

## DIET

By Oliver Cameron  
with Ole Wik

I don't eat as most people do, and haven't for a long time, so my idea of supplies would not necessarily be practical for many people.

I don't remember what I took out to the lake with me. I'm guessing that I had one dog. That meant three large bags of commercial dog food.

In one of Elmer Kreps' books, *Camp and Trail Methods*, he gives a list of what he uses, and how much of each thing. He had it pretty well figured out—quite a bit of dried fruits and a variety of items.

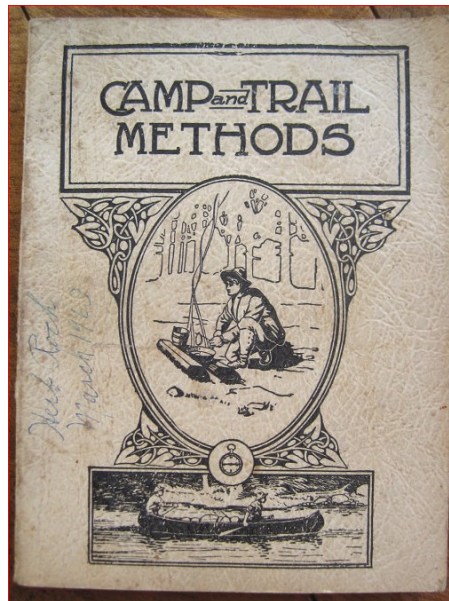


Image source: <http://www.etsy.com/listing/83646323/vintage-1950-camp-and-trail-methods-by-e>

My eating habits are not those of most people, so I probably took 50 lbs of oats, 25 lbs of cornmeal, and several #10 cans of dried vegetables—green beans and celery. Also some dehydrated carrots—I don't remember what they were in, possibly canned. So that way I had some vegetables.

Of course I took salt, pumpkin pie spice, raisins, currants, prunes, and dried apples. Also dried cranberries and dried blueberries that I had put up myself, but no sugar. That pretty well made up my diet.

Some people would want to make bread or pan bread and such, but I don't think I took flour out with me. I depended on the oats and cornmeal.

That doesn't provide for protein, so I had been drying meat. When I was getting ready to go out the lake to stake my land, I took quite a bit of pemmican, and also dried meat that I had ground up very fine and packed solidly in a plastic bag inside of a cloth bag, so that air was not mixed with it.

I also took probably two No. 10 cans that I had refilled with fat. I can't remember if it was lard or beef tallow. That was my basic food supply. Some people would want to take oil instead.

I had been eating a lot of meat, and when you're eating a meat diet, you don't up your intake of meat itself, of the flesh itself—you substitute fat for carbs. The tendency of people is to eat too much meat because it gives you a feeling that is like what you feel when you're full of carbs.

That's a mistake. You only need so much protein, and you make up your energy needs either from carbohydrates or from fat. Back at that time I was eating quite a bit of fat, not so much of carbohydrates. I also counted on getting fresh meat, even if it was just a squirrel or a spruce hen.

A confection that I quite often like to make is equal parts of dried apples and raisins and then fresh cranberries, cooked together until the apples are mushy. I try to avoid getting too much water in it, and can let it steam a while to get rid of some if needed. Then I mix in some pumpkin pie spice. It makes a pretty good dessert.

**What did you do about spoiled food?**<sup>1</sup>

There's plenty of information in books on canning and those sorts of things. I think it would be a good idea to get one of those books and follow its instructions, at least until you get some idea of what can happen.

**Did you ever get food poisoning?**

Oh yeah. One time I when I was single, over around Yakima, I was batching<sup>2</sup>. I don't remember what I fixed, but I didn't have a refrigerator, and I ate it again in the evening. I got sick, and felt really rotten. The next day I wasn't worth much, but I got over it.

**Did your wife or kids ever get sick from spoiled food?**

I don't remember any of them getting sick that way. Off and on one would get sick from eating too much fat, but that's not the same. Strong tea is supposed to help, but I didn't find it helped me a great deal. I usually had some cranberries on hand. Just two or three of them, swallowed after chewing, would help a lot.

**Would vinegar help?**

I have tried it. If you ate meat that was a little bit strong and are feeling icky, it works if you drink vinegar right away. It makes a dog out of you.<sup>3</sup>

**Have you ever eaten dirt?**

I've done that, just a little bit. I used to keep soil and sand from the outside of the house in a little jar. I'd spread a little on my food sometimes.

**What did you get out of it?**

I don't know what to say. There is food you can buy that is dirt. I don't understand about what happens, or why you should do it. I did it a few times just because I wasn't feeling good, and it did seem to help. I've assumed that it was because of minerals in the soil.

Dogs know about that too. I have had dogs that would have a little dirt pried loose at certain places along the trail, and they'd snatch a mouthful every time we passed that spot.

There is a place in Africa where elephants have scratched with their tusks into a certain cliff for dirt. They've done that for so many generations that there is now a deep cave that goes way back into the mountain, with its own ecosystem of bats, animals that prey on bats, and so on.

I don't know enough to say a whole lot, but if I eat a little clay or real fine sand, especially when I'm not feeling up to snuff, it does seem to help some.

Anything else on diet?

One winter, in Norway, Heidi Dammann wanted to know how I preserved butter. I couldn't think what she meant.

But now I remember. At one point I wasn't buying my own groceries—I was just giving Heidi or Rein a list, and they would bring them out. I used to order several pounds of butter at a time. Sometimes I rendered the butter to clarify it and get rid of the milky water that's in it.

Butter that's been clarified or rendered like that and put it into something airtight will keep a lot better than it does when it has all that moisture in it.

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- 1) This essay stems from a series of telephone conversations that Ole Wik had with Oliver between December 2007 and February 2008. Highlighted text indicates remarks made by Ole.
  - 2) Living alone, cooking for oneself, etc. From "bachelor".
  - 3) In the sense that a dog's stomach acid is remarkably strong.