

Dehydrated Packable Salads

These recipes are by J. Lynn Cutts, and were published in *Backpacker Magazine*, October 2001. You can find the whole article by Googling "dehydrated packable salads. I really appreciate these salads when I'm days from fresh veggies or don't want to carry the weight. - Marion Perry

- Shredded vegetables dry more thoroughly and rehydrate faster than sliced, and are less likely to crumble into powder. A food processor fitted with a medium grating disk is ideal for shredding firm veggies. For tomatoes and other soft fruits and veggies, stick to slices or chunks.
- Marinate your vegetables in spices for at least 24 hours before drying and you won't need to pack dressing ingredients. To get the full flavor blast, these marinades contain double the amounts of spices I'd normally use.
- Cabbage in all its forms dries exceptionally well, even pickled red cabbage and sauerkraut straight from the jar. Every version of cole slaw—unless it has a creamy dressing—makes the transformation from fresh to dry to salad successfully.
- Other trailworthy candidates for shredding include carrots, zucchini, yellow squash, and apples. Put shredded apples in lemon juice or vinegar right away to keep them from turning brown.

I carry these salads in zipper-lock bags and just add water half an hour or so before mealtime. Salads also add punch to a trailside lunch. In the morning, I divide the dried ingredients into individual servings in zipper-lock bags, add water, and by noon, I have a crispy, refreshing salad to augment crackers, cheese, and beef jerky. Eat it out of the bag, and there are no dishes to wash.

Dry approx. 15 hours at 130°F. If you've never dried veggies, or if you're using an oven or brand-new dehydrator, check their consistency after 15 hours; veggies should be crunchy, but not brittle. Dried salads last for up to 6 months in the freezer without spoilage or loss of flavor and texture.

Recipes

Packer's Cole Slaw

1 tablespoon noniodized or canning salt
1 cup water
1/2 cabbage, washed and finely shredded
1 stalk celery, shredded
1 carrot, shredded
1/2 green pepper, shredded
3/4 cup vinegar
1 teaspoon mustard seed
1/2 teaspoon celery seed
1 cup sugar

At home: Dissolve the salt in the water in a large bowl, then soak the cabbage in the salt water for an hour. Add the next three ingredients and let them soak for another 20 minutes, then drain and rinse thoroughly. Meanwhile, combine the vinegar, mustard seed, celery seed, and sugar in a pan and bring it to a boil, stirring until the sugar is dissolved. Pour the dressing over the rinsed vegetable mixture in the bowl and marinate, covered, for at least 24 hours before dehydrating. Divide the dried slaw into plastic bags (1/3 cup of dried salad is adequate as a side dish for one person).

In camp: Add an equal amount of water to each portion of salad (1/3 cup of water to 1/3 cup of salad) and allow it to reconstitute for at least half an hour. Yield: 3 1/2 to 4 cups (10 to 12 side dishes).

Carrot-Pineapple Crunch

1 large lemon's peel, grated
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup lemon juice
4 large carrots, peeled and shredded
1 8-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained
1 tablespoon toasted slivered almonds

At home: Stir the lemon zest and sugar into the lemon juice in a pan and simmer gently until the sugar is dissolved. Put the carrots and pineapple in a bowl, pour the juice mixture over them, cover the bowl, and marinate for at least 24 hours before drying. Package the dried mix in zipper-lock bags (1/3 cup of dried salad will make side dishes for two people). Package the almonds separately.

In camp: Add an equal amount of water to each portion of salad (1/3 cup of water to 1/3 cup of salad) and allow to reconstitute for at least half an hour, then add almonds. Yield: 1 cup (6 side dishes).

Mexi-Bean Salad

1 tablespoon minced cilantro
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon vinegar
1/3 cup salsa
1 15-ounce can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
1 cup frozen corn, thawed
1/2 bell pepper, sliced into strips
2 scallions, chopped

At home: Stir the cilantro, salt, and vinegar into the salsa in a large bowl. Add the remaining ingredients, stir, cover the bowl, and marinate for at least 24 hours before drying. The salad is done when the beans are crunchy and the corn is still a bit leathery. Place a single serving (1/4 cup) of the dried mix in each zipper-lock bag.

In camp: Add an equal amount of water to each portion of salad (1/4 cup of water to 1/4 cup of salad) and allow it to reconstitute for at least 1 hour. Use as a side salad or as filling for a vegetable burrito-just add cheese. Yield: 1 1/2 to 2 cups (6 to 8 side dishes).

Oriental Cabbage Salad

1/4 cup vinegar
1 cup sugar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1/4 cup soy sauce
1 large Chinese cabbage, shredded
1 bunch scallions, white bulb discarded, chopped
1 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds
1 tablespoon toasted slivered almonds

At home: Mix the vinegar, sugar, salt, oil, and soy sauce in a bowl and stir until the sugar is dissolved. Place the cabbage and scallions in a bowl, pour the marinade over them, and toss to thoroughly coat the vegetables. Marinate for 24 to 36 hours, then dehydrate. Package a single serving (1/4 cup) of the dried mix in each zipper-lock bag. Pack the sesame seeds and almonds in a separate bag.

In camp: Add 1/8 cup of water to 1/4 cup of dried mix and let it soak for at least half an hour. Sprinkle with the sesame seeds and almonds just before serving. Yield: 1 1/2 to 2 cups (6 to 8 side dishes).