many freeze-dried meat, it doesn't need to be at the bottom of the packet.
- **Use thin meat.** Pound or slice meats to make them thinner for easier cooking. Bite-sized pieces work best because they're easier to eat straight out of the packet (no knife required!).
- **Cut hard vegetables into thin slices.** Cut potatoes and carrots into thin slices; they'll take as long as the meat to cook. Other vegetables can be cut into chunks. If you're using reconstituted freeze-dried or dehydrated potato or carrot dices, you don't have to worry—they're already small and will cook quickly.
- **To season or not to season, that is the question.** Some people say to use more seasoning than usual in a foil dinner, especially if you're cooking on a campfire. But remember, freeze-dried meats can have high sodium content. Keep this in mind as you add seasonings to your packet.

Cooking Packets on a Grill or Campfire

- **Cook on the fire's coals.** Don't cook on the fire itself. Always cook packets on a two-inch-thick bed of coals.
- **Always cook on mature coals.** When camping, cook on or near the white coals rather than red ones. You can also bury your dinner in the hot ashes at the edge of the fire, or cover the packet with coals if it has a lot of food in it.
- **Start with your packet meat-side down.** Turn it at least twice during the cooking process—using tongs, of course! Test the meat and potatoes. Re-wrap and cook longer, if needed. If you're using freeze-dried meat, it's already cooked, so you only need to "cook" it long enough to heat it up and blend the flavors.
- **Cooking Rice and Pastas.** Rice and pasta should be pre-cooked before adding to foil dinners, with the exception of some dinners that include instant rice with sufficient soup, sauce, or gravy to cook in.
- **Always add moisture to the packet.** You can also add a couple tablespoons of sauce—Worcestershire, Soy, barbecue, salsa, etc.—melted butter, milk,

salad dressing, or water. If cooking meat, always include high-moisture veggies like tomatoes or onions to make sure it doesn't dry out.

- **Cooking Potatoes.** Toss them in a little oil to reduce sticking. Season well.
- **Adding Cheese.** After cooking, add cheese when you open the package. If you add it during cooking, it will stick to the foil and burn.
- **Add Cabbage to prevent burning.** If you're worried about your food burning, you can put a leaf of cabbage on the bottom of your meal and another leaf to cover the top of your meal in the foil. If your dinner gets overcooked, the cabbage will burn, but your meal won't.
- **Open your packet carefully.** When you finish cooking or if you're adding cheese, open your packet slowly and carefully to avoid steam burns.