

Some General Guidelines for Scouts (Parents) Buying Food

Having seen the results of Scout food purchases for quite a few years now, Troop 457 has established the following general guidelines for parents supervising food-buying Scouts:

First off, you should not be preparing the menu; this is the Scout's job and your son should already have an approved menu in hand. If he doesn't, it's time to call his Patrol Leader - and if the situation still isn't resolved, his Patrol Mentor. [If it still isn't resolved, call me.]

Second, please realize that (especially) for new Scouts, the exercise is as much a learning experience as a means for getting food for their Patrol. There is no question that parents can do a much faster and far more efficient job of buying food than their sons; however, we still want the **Scouts** to do the buying. Mom (or Dad's) job here is to:

1. supervise;
2. ensure that a proper menu has been planned and is being bought; and
3. most importantly, ensure that the Scouts realize the "totality" of what goes into a final product (for example, that pancakes require add-water-only pancake mix, cooking oil, butter and syrup, or that cheeseburgers require patties, cheese, & buns). Remember, if you always do it all, you'll always have to do it all - if you teach them how, eventually you'll only have to provide transportation and supervision.

Finally, regarding the menu and actual food purchases, there are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Do not emphasize only buying "healthy" foods - it will come back uneaten. While this should be resolved in menu preparation which has been checked with the Scoutmasters, it is ok to buy a mixture of foods. For example let your Scouts buy the small boxes of sugared cereal instead of a large box of raisin bran. They probably wouldn't eat the raisin bran and I know they will eat the Fruit Loops. Granted that junk food is not a great diet, but it's not going to kill them to oink out for a day or two; don't buy healthy, buy what they'll eat. Our guys generally love basic food such as apples, oranges, bread, etc.
2. Having said that, please buy quality variants, not the cheapest stuff available. Each menu plan includes a budget. Stay with-in the budget and use this chance for the Scouts to do some real work math. For example, buy deli meats vs. perpetually preserved Oscar Meyer slices. Get "real" cookies rather than the el-cheapo "family-size" mish-mash of tasteless,

unidentifiable circles and squares. Get real orange juice vs. Tang or other "orange-flavored" drinks. Etc., etc., etc. In my experience, the price differences between buying the best vs. the cheapest is only a couple of bucks per Scout, but the differences in the quality (edibility and taste) of the final product is quite significant.

3. Next, when considering alternate meal choices, go with the more convenient variants if possible - go ahead and buy the pre-prepared frozen burger patties over a huge hunk of frozen ground round. Take the add-water-only pancake mix vs. the type that requires addition of butter and eggs. Etc., etc., etc. Anything that saves significant amounts of preparation time is always very useful for us - unlike many Troops, cooking, eating and cleaning are only minor aspects of our weekend programs.

4. Finally, **don't overbuy!** This is probably the most common problem I observe; please remember you're buying for boys - hungry boys, yes - but boys nonetheless. We always seem to bring back gallons upon gallons of milk and orange juice, excessive leftover bread, cereals, oatmeal, etc. - Note that we do control food output to make sure no-one at the end of the line goes hungry. Know the number of Scouts in the patrol, think about how much an average boy would eat at home, and go for it - it'll be more than enough. Have the Scout **READ** the serving size on the container. It is accurate in most cases. If you really feel that there's just not enough food for a specific meal, buy an additional different complementary item rather than just more of the same thing (for example, a box of Nutra-Grain Bars or Donuts for what looks to you like a too skimpy breakfast - not another box of pancake mix).

5. Troop 457 provides the following general items for all patrols: condiments, drink mix for normal daytime use (this does not include breakfast juice), sugar, salt and syrup, pepper, etc. Please, please don't buy any of these items.

6. Never, never buy candy or soft drinks for campouts. On occasion we have soft drinks as prizes and they are cherished. We have a zero tolerance for candy because candy in tents is a major no-no.

Questions, please call me at 639-0225. Thanks for taking the time to act as a parental food monitor. It's an important behind the scenes job that critical for successful camping events.

Mr. Pickelhaupt - Scoutmaster