

# Cooking Merit Badge

(updated 3.15.25)

Cooking is an involved merit badge! But if you want to become an Eagle Scout (and also earn your Cody Mountaineer), it's a badge you must complete. You should either buy a copy of the merit badge book at your local Scout shop, check a copy out from your troop's librarian, or borrow a copy from a friend who has the badge already. (If you are borrowing a book, keep in mind that the requirements were updated in 2025, and you'll need to work off of the newest requirements.) Camp staff will provide you with a blue card.

To keep track of your work, you can download a printable merit badge workbook here - **keep in mind that the requirements in this workbook do not completely align with the current requirements:**

<http://www.usscouts.org/usscouts/mb/worksheets/Cooking.pdf>

*^^ Download it to your computer before entering in your work*

NOTE: While I don't ask Scouts to write down all their answers, **I do ask that Scouts write out their menus (4a, 5a, 6a) and their grocery lists (4b, 5b, 6b).**

Work that can be done before camp is denoted by '**PRE-CAMP**' below (though, in truth, all can be done before camp). Be Prepared to discuss these at Cody when asked. To get requirements signed off, please meet with the merit badge counselor and present your written work or discuss the requirement in person (at camp or in Sacramento) or on a pre-scheduled call.

1. **PRE-CAMP (all parts of 1) – Health and Safety** Do the following:
  - a. Explain to your counselor the most likely hazards you may encounter while participating in cooking activities and what you should do to anticipate, help prevent, mitigate, and respond to these hazards.
  - b. Show that you know first aid for and how to prevent injuries or illnesses that could occur while preparing meals and eating, including burns and scalds, cuts, choking, and allergic reactions.
  - c. Describe how meat, fish, chicken, eggs, dairy products, and fresh vegetables should be stored, transported, and properly prepared for cooking. Explain how to prevent cross-contamination.
  - d. Discuss with your counselor food allergies, food intolerance, and food-related illnesses and diseases. Explain why someone who handles or prepares food needs to be aware of these concerns.
  - e. Discuss with your counselor why reading food labels is important. Explain how to identify common allergens such as peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, wheat,

soy, and shellfish.

2. **PRE-CAMP (all parts of 2)** – Nutrition. Do the following:

- a. Using the MyPlate food guide or the current USDA nutrition model, give five examples for EACH of the following food groups, the recommended number of daily servings, and the recommended serving size: 1) Fruits, 2) Vegetables, 3) Grains, 4) Proteins, 5) Dairy.
- b. Explain why you should limit your intake of oils and sugars.
- c. Track your daily level of activity and your daily caloric need based on your activity for five days. Then, based on the MyPlate food guide, discuss with your counselor an appropriate meal plan for yourself for one day.

**\*\*\*Counselor's note: Easily calculate calories for 2c with the [MyPlate Plan tool](#)\*\*\***

- d. Discuss your current eating habits with your counselor and what you can do to eat healthier, based on the MyPlate food guide.
  - e. Discuss the following food label terms: calorie, fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrate, dietary fiber, sugar, protein. Explain how to calculate total carbohydrates and nutritional values for two servings, based on the serving size specified on the label.
3. Cooking Basics. Do the following:

**PRE-CAMP** – a. Discuss the following cooking methods. For each one, describe the equipment needed, how temperature control is maintained, and name at least one food that can be cooked using that method: baking, boiling, broiling, pan frying, simmering, steaming, microwaving, grilling, foil cooking, and use of a Dutch oven.

b. Discuss the benefits of using a camp stove on an outing vs. a charcoal or wood fire.

c. Describe with your counselor how to manage your time when preparing a meal so components for each course are ready to serve at the same time.

d. Explain and give examples of how taste, texture, and smell impact what we eat.

4. **PRE-CAMP (all parts of 4)** – Cooking at Home.

- a. Using the [MyPlate food guide](#) or the current USDA nutrition model, plan a menu for three full days of meals (three breakfasts, three lunches, and three dinners) plus one dessert. Your menu should include enough to feed yourself and at least one adult, keeping in mind any special needs (such as food allergies) and how

you kept your foods safe and free from cross-contamination. List the equipment and utensils needed to prepare and serve these meals.

Then do the following:

- b. Find recipes for each meal. Create a shopping list for your meals showing the amount of food needed to prepare for the number of people you serve. Determine the cost for each meal.
- c. Share and discuss your meal plan and shopping list with your counselor.
- d. Using at least five of the 10 cooking methods from requirement 3, prepare and serve yourself and at least one adult (parent, family member, guardian, or other responsible adult) one breakfast, one lunch, one dinner, and one dessert from the meals you planned. The meals for requirement 4 may be prepared on different days, and they need not be prepared consecutively. Those served need not be the same for all meals.\*

**\*\*\*Counselor's note: For req 4, while you must write out a menu that includes nine meals and one dessert, *you only have to buy food for, and cook, three meals and one dessert!*\*\*\***

- e. Time your cooking to have each meal ready to serve at the proper time. Have an adult verify the preparation of the meal to your counselor.
  - f. After each meal, ask a person you served to evaluate the meal on presentation and taste, then evaluate your own meal. Discuss what you learned with your counselor, including any adjustments that could have improved or enhanced your meals. Tell how better planning and preparation help ensure a successful meal.
5. Camp Cooking. Do the following:

**PRE-CAMP** – a. Using the MyPlate food guide or the current USDA nutrition model, plan a menu that includes four meals, one snack, and one dessert for your patrol (or a similar size group of up to eight youth, including you) on a camping trip. These four meals must include two breakfasts, one lunch, and one dinner. Additionally, you must plan one snack and one dessert. Your menus should include enough food for each person, keeping in mind any special needs (such as food allergies) and how you keep your foods safe and free from cross-contamination. List the equipment and utensils needed to prepare and serve these meals.

**PRE-CAMP** – b. Find or create recipes for at least four meals, the snack, and the dessert you have planned. Adjust menu items in the recipes for the number to be served. Create a shopping list and budget to determine the per-person cost.

**PRE-CAMP** – c. Share and discuss your menu plans and shopping list with your counselor.

d. In the outdoors, using your menu plans and recipes for this requirement, cook two of the four meals you planned using either a camp stove OR backpacking stove. Use a skillet OR a Dutch oven over campfire coals for a third meal, and cook the fourth meal in a foil pack OR on a skewer. Serve all of these meals to your patrol or a group of youth. \*\*

e. In the outdoors, using your menu plans and recipes for this requirement, prepare one snack and one dessert. Serve both of these to your patrol or a group of youth. \*\*

*\*\*\*Counselor's note: We will do 5d and 5e together at camp. If you decide to do cooking for req 5 on your own, that's OK - more practice is good.\*\*\**

f. After each meal, have those you served evaluate the meal on presentation and taste, and then evaluate your own meal. Discuss what you learned with your counselor, including any adjustments that could have improved or enhanced your meals. Tell how planning and preparation help ensure successful outdoor cooking.

g. Lead the clean-up of the equipment, utensils, and the cooking site thoroughly after each meal. Properly store or dispose of unused ingredients, leftover food, dishwater, and garbage.

h. Discuss how you followed the [Outdoor Code](#) and [Leave No Trace principles](#) when preparing your meals.

6. **PRE-CAMP (all of 6) - Trail and backpacking meals.** Do the following:

- a. Using the MyPlate food guide or the current USDA nutrition model, plan a day of meals for trail hiking or backpacking that includes one breakfast, one lunch, one dinner, and one snack. **These meals must consider weight, must not require refrigeration,** and are to be consumed by three to five people (including you). List the equipment and utensils needed to prepare and serve these meals.

*\*\*\*Counselor's note: **Backpacking meals cannot include food that need to be kept cold.** You can't use ice chests or icepacks, only food that is shelf stable and durable. Imagine you were carrying food in your pack for a week – would it survive the trip without spoiling?\*\*\**

- b. Create a shopping list for your meals, showing the amount of food needed to prepare and serve each meal, and the cost for each meal.

- c. Share and discuss your meal plan and shopping list with your counselor. Your plan must include how to repackage foods for your hike or backpacking trip to eliminate as much bulk, weight, and garbage as possible.
- d. While on a trail hike or backpacking trip, prepare and serve two meals and a snack from the menu planned for this requirement. At least one of those meals must be cooked over a fire, or an approved trail stove (with proper supervision).\*\*

*\*\*\*Counselor's note: while you must plan three meals and a snack, **you only have to buy food for, and cook, two meals!** While the other requirements ask you to cook at home for family / caregivers and on a camping trip with youth, this requirement **doesn't** specify who you are supposed to cook for. If your troop isn't going for a backpacking trek soon, you can take a day hike with your family or friends and cook over a backpacking stove to fulfill this requirement.\*\*\**

- e. After each meal, have those you served evaluate the meal on presentation and taste, then evaluate your own meal. Discuss what you learned with your counselor, including any adjustments that could have improved or enhanced your meals. Tell how planning and preparation help ensure successful trail hiking or backpacking meals.
- f. Explain to your counselor how you should divide the food and cooking supplies among the patrol in order to share the load. Discuss how to properly clean the cooking area and store your food to protect it from animals.

## 7. **PRE-CAMP** – Careers and Hobbies.

- a. Identify three career opportunities that would use skills and knowledge in cooking. Pick one and research the training, education, certification requirements, experience, and expenses associated with entering the field. Research the prospects for employment, starting salary, advancement opportunities and career goals associated with this career. Discuss what you learned with your counselor and whether you might be interested in this career.
- b. Identify how you might use the skills and knowledge in cooking to pursue a personal hobby or healthy lifestyle. Research the additional training required, expenses, and affiliation with organizations that would help you maximize the enjoyment and benefit you might gain from it. Discuss what you learned with your counselor and share what short-term and long-term goals you might have if you pursued this.