Track 1: Outdoor Skills and Survival

SESSION 5: OUTDOOR COOKING

Overview: Outdoor Cooking introduces youth to the essential skills of preparing food in outdoor environments using safe, practical methods. This session focuses on cooking techniques such as using camp stoves, building cooking fires, and preparing simple meals with minimal equipment. Youth learn about food safety, meal planning, and clean-up procedures while gaining hands-on experience with tools like foil, skewers, and Dutch ovens. Through teamwork and creativity, participants discover how outdoor cooking can be both fun and rewarding—building confidence and self-reliance for future adventures.

Objectives

- Learn basic outdoor cooking techniques using campfires and portable stoves.
- Understand food safety and hygiene in outdoor settings.
- Practice teamwork and planning in preparing a group meal.

Supplies for Campfire Cooking

- Firewood and fire-starting materials
- Charcoal and lighter fluid
- Fire ring or designated fire-safe area
- Grill grate or cooking tripod
- Foil, skewers, or cast-iron pans
- Buckets of water or fire extinguisher

Supplies for Portable Stove Cooking

- Portable camp stoves
- Fuel canisters
- Cooking utensils and pots
- Ingredients for simple recipes
- Coolers or food-safe storage

Advisor Notes

- Review fire safety and food handling rules before cooking begins.
- Demonstrate how to safely light and use a camp stove.
- Assign roles to youth for meal prep, cooking, and cleanup.
- Encourage creativity in recipe selection and presentation.
- Ensure all cooking areas are cleaned and fires extinguished properly.

SESSION OUTLINE

Welcome and Icebreaker Activity: Camp Kitchen Charades (10 min)

- Get youth moving and laughing while introducing outdoor cooking tools and actions.
- Prepare a list of outdoor cooking-related actions or items. (for example, stirring a pot, lighting a camp stove, roasting a marshmallow, and chopping vegetables).
- Write each one on a slip of paper.
- Youth take turns drawing a card and acting out the item or action without speaking.
- The group guesses what it is. Once guessed, briefly explain its use in outdoor cooking.

Safety Moment: Clean, Cook, Cool (2-3 min)

- Wash hands before handling food.
- Keep cooking areas clean and organized.
- Use stoves and fires safely — never leave them unattended.
- Store food properly to avoid spoilage or attracting wildlife.

Campfire Cooking Demo (30 min)

- Advisor demonstrates how to prepare simple meals using foil packets, skewers, or cast-iron pans.
- Discuss heat control, cooking times, and safety.
- Youth observe and assist with prep or cooking steps.
- Optional: Let youth taste samples or prep their own foil packet to cook later.

Team Cooking Challenge (30 min)

- Divide youth into small teams. Each team receives ingredients and chooses a cooking method.
- Teams plan, prep, cook, and present their meal.
- Advisors judge based on taste, teamwork, and presentation.
- Optional: Create a "Camp Chef" certificate or ribbon for fun recognition.

Outdoor Kitchen Setup (20 min)

- Teach youth how to organize a safe and efficient cooking area.
- Include handwashing station, prep area, cooking zone, and waste disposal.
- Youth work in teams to set up and explain their kitchen layout.

Resources

- Smartphone: Campfire cooking techniques
- Handout: Outdoor food safety
- Optional: Link to USDA outdoor food safety guidelines

REFLECTION SECTION

Advisor note: These are sample questions. They are designed to help the participants apply what they have learned to their own interests. You are welcome to use these questions or develop your own questions.

Focusing Questions

- What did you enjoy most about cooking outdoors?
- What was the most challenging part of preparing your meal?

Analysis Questions

- How did your team decide on the recipe and cooking method?
- What safety measures did you take while cooking?

Generalization Questions

- How can outdoor cooking skills help in real-life situations?
- What did you learn about teamwork and planning through this activity?

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PRINTABLE HANDOUT: OUTDOOR FOOD SAFETY BASICS

Food Handling Hygiene

- Wash hands with soap and water before and after handling food.
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Keep cooking surfaces and utensils clean.
- Avoid touching food with dirty hands or gloves.

Safe Cooking Temperatures

- Cook poultry to at least 165˚F (74˚C).
- Cook ground meats to at least 160˚F (71˚C).
- Reheat leftovers to 165˚F (74˚C).
- Use a food thermometer to check temperatures.

Proper Storage

- Keep perishable foods in a cooler with ice packs.
- Store raw meats separately from ready-to-eat foods.
- Avoid leaving food out in the sun or heat.
- Label and date stored food items.

Avoiding Cross-Contamination

- Use separate cutting boards for raw meat and vegetables.
- Clean utensils and surfaces between uses.
- Do not reuse plates that held raw food.
- Keep raw and cooked foods apart during transport and storage.

Cleanup Procedures

- Dispose of food waste properly in sealed bags or containers.
- Wash dishes and utensils with hot, soapy water.
- Sanitize surfaces after cooking.
- Leave the cooking area cleaner than you found it.