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Get Off Road with Phil  
**Jaffles &  
Spam**  
*thoughts for food on a big trip to nowhere*  
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**L**ast issue I began the discussion of how to prepare for the 'big' winter trip. That article dealt with the vehicle and trailer aspect, but one of the most important considerations for a big trip is what to pack and how to ensure you have enough nutritious and varied food.

Depending where you intend to travel, there may be limited opportunities to buy food along the way, so you may need to pack most of your food needs before leaving home.

You may have success buying the basics, such as frozen milk and bread at a remote roadhouse or small community, however it's risky to assume availability and on many occasions I've found limited stocks or they'd run out altogether.

Before charging out and buying food for your trip prepare a menu and use it to create a shopping list. I try and keep my menus simple and I've developed a seven-day plan that I repeat for each week of the trip. This ensures a variety of food and at the same time makes shopping and organising very easy.

Food needn't be just cans of baked beans, cracker biscuits and cuppa soups, but few

people have the luxury of travelling with a fridge and freezer; most have just a fridge. So how do you pack enough food for an extended trip? Nowadays supermarkets carry a large variety of foods that are long-life or have been cryovacked or pre-prepared and sealed in sterilised containers. There are also dried foods, such as peas, corn, beans and onions that take up little space and can quickly be converted into a nutritious meal.

Many foods, like cheese and bacon, and cold meats, such as ham and salami, smoked fish and paté are already cryovacked and available at the supermarket. If you want to use fresh meat, find a butcher in your area that cryovacks meat. Alternatively, you can buy your own cryovacking machine and do it yourself. Don't cryovac meat with bones, such as chops and roasts, because the bones can perforate the plastic and spoil undetected in your fridge.

Your cryovac machine will quickly pay for itself if you cut up large blocks of cheese or buy cold meat at the supermarket deli counter and cryovac it in manageable-sized packs. Savings of more than fifty percent can be achieved from

buying in bulk and, best of all, you have the food packed in quantities and sizes that suit you.

Cryovacked cheese and cold meat will keep for months and fresh meat, if kept in your fridge, just above freezing will last up to four weeks. Cryovacking also lets you marinate the food in advance and marinated steak that has been cryovacked for weeks tastes fantastic; it just melts in your mouth.

Long-life items available include milk, cream, custard, orange/fruit juice, and soup as well as prepared food including lasagne, pasta, shepherd's pie and rice dishes.

Potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, pumpkin, apples and oranges travel well. Individually wrap potatoes and apples in newspaper to reduce the risk of spoilage or bruising.

Our breakfast is usually cereal with long-life milk and remember to carry some powdered milk as a backup. Having cereal reduces the need for bread and therefore reduces the pressure on the capacity of the fridge.

I really enjoy a jaffle (toasted sandwich using a jaffle iron); it's a great way to use up leftover vegetables, pasta, stews and curries and, if I'm



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**Clockwise from left:**  
The joys of a campfire. ❖ Nature just keeps on surprising. ❖ Jaffles for breakfast – just delicious. ❖ Camp oven cooked bread – it's easier than you think. ❖ Campfire cooking.





feeling adventurous, bacon, eggs and the like can be cooked using a jaffle iron.

Just a word of warning when packing long-life milk and custard; place each carton in a plastic bag and seal it. Sometimes the containers leak and by the time you discover the leak the smell is unbearable; at least in a plastic bag the damage is contained.

Crackers, flat bread with cryovacked deli-style meat, cheese, gherkins and spreads goes down a treat for lunch. If fridge space is at a premium, consider canned tuna, sardines, sausages, hams and good old SPAM. Remember, it's only for the duration of the trip; a few weeks of canned food won't kill you. [Editor's note: canned food contains a lot more salt than you may normally have in your diet so remember to drink extra fluids]. Dried fruit, nuts and the like weigh little and are great for snacks between meals.

After such basic breakfasts and lunches why not give yourself a treat for the evening meal. Barbequed steak, sausages, chicken, ham steaks, pork or lamb chops and marinated ribs are stand outs. When buying steak, do buy the best quality and not the boot sole variety. I recall one lady saying to me, 'You're cooking fillet steak. I bought frying steak because we're only camping!' I was lost for words. Other suggestions for evening meals include stews, curries and roasts. I reckon a roast cooked in a camp oven can't be beaten.

For sweets there are numerous canned fruits with long-life custard and cream available. For something different, buy a supermarket block fruit cake and serve it as a pudding with custard; quick and easy.

Bread is something many of us struggle to go without. By wrapping each loaf in newspaper and keeping it cool and dark I have had loaves last more than a week. Don't use small shopping centre bakery bread; use big bakery bread, because this bread has more preservatives in it. When the bread runs out use wraps or crackers; there are a huge variety of both available nowadays.

If you're really keen why not bake your own. There are a large variety of bread mixes that can be bought off the shelf. Cake, scone mixes, puddings and dampers are also favourites; all can be cooked in a camp oven.

Cans of drink should be individually wrapped in a piece of newspaper, which prevents the cans rotating and leaking when driving on corrugations. It doesn't take long to empty a carton of cans, wrap each in newspaper and replace it in the carton. To prevent breakage also wrap jars of food in newspaper or place them in stubby holders.

If taking wine consider taking cask wine, there are good brands out there. Decant the wine into rinsed cool drink bottles; I have been doing this for years and the wine keeps well. You won't have leaks and you will have a better handle on how your consumption is going so you don't run out. This method also removes the risk of glass bottles breaking and having to cart empties around.

Hopefully I've given you some food for thought (no pun intended) as you plan for your big winter trip.

**See you in the bush.**



**Top to bottom:**

The variety of pre-packed cryovacked foods is enormous. ❖ Bianchi's cryovac machine at work. ❖ A tranquil pool in remote country. ❖ Magnificent desert scenery.

