

Grand Canyon ○ Smokies ○ Patagonia
THE ULTIMATE DAYHIKES, READER TRIP & ADVENTURE TREK

BACKPACKER

THE OUTDOORS AT YOUR DOORSTEP®

READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

America's 100 Best Hikes

YOUR TOP PICKS IN EVERY REGION

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15 EASY
GETAWAYS
New!
Expanded
Weekend
Section

+ **HOW TO**
CURE SHIN SPLINTS
SLEEP WARM ANYWHERE
IMPROVE YOUR STAMINA
ESCAPE QUICKSAND

TESTED:
ULTRALIGHT
TENTS &
DAYPACKS

Life List 2008

47 INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES—AND
HOW TO PULL THEM OFF (P.75)



SKILLS FOOD

Flavor in a Flash

ENHANCE BLAND BACKPACKING FOOD WITH AN ULTRALIGHT SPICE KIT.

Great taste isn't a specific ingredient in any recipe, but the right herbs and spices can guarantee it's on the menu. Think basil added to freeze-dried lasagna or curry powder sprinkled on freshly prepared chicken salad. "By adding a few ounces of spices to your pack," says Claudia Pearson, Rations Manager at NOLS Rocky Mountain and author of *NOLS Cookery*, "you gain flexibility in how you prepare and serve basic meals." Here's how to assemble and deploy an arsenal of taste on your next trek.



FIND A SPICE

- **Garlic powder** Add to foods whenever you'd use salt and pepper, including most meats, cooked vegetables, and starches. Avoid overdosing; garlic is good for the heart, bad for conversation.
- **Oregano/basil mix** Sprinkle this herb combo in equal parts on mac-and-cheese, spaghetti, or any pasta dish to create a fresh, smooth, minty flavor. Also use it to add life to canned tomato soup.
- **Soy sauce** Add zip to plain rice, pasta, cooked vegetables, and any kind of meat with this rich, salty flavoring. Mix with sesame oil, Worcester sauce, and garlic powder for a medley of spices that dresses up a pasta salad and both red or white meat.
- **Spike** Combining 39 ingredients, this salty, savory flavoring is an all-in-one spice kit ideal for salads, cold veggies, stir-fries, burritos, or soup. Also works well on chicken or steak.
- **Cinnamon** Sprinkle this spice in oatmeal, coffee, or hot chocolate. For winter holiday seasonings, mix cinnamon with nutmeg, ginger, and sugar and shake over pancakes.
- **Hot sauce** Rescue overly bland or burned meals with extra heat from chili and

cayenne peppers, both of which mask bad tastes while improving blood circulation and speeding digestion. Pack dry as red pepper flakes and use sparingly. Another favorite of our editors: the classic 1/8-ounce bottle of Tabasco sauce, which is great on scrambled eggs, rice, or tacos.

• **Curry** Add color and flavor to plain rice or noodles, or revitalize cold starchy leftovers for a spicy breakfast. Plus, curry's anti-inflammatory properties reduce muscle aches. For immediate relief, check out the four curry recipes on page 50.

BUILD YOUR OWN KIT

» **Buy** Find most common spices in the baking aisle of your local supermarket, or try Asian or Indian groceries for more variety and bulk containers. Buy seasonings by the ounce or the pound at online retailers like spicemill.com



or americanspice.com. Save pre-packaged (and long-lasting) packets of mustard, ketchup, and soy sauce from restaurants.

» **Contain** Store spices and sauces in leak-proof, screw-top Lixan travel bottles—like Nalgene's Medium Travel Bottle Kit (below) (\$9, nalgene-outdoor.com) or Eagle Creek's TSA-safe Pack-It Liquid/Gels Kit (\$15, eaglecreek.com). Kenyon makes a multi-chambered container (top) pre-loaded with garlic powder, black pepper, salt, paprika, curry powder, and cayenne pepper (\$5, rei.com).



Or fill an empty 4-chambered container (\$1.75, campmor.com) with your own spices.

» **Pack** Put your spice kit in a zip-top or mesh bag. Pack with your cook kit for easy access, and store with food (protected in a bear bag or canister, when appropriate).

Play with Fire

4 tips to get the most out of your spices

- » You can introduce extra seasoning at any point before, during, or after cooking, but the earlier you add a spice, the more infused the flavors will become.
- » Add spices in pinches to avoid over-flavoring your food. Commonly piled-on flavors include salt, hot sauce, and garlic.
- » Placate picky eaters by letting them season their own food.
- » Unless you're following a recipe, avoid mixing multiple spices together at once; the competing flavors can drown out the natural flavor of the food.

SODIUM SOAKER REPAIR EXTRA-SALTY SOUP BY ADDING A PINCH OF SUGAR, OR A RAW, PEELED POTATO.