


Meals ready to eat: the MRE



Tips
from the Posse

By Mark Rackay

Food, on the importance scale of survival, does not rank very high.

You can go for weeks without food, but only days without water. If the weather is cold, stormy, windy or snowy, shelter ranks high on the list. You don't find very many people who died of starvation when lost in the woods. Usually, an injury or exposure will cancel the life memberships of a lost person, but I can't recall seeing anyone pass from starvation.

My wife would probably disagree with my statement about food, as I am hungry all the time. I would eat like a high school kid if she would let me. If not for her, my wardrobe would consist of a bunch of stretchy polyester pants.

I have somewhat reconsidered my position on food and what to carry in a pack, after my recent moose hunting trip in Canada. We left camp in the wee hours, after a light breakfast. Each day, we stayed in the field until dark, which was some 14 hours later. That is a long time for this kid to go without food, but I was assured that the guide had packed us a lunch.

Roll around lunchtime and he produces a couple cans of sardines and herring. Sorry



There is a lot of food in a single MRE. Having one along can make an unexpected overnight stay a little easier. (Mark Rackay/ Special to the Montrose Daily Press)

folks, but I don't eat anything that smells that bad. That stuff is like rotted cat food and I chose to survive without it. I would sooner eat handfuls of tree moss. I was able to rummage out a case of some granola-type bars, and a dozen of them were my lunch for the next nine days.

Most of us carry a handful of snacks in our packs. Space and weight is usually a consideration so a few light items generally suffice. However, if room is not an issue, you may consider an MRE (Meal Ready to Eat). I carry a couple in my truck and in my ATV. If room and space allow, one will be in my pack.

The MRE was developed for the Department of Defense in 1975 and became standard

issue to troops in 1986 with 12 different entrees. The MRE has gone through many changes and advancements since then. Today there are 24 entrees and more than 150 additional items for service members in different parts of the world.

An MRE is a self-contained meal, in a waterproof and airtight packaging that weighs less than 2 pounds. Each MRE comes with a flameless ration heater, to heat up the entrée. This makes it an ideal survival tool, especially in wet weather.

There is some argument as to how long an MRE will last. Theoretically, they should last forever. Time will erode the flavor, but as long as the packaging for the entrée is not opened or swollen, it is safe to eat. The way to prolong the

lifespan of an MRE is to store them in a cool place.

When not in your pack, try and store them at 50 or 60 degrees. The shelf life is five years at 50 degrees. I would not store them in the trunk of my car, outside in August or they may taste worse than a can of sardines. As a rule of thumb, I change mine out every couple years.

A sample of what comes in an MRE includes:

- An entrée such as beef stew or spaghetti
- A side dish, like rice, corn or mashed potatoes
- Cracker or bread
- Spread such as peanut butter
- Desserts like some cookies

or pound cake

- Candy
- Drink mixes such as Gatorade, cocoa, coffee or tea
- Hot sauce, salt and pepper
- Flameless ration heater
- Spoon, matches, creamer, toilet paper etc.

Each MRE provides an average of 1250 calories. They have enough food for a person stuck in the woods to eat for the day. They can be purchased for eight or nine bucks apiece from scores of places online. The best deal is to buy a case of them and have one or two to grab when you need them.

If space allows, an MRE in your pack is great for one of those "inconvenient overnight stays." If you were stranded because your ATV or vehicle broke down, and help could not get to you until morning, an MRE can be a real comfort food blessing to have with you.

Having a full belly can make a stranded night, a minor inconvenience rather than a rough time. A full belly gives you a better mental outlook and will help you think more clearly. And if Murphy, of Murphy's Law fame, is going to take part in the proceedings, having one in your pack is a really good idea. In fact, pack a couple of them just in case Murph wants to stay for dinner.

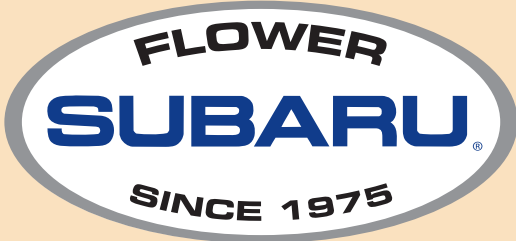
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The Great Outdoors Expo is a two-day celebration that includes exciting exhibits and fun activities for outdoor enthusiasts of all ages. The expo exhibitors will feature hunting and fishing gear, wildlife art, gifts, bikes, golf equipment, books, outdoor apparel, camping equipment, Kayaks, boats, recreational vehicles, game calls and more. This event is being heavily marketed to outdoor enthusiasts locally and throughout the Four Corners. Be sure to register early!

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