

# Troop 147 Shopping Guide for Patrol Cooks

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***Congratulations!*** You have volunteered to shop for your patrol for an upcoming campout! This is likely (but not necessarily) being done in conjunction with requirement 4 for the First Class rank. This document guides you in some of the basics you need to know in order to do this important job well. Your buddies are counting on you to take care of them – so take this responsibility seriously.

## Planning Menu

Before you shop, you will work with your patrol to plan the menu. This is typically done at a troop meeting a week or two before the outing. When planning your menu, keep in mind the following:

- Try to have some kind of fruit and vegetable in each meal.
- Drink. Try to plan something to drink at each meal. If necessary, you will usually have water available at the campsite, but you probably would appreciate something a bit more tasty.
- Consider how much effort goes into preparing each dish and cleaning up afterwards. Foods that take a great deal of time to cook and/or clean up may not be appropriate for meals where you won't have much time available.
- Try to use the Food Guide Pyramid to guide your choice of foods (e.g., try to avoid/minimize foods heavy in saturated fat).

Before you leave the menu planning meeting to go home to go shopping, **ENSURE that you have the following information:**

- How many people are we cooking for?
- How much money can I spend for each meal?

It is **ABSOLUTELY VITAL** that you have this information. It is **NOT POSSIBLE** to adequately do your shopping without this information. If you have any question about the answers to these questions, ask your Patrol Leader.

## Where to Shop

Please shop at ALDI first! ALDI is located at 24<sup>th</sup> St and US-31 in Holland. ALDI has a limited selection, but absolutely outstanding every-day prices. Please buy everything you can buy at ALDI – and only shop elsewhere for things that you've established that you can't buy at ALDI. If you are shopping for yourself, you are welcome to shop anywhere you wish. However, when you are shopping for others, using *their* money, you need to be especially cost-conscious. Keep in mind that ALDI does not accept credit cards or checks, so you need to bring enough cash with you to buy all your food.

After getting as much of your required foods as possible at ALDI, you can fill in any gaps by shopping at Sam's Club or Costco (if you are a member), Save-a-Lot, or any other grocery store, in that order of preference. But you should only go to these places **AFTER** you have shopped at ALDI – it is vitally important that you spend other people's money very carefully, even if you don't ordinarily shop at ALDI for yourself.

## Brands

We all have preferences for favorite brands of certain foods. Try to put these preferences aside when shopping for the group.

There are several foods that we typically buy for our campouts. Here are some actual cost comparisons of typical foods available at ALDI with virtually identical foods available at Meijer (this actual cost comparison done on 5/6/2007):

### Pancake Mix

- Aunt Maple's Complete Buttermilk Pancake Mix; 32 oz.: \$0.99 at ALDI
- Meijer Complete Buttermilk Pancake Mix; 32 oz.: \$1.29 at Meijer (30% more expensive)
- Aunt Jemima Buttermilk Pancake Mix; 32 oz.: \$2.08 at Meijer (110% more expensive; more than twice the cost)

### Pancake Syrup

- Aunt Maple's Pancake Syrup; 24 oz.: \$0.99 at ALDI
- Meijer Pancake & Waffle Syrup; 24 oz.: \$1.99 at Meijer (twice as expensive)
- Aunt Jemima Original Syrup; 24 oz.: \$2.99 at Meijer (three times as expensive)

### Macaroni & Cheese Dinner

- Cheese Club Macaroni & Cheese Dinner; 7.25 oz.: \$0.29 at ALDI
- Meijer Macaroni & Cheese Dinner; 7.25 oz.: \$0.54 at Meijer (86% more expensive; almost twice the cost)
- Kraft Macaroni & Cheese Dinner; 7.25 oz.: \$0.63 at Meijer (117% more expensive; more than twice the cost)

### Instant Oatmeal Packets

- Millville Instant Oatmeal; 10 packets: \$1.29 at ALDI
- Meijer Instant Oatmeal; 10 packets: \$2.09 at Meijer (62% more expensive)
- Quaker Instant Oatmeal; 10 packets: \$2.54 at Meijer (97% more expensive, almost twice the cost)

### Graham Crackers (e.g., for "s'mores"):

- Sun Grams Honey Grams; 14.4 oz.: \$0.99 at ALDI
- Meijer Honey Grahams; 14.4 oz.: \$2.29 at Meijer (131% more expensive; more than twice the cost)
- Money Maid Honey Grahams; 14.4 oz.: \$2.87 at Meijer (190% more expensive; almost three times the cost)

Note that in all of the above cases, the name brands at Meijer cost between two and three times as much as the store brand items at ALDI. Even the store brand items at Meijer were between 30 percent and 129 percent higher than the store brand items at ALDI.

If you followed our guidance to first shop at ALDI, you would certainly choose the first option in each of the examples above. If for some reason you had to make this decision at Meijer (perhaps because ALDI was out of macaroni and cheese when you went there), you would buy the Meijer-brand alternative. It doesn't matter that you personally prefer the expensive "name" brand (i.e., the third choices listed above). **When spending other people's money, you need to consider cost much more than your own personal preferences.**

So, for example, if you think that it is "worth it" to spend more than twice as much on Kraft-brand macaroni & cheese dinners, rather than ALDI's Cheese Club brand, you are welcome to do so when shopping for yourself. However, when shopping for the scout group, please put this preference aside and "do the right thing" by buying the (dramatically more) economical choice. Remember: A Scout is Thrifty.

This is so important that I will repeat it for effect:

***Please do NOT waste other people's money by needlessly buying expensive name brands when essentially similar generic or store brands are available at a dramatically better price.***

## **Portions**

While shopping, you need to calculate how much of each food you need to buy for each meal. This takes a bit of work. For example, if you are going to make sandwiches, you need to consider how many people are going to be eating. Then make an assumption of how many sandwiches each person will eat. Remember, some of these boys are bigger than you and eat a lot! Further, going camping makes everybody hungry. Let's say that you assume that each person will eat three sandwiches (even if you are pretty certain that you yourself will only eat two). If you are cooking for eight people, that means you need to buy enough bread for 24 sandwiches ( $8 * 3 = 24$ ). That is 48 slices of bread. How many loaves of bread do you need to buy? You need to count how many slices there are in a loaf. Given a choice of having a little too little food or a little too much, it is usually better to have a little (not a lot) too much.

When considering what size of an item to buy, look at the price per unit. For example, if you can buy two fifteen-ounce cans of corn for 50 cents a piece, or one thirty-ounce can of corn for 90 cents, you clearly should buy the larger size, but keep in mind that the larger size is NOT always the most economical (i.e., if you can buy two fifteen-ounce cans of corn for 50 cents a piece, or one thirty-ounce can of corn for \$1.10, you clearly should buy the smaller size).

HOWEVER, beware of very large containers. Sometimes, a very large container of a food is very appropriate for a large group. You need to estimate how much the group is likely to need. But for foods that are not "the main dish", it may not be appropriate to buy very much of something. For example, if you are making sandwiches, let's say that you really like mayonnaise. Shopping for a big group of eight or ten, you should obviously buy the gallon size jug of mayonnaise, right? Well, keep in mind that others

may not share your love for mayonnaise. What if you are the only one who chooses to put this on their sandwich? The rest of the gallon would end up being a waste. Try hard to avoid waste – especially when it is other people’s money that you are wasting. In this case, it may be best to skip the mayonnaise entirely – it is unlikely that anybody will miss it. And this avoids the need to refrigerate it and the specter of wasting unused amounts.

If you have questions about how much of something to buy, ask your patrol leader or your parent for help in figuring it out.

Remember that it is not good to have much too little food. But it is perhaps equally undesirable to have much too much food. ***If everybody keeps food costs down, we all benefit by having less expensive outings!***

## **Money**

Recall that you found out how much money you could spend for each meal. Let’s say that you found out that you could spend \$30 for a particular meal. While you are shopping, you need to keep track of approximately how much you are spending for each meal.

Just because you could spend as much as \$30 for a particular meal doesn’t mean that you have to spend every penny. If you can get the job done spending less than the maximum, that is always preferable. The less you spend, the better!

Make sure that you keep receipts for all the food you buy for the outing. You will need to submit this for reimbursement from the troop. If you have questions about how this works, ask your Patrol Leader.