

Foil Packet Cooking - The Basics

I've had good success with plain ground beef (I use Chuck so that it is not too fatty but does give you some fat and moisture for cooking), potatoes, onions and carrots.

- Put 1/4 to 1/2 lb ground beef on the foil seasoned to taste.
- Slice the potatoes into roughly 1/4 inch thick slices and place on top of beef.
- Onions can be sliced into bite size chunks or sliced as rings and added to the beef and potatoes.
- Carrots can be sliced or left as is depending on their thickness.
- Season beef to taste with Salt, pepper, garlic salt, etc. and double or triple wrap in foil. Fold and seal each layer of foil as it's own foil packet
- Bury in coals until beef is done (time depends on the fire) or lay on top of coals and flip over half way through cooking (20-30 minutes per side). hold handled tongs can be used if you are careful not to puncture the foil or use welding gloves. Don't get burnt!
- I've found that dry or powdered spices are better than liquid sauces.

Also good are hollow vegetables stuffed with ground beef or a ground beef/rice mixture. Green peppers, onions and tomatoes work well. Cut the top off of the green peppers or tomatoes, remove the innards leaving just the fleshy outer part, and stuff with whatever you want inside. For onions, hollow out the inner sections leaving about 1/4 inch of the outer sections. I've seen the veggies cooked both in foil and also put directly on the coals. Some people like these hollowed out vegetables with a tuna fish mixture in them (hot or cold).

Short Cuts, Time Savers, and Other Suggestions

- You can use canned, sliced potato instead of raw potato you need to cut in camp.
- You can use canned, sliced carrots instead of raw carrots you need to cut in camp.
- You can use baby carrots (bagged in the fresh produce section of the grocery store) whole.
- I like to use the outer leaves of a head of cabbage as a bowl for my dinners. Then a layer of potato, carrots, and sliced onion; then the beef, then more potato, carrots, and sliced onion; and finally topped off with another layer or two of outer cabbage leaves. Don't forget to season your meat and vegetables. This method has an advantage in that if the meal burns a bit only the cabbage leaves are damaged and not the whole meal, the cabbage adds flavor and moisture too.
- Some friends swear by adding a few pats of butter or margarine to their foil packs.
- For seasoning, I like mixing dry onion soup mix to my ground beef, chicken, or turkey
- If convenience is more important than cost, try pre-frozen patties, frozen chicken breasts (with or without flavor coating), marinated boneless meats, or ready made fresh meat patties. You can cut down on the handling of the meat, won't need to worry as much about portion sizes, and keep meat juices off the picnic table this way. In addition, the frozen patties or boneless meat pieces can help keep the cooler colder as they thaw more slowly.

- A recent email was received that recommended using the pre-made foil packets that are now available in most grocery stores. Reynolds, I think, was the first to sell them.

Hot Wings in Foil

- 4-6 wings per person
- A little salt and pepper (black pepper - the hot stuff comes later)
- 3 tablespoons of margarine or butter
- 3 tablespoons of Louisiana hot sauce; any brand will do. (Keep in mind that Tabasco is about twice as hot as the others)
- double or triple wrap in foil. Fold and seal each layer of foil as it's own foil packet
- cook 'em up and don't forget the blue cheese dressing.

Chicken Cordon-Blu

- Pound out a boneless chicken breast. (Can be done at home)
- Place a slice of ham, a slice of Swiss cheese, and some broccoli on top.
- Roll it up and cover with bread crumbs.
- Wrap in foil and cook until chicken is done.

Points to Remember

- Understand that cooking with steam is sometimes more efficient. With that in mind, we take our large piece of aluminum foil and make a pocket out of it. Fold the bottom up into a "W" fold so that it will stand up if you flatten the bottom. The sides should be folded to make a seam. The aluminum foil "pocket" will become a pressure cooker when you fold the top over.
- Use small pieces (about 1/2" across) or less for all of your materials. This means bite size pieces of meat (beef, chicken, turkey, pork), fish, vegetables, etc.
- Use at least three times more vegetables than meat (for health).
- All of the portions should be the same size/weight. They'll all cook at about the same speed and everyone will be ready at the same time. If you are a large eater, just make two portions.
- Your fire lay (of coals) should be large enough to hold all of the packets at one time.
- Cycle the ones at the center toward the outside after about 12-15 minutes.
- Everything should be done in about 20-30 minutes.
- The foil pockets, standing up, should be easy to handle by grasping the top of the pocket while wearing gloves.

Now, for the assembly . . .

- For flavor you can lay a single piece of bacon across the bottom of the pocket (or leave it out if you so choose).
- Cut the meat into small pieces. This is not necessary for ground meat patties.
- For a 4 ounce portion of meat, you'll have another 12 ounces of vegetables, including carrots, potatoes, string beans, onion slivers, squash, cauliflower, etc.

- DO NOT PACK THE FOOD DOWN!
- Before you close the foil pocket, add 1 tablespoon of water and seasonings.
- Place the packs on the coals when they are ready to cook.
- Alternatively, you can use broth in place of the water and spices.

I have done :

- Pork strips, carrot, potato, beans, onion, squash
- Fish fillets, rice, onion, squash, cauliflower
- Ground Beef, potato, carrot, mushrooms, squash
- Boneless, skinless chicken breasts with and without marinade flavors
- Ham Steaks, onion, pineapple rings, cherry
- Apples, sugar, butter, cinnamon, oats, flour, chopped walnuts, tablespoon or two of orange juice
- Stir Fried Vegetable Mix (frozen)