

# Your Just Desserts

By [Alan Kesselheim](#), February 1998

I usually flinch at the quippy philosophies espoused on car bumper stickers, but when I spotted one that said, "Life is short, eat dessert first," I knew a great mind was at work somewhere. On the trail, dessert is what I live for.

There are good reasons, other than simply satisfying a sweet tooth, for having dessert. Desserts top off scanty dinners, filling the gastrointestinal crannies and pumping up essential

caloric intake after an arduous day. Beyond that, something sweet and scrumptious is always a morale booster. With a dessert going down, bad weather doesn't seem so terrible, and your muscles aren't as sore. Desserts are also a great way to celebrate—a birthday, an anniversary, reaching the top of a peak, a change in the weather, anything.

So why do many backcountry travelers include sweet treats only as an afterthought? And even then why is it only a handful of gorp or a candy bar? It probably can be traced back to one too many experiences with crumbly oatmeal cookies, pudding that never does pud, or no-bake creations that leave a processed taste in the mouth.

We're suffering a national crisis of imagination on the subject of camp desserts, which I mean to address right now. What follows is some sweet inspiration on the backcountry confections frontier. Some of the recipes are dead easy, others a tad elaborate, and there are a few you prepare at home and carry along. A full day of backpacking gives you license to eat dessert without the slightest twinge of guilt, so indulge.

## Recipes

**Desert**

### Blind Dates

#### Recipe Ingredients

- 11 pitted dates
- 4 Ounce-packages cream cheese
- 11 pecan halves

#### Serves: 2

This one falls into the dead-easy-to-make category. Best eaten on the first night out, before the cream cheese warms.

**In Camp:** Cut the dates in half lengthwise, squeeze a generous dollop of cream cheese into the cavity, and settle a pecan firmly atop the cream cheese. Repeat.

## Decadent Pudding

### Recipe Ingredients

- 1 instant pudding (chocolate can't be beat)
- powdered milk
- 1/4 Cup crushed peanuts
- 1/2 Cup Oreo cookies, crumbled
- 3 Ounces Kahlua
- 3 Ounces chocolate syrup

**Serves: 4**

**At Home:** Package the pudding mix and correct amount of powdered milk in a heavy-duty freezer zipper-lock bag with directions from pudding packaging. Package nuts and cookies in separate bags.

**In Camp:** While preparing the main meal, add the correct amount of cold water to pudding mix, add liqueur, zip bag closed, and shake well. Put crumbled cookies into individual cups, pour pudding mixture over the top, and allow to set. Warm chocolate syrup bottle in the water being heated for coffee or hot chocolate, then drizzle syrup over pudding.

## Fruit Cobbler

### Recipe Ingredients

- 12 Ounces dried fruit
- 2 Teaspoons brown sugar
- 1/4 Teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 3/4 Cups apple-cinnamon pancake mix
- 3 1/2 Cups water

**Serves: 4**

**At Home:** Package diced dried fruit with brown sugar and cinnamon. Package pancake mix in a zipper-lock plastic bag with directions to add 1/2 cup water when preparing.

**In Camp:** Add the fruit mixture to 3 cups of water and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 8 to 10 minutes to soften fruit. Add about 1/2 cup of water to the pancake mix and knead the bag to create a very stiff dumpling dough. Cut off a corner of the bag and squeeze the dough onto the top of the hot fruit (make sure you have at least 2 inches of liquid in the pot). Cover and continue to simmer until "dumplings" have cooked through, about 5 minutes.

## Lightweight Gorp

### Recipe Ingredients

- 1 part each roasted sun flower seeds, roasted pumpkin seeds, and part soy nuts
- 2 parts roasted corn, salted

**Serves: 1**

Building a better gorp: Rick Guthrie of Olympia, Washington, munches on gorp that "weighs about half as much as regular gorp."

**Snack**

## Martin Ives' Gorp

### Recipe Ingredients

- 2 parts honey-almond granola
- 1 part each whole almonds, raisins, roasted peapants, M&Ms, shredded coconut

**Serves: 1**

Martin Ives of Tacoma, Washington, makes his gorp this way.

**Desert**

## No-Bake Fudge Cookies

### Recipe Ingredients

- 1 Cup brown sugar
- 3 Tablespoons powdered milk
- 1 1/2 Cups rolled oats
- 1/4 Cup walnuts or almonds
- 3 Tablespoons water
- 5 Tablespoons margarine

**Serves: 4**

**Desert**

## Peanut Butter Cups

### Recipe Ingredients

- 1/4 Cup margarine
- 3/4 Cup peanut butter

- 3/4 Cup graham cracker crumbs
- 1/2 Pound powdered sugar
- 1 1/2 Cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

**Serves: 4**

**At Home:** Package the margarine and peanut butter in a zipper-lock freezer bag. Graham cracker crumbs and sugar go in a separate bag, and chocolate chips occupy a third bag.

**In Camp:** Drop the plastic bag containing margarine and peanut butter into boiling water until the contents melt. Remove from water and mix in sugar and crumbs. Press the batter into the bottom of a cook pot. Melt chips in their plastic bag in boiling water. Pour the melted chocolate over the crust, and set aside for an hour, if you can wait that long.

**Desert**

## **Sweet Torts**

### **Recipe Ingredients**

- 1 Tablespoon oil
- 1 package corn or flour tortillas
- 1/4 Cup brown sugar
- 1 Teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 Dash nutmeg

**Serves: 6**

**At Home:** Package the brown sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg in a zipper-lock bag.

**In Camp:** Heat oil in a frying pan at medium heat. Brown one side of a tortilla in the butter, then flip it over. Sprinkle the sugar and spice mixture across the top of the tortilla, cover the pan, and heat until the tortilla is crisp and the sugar melts.