

# **Feasting in the Wild Country**

By

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Half Dome as seen from the John Muir Trail in Yosemite, California.

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# I

## INTRODUCTION



I am a backpacker and therefore, of necessity, put into the situation of providing my own food when hiking the trails. Like all those who take to the back country, I have been trying my whole backpacking career to find food that would be fast and easy to prepare under adverse weather conditions; but that is also good tasting, nutritious and inexpensive. Did I mention light weight? Over the years, I have amassed a small library of cookbooks geared toward backcountry cooking. I thought, like all of us, that those books held the secret of the "Holy Grail" of cooking for long outings. I was wrong. I discovered this as my nephew, Chris, and I were preparing for our Colorado Trail hike. He and I had hiked the John Muir Trail together 2 years before and, although it only took us 20 days, Chris lost too much weight. Our Colorado Trail hike would last about 30 days and I did not want to risk Chris' health and comfort. So I was really motivated to find a system and a cuisine that would give us what we needed. I have discovered in my trail wanderings, it's not enough to just to have a few recipes. You need a kind of system, a context, which will work and yet fulfill all the requirements of good nutrition, variety, quick cooking and light weight.

I believe I have found the secret of making cooking during your back country adventures easy, but more importantly, delicious. The idea is simple. When you go on your outing, take the food that you would eat at home. That is it in a nutshell, and what I decided to do when Chris and I were preparing for our Colorado Trail hike. I consulted real cookbooks, the kind you would use to make meals at home. I wanted real food like beef stew, chicken pot pie, chili, even pasta. I wanted a variety of flavors and textures. In other words, it was not enough for us to just survive on the food, but to close the gap between "town" food and "trail" food. There are many commercially prepared products that try to give you a taste of home, but you can do so much better because you can control the ingredients and customize them to you taste. Yet, you will still have the convenience of quick preparation time on your trip. It does require some time and a little work, but the rewards of having good food are worth it.

I have written this book (at Chris' suggestion) not just to contribute to the already very many cookbooks for backpackers that exist. My hope is that you will be able to write your own cookbook in order to take the foods you like and enjoy with you on all

your outings. If you plan a 6 month hike, or an overnight; if you enjoy horse packing, sailing, boating, canoeing or rafting; any outing where you do not have the luxury of a refrigerator handy, you can take meals that will delight your taste buds. I have used my recipes and techniques on my extended backpacking trips, and so have had those trips in mind while writing this. In fact, I have never found a cook book geared toward those participating in extended hikes or long term outings. So, after 20 years and several thousand miles of trails in which I have honed my cooking skills, I hope to help the long distance hiker create nourishing daily fare. Any person who enjoys the outdoors, I believe, can benefit from all that follows.