

THE TOC NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2011

Hello fellow TOCers!

Welcome to the latest edition of our reprised TOC newsletter! I'd like to extend our thanks to David Block for his offer to edit the newsletter, and to help our community share thoughts, recipes, and memories that are of common interest to our community.

Now that we have an editor for this newsletter, and we've got the ball rolling (again), I would encourage any member to submit their articles or a special photo to newsletter@torontooutdoorclub.com by June 15th for our next edition. It can be a one-time article on a particular topic or idea (campground reviews, environmentally responsible outdoor activities/practices, skiing techniques, edible wild plants, bird identification, etc.), or perhaps you can develop a recurring column. We cannot promise that all submissions will be published, but all efforts are appreciated.

I hope that you find this newsletter interesting, informative, and enjoyable, and hope you can help us continue to produce entertaining newsletters that builds knowledge of our TOC community going forward!

By Cynthia Beernink
On behalf of the TOC Executive

Outdoor Food - Trail Lunches (Day Hikes)

Article by Stacy Peuhkurinen

Sometimes I get bored of my standard trail lunch: peanut butter rolled into a whole wheat wrap. Sure, it's the quick and easy no brainer. I almost always have all the ingredients on hand, and I can throw it together in 2 minutes on the day of my hike. "Perfect!" I think as I stuff it and a granola bar into my daypack and run out the door. A few hours and kilometres later the hike leader calls for lunch break. We all scramble to find the best spot to settle down, and out come the variety of lunches. I spot someone with a power bar that I'm certain tastes like chalk, and merrily dig into my wrap. But the moment always happens when I glance over and see someone else with Something Way Better. That's when I take a second look at my boring little lunch, and think "I've got to find something new."

The trail lunch is often just a passing thought, a "must do" to get through the day so you can get on with it and see all the sites and hike all the mileage. And yet, I've often found lunch break on the trail to be a special time in its own right. Conversations transform and morph as people who don't hike at the same speed finally get the chance to mingle and get to know each other. You start to notice sights and sounds that you were missing before. You can even check on and attend to that blister you think is forming on your little toe! But let's not forget that refueling, adding some wholesome and energizing calories back into the body is important so that we can enjoy the second half of the hike and make it safely back to the cars.

Winter and early spring are great seasons for trail lunches! When you're essentially walking in fridge or freezer temperatures, you can

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By Stacy Peuhkurinen

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bring along all manner of wonderful foods that you can't get away with in the warmer months. Suddenly, a serving of yogurt is feasible, as is some freshly squeezed orange juice. Get creative and think about ways you can use last night's dinner leftovers as part of your trail lunch. A little bit of chicken breast or shrimps will go a long way in a variety of salads. Some leftover pasta can be transformed into a tuna-pasta salad. What a great way to mix carbs and protein into your day! But sometimes the cold weather calls for something warm. You know you don't want to whip out your whisperlight when the wind is howling and the hike leader calls for a short 15 minute stopover. The thermos is the obvious answer here. Now your choices are soups to stews, chilis to chowders!

So take advantage of this magical time of year and pack a lunch that packs a punch into your day.

This recipe is one of my favourite soups. It's spiciness will warm you all the way through. You can also dehydrate this soup for backpacking trips! Just leave out the vermicelli and dehydrate the soup. At camp, rehydrate, then heat the soup, add the vermicelli and enjoy!

Algerian Tomato Soup with Vermicelli

2 Tablespoons Olive Oil
2 Cups Diced Onions
3 Minced Garlic Cloves
1/8 Teaspoon Cayenne
1 Teaspoon Ground Coriander

1 Teaspoon Ground Cumin
1/2 Teaspoon Curry Powder
1/2 Teaspoon Ground Cinnamon
3/4 Teaspoon Salt
1 Tablespoon Freshly Grated Orange Peel
3 Cups Undrained Chopped Canned Tomatoes
3 Cups Water or Vegetable Stock
2 Cups Diced Red Bell Peppers
2 Cups Thinly Sliced Celery
1/2 Cup Vermicelli Broken into 1/2 Inch Pieces
2 Teaspoons Fresh Lemon Juice

Heat the olive oil in a nonreactive soup pot, add the onions and garlic and sauté on medium heat for about 10 minutes until the onions are translucent. Add the cayenne, coriander, cumin, curry powder, cinnamon, salt, and orange peel and sauté for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add the tomatoes and water or stock, cover, and bring to a boil.

Add the peppers and celery, return the mixture to a boil, and cook for five minutes. Add the vermicelli and simmer, uncovered, for about 5 more minutes until the pasta is al dente and the vegetables are tender. Stir in the lemon juice and serve.

The TOC Backpacking Column

Article and photos by Jenn Mullen

Welcome to the TOC Backpacking Column! I'd love to hear from you with any questions you have about trails, gear, food, and backpacking in general. I can be reached at jennmTOC@gmail.com.

One of the most important things about backpacking is safety.

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With that in mind, I'm going to discuss the 10 essentials to bring while backpacking – this list has been around for decades in one form or another and was pioneered by mountaineers.

1. Navigation

Most people today use GPS. This technology is great, but can fail – batteries can run out, the device can malfunction – so in addition to your GPS, be sure to always carry a map and compass. They're light, cheap, and provide you with backup that you can rely on. If you don't want to carry a large map, you can always cut it down to reflect only the portion of the land you'll be travelling on! Be sure to waterproof your map.

2. Sun protection

A hat, sunscreen, and light long-sleeved clothing can go a long way to preventing sunburn/heat stroke, especially in warm weather. Be sure to bring sunglasses as well. You do need sun protection in the winter as well, despite the weather being colder – the glare off snow can be worse than the sunlight of summer, and it can burn!

3. Insulation

What is insulation? Usually it is extra layers to help keep you warm. Most backpackers will carry some extra clothing already, but it's a great idea, especially when it's colder, to carry a set of dry clothes to wear around camp.

4. Illumination

A head lamp is great for around camp or if you're out on the trail late.

5. First Aid kit

Very important! You should be able to treat minor injuries in the field to avoid them developing into something worse. Have a plan to deal with more major medical problems

6. Fire kit

Fire provides warmth. In addition, you can cook and treat Water over it. Always bring matches/lighter and a form of firestarter (tinder, birch bark, tea light etc.) with you, whether you carry

a stove or plan on using a wood fire. Be sure to pay attention to any fire bans.

7. Repair kit

What do you do if your gear breaks and you are far from the trailhead? Repair it! A repair kit can help you continue on with your trip.

8. Nutrition

Without fuel, our bodies won't work and we won't be able to carry a pack over the trail. Keep food lightweight, but always be aware of your caloric requirements with the increased exercise and bring food accordingly.

9. Hydration

Water is very important! Water bottles plus a method with which to treat the water (drops, filter, UV treatment etc) are indispensable not only to keep you hydrated but also to prevent you from picking up anything bad.

10. Shelter

As backpackers, we're already carrying shelter. Make sure that yours is adequate for your needs – proper size and suited to the weather conditions as well as the rest of your gear – and look at the weight of the shelter that you're carrying, which is often one of the heaviest base weight items in your pack.



Memory Lane

By Cynthia Beernink.

I've truly been on so many wonderful TOC events that it's impossible to pick the very best, but let me tell you about just one.

At the end of August, I had some time off school, and I wanted to get some star-gazing in before the end of summer. So I organized a "Let's Play Hooky at the Beach" event on a (non-holiday) Monday, and had a surprisingly large group of people sign up! (Amusingly, some people thought the event said "Let's Play *Hockey* at the Beach". (You know you live in Canada when ...!)) Fortunately, any confusion was cleared up prior to the event.)

We drove out to Sandbanks Provincial Park just for the day. The weather was absolutely perfect for a day at the beach, though the water was not (there was a lot of algae in the water – yuck!). Many of the participants were stalwart and undaunted, however, and frolicked in the warm waters while the rest of us relaxed on the powdery sand or sought out other forms of refreshment. Magazines and books were read, conversations had, and friendships formed.

We watched a gorgeous sunset, then dragged a couple of picnic tables together in the dark so we could share a delicious pie (purchased en route at the Big Apple) to celebrate Jenn P's birthday. As the park prepared

to close for the night, the evening sky became velvet black, with a humbling array of stars spilled across its vast dome.

The ride home was nearly disastrous – due to construction and/or accidents, the 401 suddenly became a parking lot, and the normal 2-hour drive took at least 4 hours. After at least an hour of stop-and-go traffic, we managed to make it to an off-ramp sometime after midnight, and returned to Toronto via darkened, twisty secondary roads. As one of the carpool drivers, I was grateful that my passengers (Jenn P and David Block) kept themselves awake in order to help me stay alert.

Despite the long commute home, though, I think everyone agreed it was totally worth it to have had such a magical afternoon and evening on that beach.

Want to share your own reflections on a memorable TOC event? Submit your write-up of 100 – 500 words to newsletter@torontooutdoorclub.com with the subject line: "Memory Lane".

Feature Photo Contest

Do you have some great photos you took on a recent TOC event? Do you want lots of people to see your work? If you answered "yes" on both counts then submit your photos to newsletter@torontooutdoorclub.com. We will pick a few photos to publish in future issues of the Newsletter.

Safety: You and Me

By Jenn Mullen TOC Safety Officer

Safety is the responsibility not just of event coordinators but also of all participants on the event.

Be prepared. Have the required and recommended items with you, and check out the lists the TOC creates with items to bring on different types of events.

Listen to the coordinator, and use common sense. Remember that event coordinators are volunteers, not professionals; and in any case, you are ultimately responsible for your own well-being and safety.

Be sure when you sign up for an event that it is within your skill and fitness level - an unprepared participant can seriously affect the safety of all participants as well as impacting the enjoyment of all on the event!

If you see unsafe behaviour during an event - especially that of a carpool driver - bring it to the attention of a TOC volunteer - we want to know!

If your carpool driver is sleepy on the way home, don't be afraid to suggest to stop for a coffee or a rest break. We are so lucky to have these volunteers to drive, let's all help make their experience more pleasant!

TOC & giving back to Bruce Trail & other "free" facilities

By Cynthia Beernink

Recently, a valued TOC volunteer proposed creating a fundraising event for a charity that works to preserve and maintain the Bruce Trail. According to the Bruce Trail Conservancy:

In order to ensure a secure a permanent conservation corridor, the Bruce Trail Conservancy acquires Niagara Escarpment land for the Bruce Trail and conservation buffers. Today almost 7,000 acres of Escarpment land are secured and managed by the BTC. This preserved land is cared for by Bruce Trail volunteers, with the support of a small BTC staff.

Many people don't realise that the Bruce Trail is not permanently secure, and that 52% of the Bruce Trail corridor is still vulnerable to development. The BTC is working to secure this corridor by receiving donations of land or by purchasing land.

Each year the BTC spends from \$1 to \$2 million on purchases, preserving hundreds of acres of Escarpment landscape and Bruce Trail corridor forever. These acquisitions protect a diverse array of landscape types - wetlands, karst topography, open meadows, caves, towering scarp edges and lush forests - all within the Niagara Escarpment UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

— <http://brucetrail.org/pages/land-conservation>

The club's executive debated – with passion – whether this event should be posted. There was no question of the

worthiness of the cause, and we all acknowledged that as an organization, we should be doing much more to give back in return for the TOC's extensive free use of the Bruce Trail. However, there was also an enormous concern that the TOC's member database be used/taken over for the purpose of raising money for third parties. (It was deemed that there was a fine line between a volunteer posting an event for people to participate as a group in a charity event organized by a third party, such as the Run for the Cure, v.s. the TOC actually creating the charity event ourselves.) We agreed that an important principle of the TOC be that none of the events we organize ourselves



Photo from Alison Munro's Bruce Trail Hike October 30th, 2010

should charge members any money other than what is required to run the event. This decision by the TOC executive is binding, and not open for any further debate.

What is open for discussion, however, is in what ways the TOC can give back to the Bruce Trail or other facilities that we use frequently without charge. In good conscience, we know this is the responsible thing to do, and benefits the TOC long-term. Therefore, through existing contacts, we intend to ask Bruce Trail organizations how the TOC can provide them support in ways other than organizing fundraisers – perhaps by organizing work crews to assist in trail maintenance, providing free banner space on our website to one or two such organizations, etc.

Now we want to know: What do you think? Would you be willing to help out with some trail maintenance, if the time comes? Would you be willing to take some trash out the next time you walk the Trail? Do you already support the Bruce Trail, or feel you are feel you enough to support it and other facilities like it?

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Do you have any other innovative ideas not yet mentioned how the TOC



Photo from Alison Munro's Bruce Trail Hike October 30th, 2010

can be responsible users of such facilities and give back?

The TOC Needs YOU (to Be a Considerate Member of the Club)

One of the most frequent concerns that our volunteers hear from our membership - especially the newest members - is that it's too difficult to get onto a TOC event. It's true that our events fill quickly. But surprisingly, when event day arrives, many of our events are run with open spaces that no one is able to use. Why is that?

Estimates are that about 30% of people who sign up for a TOC event will drop out in the last few days leading up to the day of the activity. Certainly life happens (people get sick, work crops up, etc.), but it's also apparent that there are people who register for events without a clear intention to participate, that is, they want to hold

that space for themselves until they decide whether or not they will actually use it. (Volunteers have access to see the sign-up history of individual members, and some members do have a pattern of frequently dropping out of events with short notice.)

When a member drops out a day or two before an event with a wait list, it's often too late to find a replacement; By now, most of the people on the wait list have made alternate plans, and no amount of time spent phoning them, one by one, will change that. As you can imagine, this causes no end of frustration to members who would have liked to participate. Some of our event coordinators also find this frustrating, especially when there is significant planning involved in running the event, such as assessing individuals' levels of experience, determining how gear or food is to be shared, arranging carpools, etc.

All this to say: Please show consideration to your fellow TOC members by only signing up for events that you truly plan on attending. And if something does come up that prevents you from going after all, please delete your registration as soon as possible so that the event coordinator can try to find someone else to take your spot. (p.s. this goes for wait list members, too: if you're on the wait list for an event, please remove yourself if you can no longer make it that day!)

And for those who are feeling the frustration of seeing events fill up before you can register, take this advice: add yourself to wait lists, and be patient. Sometimes you get lucky and get moved to the event, but there are also times when the wait list is so long that the volunteer asks another volunteer to run the same event on the same day and take the whole wait list with them! And at worst (if you can imagine calling it that), when an event does get a long wait list, the volunteer knows that their event is really popular, and that means that there is a better chance that they will re-run it in the near future, giving you another chance to participate!

Thank you in advance for your cooperation,

Cynthia B
On behalf of the TOC Executive

We Need YOUR Input

Want to discuss any of the topics/articles of this newsletter? If you have participated in at least two events with the TOC, you can access the TOC forum by going to www.torontooutdoorclub.com, then clicking on the **Forum** link under **Resources** on the left-hand panel. There is a discussion thread under **General Chat** for you to share your thoughts!