



Recreation
Aotearoa

Camp Cooking & Fires

Good Practice Guide

Version 1
2020

Camp Cooking & Fires

Activities using stoves, or fire - including liquid fuel or gas stoves, gas or wood barbeques, and camp fires. Activities could include fire making, camp fire experiences and cooking meals with stoves/fire

Camp cooking and fire making could occur on Department of Conservation (DOC) estate and council campsites, school grounds or private land. There may or may not be established camp cooking/fire facilities, ready access to water or road access.

This guidance has been developed for camp cooking and fire making that is under direct supervision. However, it may also be helpful for indirectly supervised activities such as solo camp cooking.

This guidance is specific to **Camp cooking & fires** activities and is designed to be used in conjunction with the **General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities** and the **Camp Cooking & Fires Planning Template**.

Potential value of activity

CAMP COOKING & FIRES CAN PROVIDE:

- A chance to explore new skills and techniques.
- Learning safe practices for using different styles of camp cooking & fires.
- Learning different techniques to light and manage fires.
- Learning to adapt and change if something does not go to plan.
- Being part of a team working on a shared challenge like building a fire, cooking a group meal.
- The opportunity to be proud of creating a meal in a remote area.
- Social interaction around a campfire, sharing stories and food.
- Environmental experiences (clean air, sounds at night, night sky/stars).
- Freedom from media, cell phones and other digital devices **or** find new ways to engage with technology.

“Everything is better around a campfire”

Planning Considerations

See the [General Guidance for Organised Outdoor Activities](#)

An activity plan helps to maximize an activity's success and minimizes risk to participants. The Camp Cooking and Fires Activities Planning Template provides a useful format.

The Site

Ensure that there are no local government, land owner, seasonal or weather related limitations to lighting a fire, or cooking with an open flame, or gas/liquid stove i.e. are there any local fire regulations or fire bans in the area? Does your concession allow for lighting fires on DOC land?

Identify a suitable site for lighting a fire or cooking with a stove. It should be:

- on level ground, clear of trip hazards
- clear of all flammable material for at least one metre horizontally and at least three metres vertically
- good egress pathway
- away from living/sleeping areas
- away from walking areas.



Using an existing fireplace will minimise the environmental impact of an open fire.

Gas and liquid stoves need a stable level base, and should not be used inside a tent, or inside a building without adequate ventilation. If cooking inside, area must be well vented to protect from carbon monoxide poisoning.

Consider a water source, hand washing and toilet facilities when organising your camp cooking area.

Consider the availability for firewood and environmental impact on site. Live trees must not be used. Consider bringing wood if possible.

Participants

How to ensure the activities match the participants' abilities and needs.

In addition to the generic participant considerations (see General Guidance for Organized Outdoor Activities), organisers of camp cooking & fire activities should implement strategies to:

- Be confident that participants will listen to important safety instructions and demonstrate acceptable behaviors whilst carrying out activities.
- Ensure that participants are comfortable around fires and/or in the dark.
- Identify any specific dietary requirements that need to be catered for, including religious, cultural, allergies and other health requirements).
- Check whether participants have any specific allergies or health issues, if so, do they have appropriate medication with them?

Supervision

Guidance on the level and style of supervision typically required for this activity.

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN DETERMINING THE APPROPRIATE SUPERVISION STRUCTURE FOR CAMP COOKING AND FIRES:

- Ensure that there are clear boundaries in place so that everyone knows where the fire and/or cooking area is.
- Provide a clear briefing that includes behavioral guidelines i.e. no running or fooling about.
- For capable groups of adults and teenagers, one leader may be adequate to supervise cooking/fires.
- For younger groups consider having two or more leaders – especially with open flames. Keep in mind that children will get excited as the sight of a campfire and may react in a different manner to usual. You may need to limit the number of people around your fire at a time.
- If cooking on gas or liquid fuel cookers, consider having an extra leader to assist with managing the cookers.
- If you have participants with behavioral problems or disabilities, you may require extra leaders to directly support these participants through the activity.
- Ensure that a fire or gas/liquid fuel cooker is never left unattended while lit.
- Light one fire, gas and liquid fuel cooker at a time, with direct supervision.
- Have one leader in charge of checking all fires and cookers are correctly put out and are cool before packing away. Fires should be extinguished using repeated dowsing with water and stirring in, until ashes are cold to touch.

- Dispose of any waste, including cooking and washing up water, appropriately.
- If participants gather firewood, they should:
 - stay within sight of others and/or carry a whistle/head torch, so as not to get lost
 - harvest only dead, dry standing wood
 - carry branches at/below hip height, and hold, not throw them.
- A small fire in some form of container i.e. firepit, drum helps to minimise risk.
- If cooking on picnic tables, participants must not sit with legs under the table. They must sit with their legs on the outside of the bench seat so they avoid getting burnt from hot liquids, avoid knocking the table and can easily stand and walk away.
- Ensure that the stove is out and cool enough to touch before refueling. This is particularly important with methylated spirits stoves where the flame can burn almost invisibly.
- Ensure that stoves are refueled away from the fire/cooking area, and away from any other naked flame i.e. candles. Allow stoves to cool down before refueling.
- If cooking in a hut, refuel outside.
- Have a clear process for managing dietary requirements, food labeling, separate utensils to eliminate cross contamination.
- Ensure participants are aware of how to correctly cook their food and not to consume raw uncooked food.
- Remind participants they should ensure that skewer cooked food i.e. marshmallows, damper needs to cool sufficiently before they try to eat it.
- Follow leave no trace principles.



Leader competence

The experience and knowledge required by those running the activity, both for normal operation and for managing emergencies. What competence other assistant leaders need should also be considered (e.g. where parents or other adults are helping the person running the activity).

Camp Cooking & Fire skills and knowledge

- Evaluates suitability of the site as a safe and effective location for cooking with fires or stoves.
- Briefs assistant leaders before the activity, in correct processes, safety management and required supervision.
- Manages participants (individual, and as a group) around fires and cookers - during normal and emergency situations.
- Teaches how to and supports participants build a successful fire and fire pit.
- Has in-depth knowledge of the equipment being used, including how to check it is safe to use.
- Understands how to use a fire or stove safely, to hygienically produce a nourishing meal.
- Have an understanding of hazards involved.

Relevant qualifications

The following qualifications are relevant for camp cooking management

- New Zealand Certificate in Outdoor Instructor (Level 5), Bush Walking strand.
- NZOIA Bush 1

“Experience is the teacher of all things”



Resources and equipment

Consider what equipment and resources are required to ensure the activity can be run safely. The participants may be required to bring this or it may be provided to them.

Participant

What each participant needs to bring to the activity.

- Appropriate clothing:
 - clothing that is not highly flammable (cotton and wool preferable to synthetic materials. If this is not possible then participants should be aware that polypropylene and fleece are both flammable materials).
 - no loose fitting, dangly items (hair ties for participants with long hair)
 - arms and legs covered from embers
 - covered footwear.
- Consider insect repellent.
- Personal lighting (headlamps and torches).
- Personal cutlery including plates, bowls, cups, knives, forks, spoons.
- Personal medications (and spares of critical medications).

Group

- Cooking equipment.
- Ensure pots and pans are suitable for the size of the cooker.
- Provide a means of handling hot pots, e.g. oven mitt, tongs.
- Ensure cookers have the correct type of fuel in sufficient quantities. Also check that fuel and gas lines do not leak when under pressure/during use. Consider bringing spare seals and/or stove repair equipment. Check the seal (O-ring) inside the gas cooker before using. Also check the rubber seal of gas regulators and expiry date is current, for 9Kg gas bottles, before use.
- Store spare fuel at least 3 metres away from the stove/fire. If cooking inside, spare fuel containers should be kept outside, and away from doorways.
- Store dry firewood at least 3 metres from the firepit so that it is not a trip hazard and is ideally upwind from the fire.
- Ensure the separation requirements of participants with religious or allergy requirements. Separate cooking containers, and food preparation implements and washing facilities may be required.

- Hygiene. Provide hand washing facilities and / or sanitizer near to any cooking activity and ensure that it is used before handling food or eating.
- Ensure you have an adequate amount of food to feed your participants. Bring spare food in case of a spillage.
- Have the ability to store food hygienically at the correct temperature to prevent illness or ensure that food chosen does not need refrigeration.
- Provide the correct equipment to be able to wash up thoroughly (scrape, rinse, wash). and dispose /recycle of all waste and wastewater appropriately (scrapers, basins buckets, dish soap, scrubbers, bins, etc.)
- Group lighting (lanterns, candles). Make sure all leaders and participants have access to effective night lighting (torches, headlamps etc. with adequate spare batteries) for getting around safely after dark.
- First aid kit and other emergency gear (e.g. fire extinguisher, fire blanket, emergency shelter, sufficient water immediately available to cool burns i.e. a bucket of water at each cooking point).

Leader

- List of participants, including emergency contacts, any health, dietary, and other needs that the leader should know about.
- Safety plan including emergency contact numbers (see **Camp Cooking & Fires Planning Template**).



Leave No Trace (LNT)/Environmental Protection

Consider how you can plan your activity to minimize long term damage to the environment. Camp cooking and fires has the potential to leave a high impact on the environment, dispose of food waste appropriately and correctly put out fires.

There are seven key LNT principles which are:

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Ground
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimise the Effects of Fire
6. Respect Wildlife and Farm Animals
7. Be Considerate of Others

For further information about LNT see

Leave No Trace teaching tips for minimising the effects of fire:

<https://leavenotrace.org.nz/minimise-the-effects-of-fire/>

Exemplars

Examples of good practice

How to Manage a Campsite | Camp Craft Episode 24 | MSC Get Outdoors Series
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Co04qDLd3M&list=PLeLnlpLtcKodTaLnO-53RmTNSCUHjIxa&index=25>

How to Light a Fire | Camp Craft Episode 25 | MSC Get Outdoors Series
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aU-Gk5MVUKc&list=PLeLnlpLtcKodTaLnO-53RmTNSCUHjIxa&index=26>

Cooking on a Stove in the Outdoors | Camp Craft Episode 26 | MSC Get Outdoors Series
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jy08_79JSk&list=PLeLnlpLtcKodTaLnO-53RmTNSCUHjIxa&index=27

Further support

Places to gain more information from, e.g. specialist websites, industry bodies or clubs.

Mountain Safety Council
<https://www.mountainsafety.org.nz/>

Outdoor Training NZ
<https://www.outdoortraining.nz/>