

Information About Ingredients

Meats:

All meat listed in these recipes are freeze dried. I know it's possible to dehydrate your own meat at home, but most dehydrated meats won't reconstitute by just adding boiling water – they need actual cooking.

Vegetables:

Some veggies can be dehydrated at home and will reconstitute with boiling water and no cooking. Some vegetables will only work if they are freeze dried. Below is a table with some common vegetables and my experience of their rehydration qualities.

Vegetable	Drying Method	Notes:
zucchini	dehydrate	Very thin slices only (use a mandolin on 2 to cut)
Yellow squash	dehydrate	Very thin slices only (use a mandolin on 2 to cut)
Carrots	dehydrate	Shredded or super thin sliced works best, use the tray liner to dry
	Freeze dried	For bigger chunks
Peppers	dehydrate	Very thin slices or small dice, dries really small, might need a liner to dry
	Freeze dried	For larger dice or chunks
Onions	Dehydrate or can find them in the grocery store (minced or flakes)	thin slices or small dice at home, but I buy these – so much easier and they are inexpensive.
Kale and spinach (be careful if you buy dried kale, some are LOTS of stem)	Dehydrate	I dry raw leaves whole then crumble them for storage – they will be tiny little pieces
	Freeze dried	For slightly bigger pieces, but still only like ¼ inch
Broccoli	dehydrate	Cut into very thin pieces of florets, blanch before drying, need long soak time
	Freeze dried	For bigger pieces
Cauliflower	dehydrate	Must be cut into very thin pieces of florets, will need long soak
	Freeze dried	For bigger pieces

Tomatoes, cherry	Dehydrate (I don't like freeze dried)	Halved or quartered for bigger ones
Tomatoes, slicing	Dehydrate (I don't like freeze dried)	Cut into ¼ inch slices
Peas	Freeze dried only	Dehydrated needs cooking
Pea Pods	Dehydrate	Only the snow peas, the younger and thinner the better, will work
Corn	Freeze dried only	Dehydrated needs cooking
Green Beans	Freeze dried only	Dehydrated needs cooking
Mushrooms	dehydrate	Really thin slices, but I buy these – they are cheap to buy and hard to do at home
	Freeze dried	I don't like the consistency, so I use dehydrated only
Potatoes	dehydrated	Grated will work
	Freeze dried	For bigger chunks

Carbs

Rice:

You can buy quick cooking Minute rice (white or brown). White minute rice does not need additional cooking. If you use brown rice, you will need to either cook the rice in the boiling water for two minutes...or soak in your cozy for a long time.

You can dehydrate your own cooked rice – either white or brown. Use long grain brown, not short grain, or the rehydration time is really long. Cook the rice, dehydrate on a tray liner (rice will fall through most screen trays) for 4 to 5 hours at 135 degrees. It does taste slightly better, but it's very time consuming. BUT it's hard to find organic minute rice and you can easily dehydrate organic rice...

For Minute Rice (or homemade) : ½ C dry makes about 1 cup cooked. I use 1 cup raw (2 cups cooked) for a for big meal, 1 or 1.5 cups cooked for smaller meals.

Small box 14 oz makes 4 big backpacking meals (contains 4 cups raw rice)

Big box 42 oz makes 13 big backpacking meals (contains 13 cups raw rice)

Beans:

Many dehydrated beans (like garbanzos) will NOT reconstitute with boiling water – they need a longer cook time. However, some smaller beans work well, with either a long cozy soak time or a bit of pan cooking. Try cooked, dehydrated brown lentils, small red beans, northern beans, black beans and navy beans. When you cook them before dehydrating, make sure they are well cooked and very soft.

You can buy freeze dried fully cooked beans – they are a little pricey but pretty good, especially if you are trying to prepare vegetarian meals. Freeze drying changes their texture, I like them, not everyone does. They will rehydrate with boiling water only. Another good bet is to buy dehydrated cooked bean flakes – they work best for soups, but you can add them to stews for bulk and protein and flavor. Freeze dried beans are surprisingly hard to find – I have had good luck with Eterna Fresh, on line. Expensive, but good quality.

Tofu:

If you are looking to make meals that are higher in protein and also vegetarian, you may be interested in dried tofu. I have to say, it's not my favorite. The dried tofu normally won't rehydrate well with boiling water soak only, it needs to be cooked in the pan for a while. You can buy freeze dried tofu – it's a little pricey and the texture of it leaves something to be desired in my opinion. I use it in ramen noodle dishes – breaking up the large cubes into smaller pieces. It's ok, but not fabulous. Perhaps it would help to pre-soak it or boil it with the water and broth when you are reconstituting it.

Mashed potatoes:

One year, I made mashers from scratch and dried them in my dehydrator. A lot of work. I could hardly tell the difference between the home made and a good brand from the store. Now I buy instant mashed potato flakes.

I personally can't tell much difference between the expensive brands and the cheaper store brands – but my husband swears the Bob's Red Mill brand is far and away the best. You be the judge, I guess.

I recommend straight mashed potatoes, not the pouches with butter and milk added already. It is cheaper (and tastes better) to buy straight potatoes and add your own powdered milk and butter.

When making these on-trail, don't worry about instructions telling you to add the cold milk separately. The total amount of liquid you will add equals the Water plus the Milk called for in the instructions. You will add it all at once in the form of plain boiling water.

Pay attention to the brand of potatoes you are using as some of them differ in their proportions of liquid.

Usually, a serving (on the box instructions) is about ½ Cup cooked. For most meals, you will do a “4 serving” portion, for about 2 C of prepared potatoes.

Boxed (straight potatoes):

The 13.75 oz box will make about 9 cups prepared

The big box, 26.2 oz, makes 17 cups prepared

Pouches: (with butter and milk already added)

The small 4 oz pouch makes about 2 cups cooked

The larger 8 oz pouch makes about 4 cups cooked

Pasta:

Any pasta that cooks in 6 min or less should rehydrate with boiling water only. You may need to let the cozy sit for longer than 10 minutes for some pastas, to allow them to fully rehydrate. It's always worth testing pasta before you assemble the meals– put some in your cozy with boiling water and see how it tastes and feels after 10 minutes...15 minutes...etc.

If you're willing, you can use many longer cooking pastas, you just have to cook and dry them first. Fully cook it, just past al dente but not mushy. Then dehydrate it. It should reconstitute with boiling water only. It makes for more work, but if you really want a specific pasta, it may be worth it to you.

Angel Hair will work but may get a little mushy after a 10 min soak in boiling water. 2 oz dry equals just a little under 1 C cooked

Spaghettini – just a little thicker than angel hair and will hold up better to a 10 minute soak. Look at it in the store, compare it to angel hair, make sure it is a little thicker.

Linguine Fini – a thinner version of linguine noodles, cooks in about 4 minutes so does well with a 10 minute soak.

De Cecco Fettucine 103 (make sure it is 103) is my favorite - it will rehydrate but does not get mushy - it's also hard to find. Look online – you can find it for about \$3.00/8 oz box if you buy 12 boxes. 2 oz dry equals a little over 1 C cooked.

“Al Dente” brand (available online if not in a local store) makes a couple different fettuccine flavors that work well - says right on the bag “cooks in 5 minutes”. 2 oz dry = a little over 1C cooked

Macaroni for Mac and Cheese: Grocery stores sell quite a variety of elbow macaroni. You can look at them and visually see which macaroni has the thinnest walls - that's the one you want, as it will rehydrate best. Test “cook” it first in your cozy with boiling water. Some of them rehydrate beautifully, some get like mushy cardboard. I don't know why. For very best results, buy a good macaroni with thin walls, cook it at home, spread it on a dehydrator tray and dry it. It reconstitutes beautifully! PS, the stuff in the boxed mac and cheese will not work – you must boil those noodles.

Ramen and Asian Noodles: I have not used instant ramen in meals because most of the flavor packets either have a lot of MSG or I just don't love the taste. The only place I have been able to find affordable, organic, instant (just add boiling water) ramen without the flavor packets is Walmart – they sell organic ramen in big bags. Amazon sometimes has Ka Me quick cooking Chinese noodles – those are fine but super expensive.

You could use any quick cooking Asian noodle – soba is good.

I am not a fan of the quick cook rice vermicelli noodles, and most of the rice noodles need at least a 5-minute boil, regardless of their package directions. Experiment at home with your cozy and your favorite Asian noodles, see what works for you.

Couscous: For most kinds, 1 C couscous + 1 C water makes just over 2 C cooked. Some brands call for 1 ¼ C water.

If you search, you can find it in bulk or in big bags. You don't need to buy those expensive little boxes with the flavorings already added, though of course, you can - and use the flavorings. Over 10 min sitting time makes couscous a little mushy. If the meal needs a long sit time, take the lid off and stir it halfway through, cooling down the couscous on the bottom.

Quinoa – Amazon now sells quick cooking quinoa, which I have not tried. I have home dehydrated cooked quinoa. It does reconstitute with boiling water. I think the consistency suffers a little from the process. It's OK, but I don't use it very often. It's also a pain to dry. But if you like it...go ahead. Many of these recipes could use quinoa instead of rice or mashed potatoes.

The Things That Make This Food Worth Eating:

Powdered coconut milk, butter, sour cream, whole milk, heavy cream and powdered cheese. Horribly processed, expensive, industrial foods, but IMHO, totally necessary. Some brands are better than others. Buy them on Amazon or shop it right and maybe find them on sale. I like Judees brand, Hoosier Hill is just OK, there are some organics ones which are quite good, but really expensive.

Powdered Coconut Milk – also known as coconut cream powder. Use for curries, tikka masala, chia pudding, some soups

Powdered Butter – I put it in almost everything

Powdered Sour Cream – beef stroganoff, anything with mashed potatoes, anything Mexican, this adds a noticeable richness and depth to so many meals.

Powdered Milk – do yourself a favor and don't buy the nonfat. Whole milk only unless you are trying to go budget, then maybe the non-fat is ok.

Powdered Heavy Cream – if you use this, it's amazing! But for long term storage, you will need to put your meals in the freezer. The fat content is high enough that this will go a little sour after a month or two. It's a game changer for instant coffee though...and any kind of alfredo or creamy sauce.

Cheese – the powdered cheddars are quite good. For some reason, I find the orange cheddar powder tastes way more cheese-like than the white. You can't really dehydrate cheese, it has too much fat. You can buy a jar of Kraft Grated Parmesan from the grocery store and use that in any of these meals – it is shelf stable. You can, however, buy freeze dried shredded or crumbled cheese. It's Ok. It kind of melts. But it's a little weird.

Flavoring Items:

You can dry **sriracha** and **tamari** - or you can buy them powdered on amazon - or you can say fuck it and just steal some Tabasco and soy sauce packets from a restaurant and carry them to add to the meal in camp. What's another 8 grams (which is what a packet of soy sauce weighs)

Mushroom powder, put dried mushrooms in your coffee grinder. Good in many things!

Tomato powder, I save the skins from canning tomatoes and dehydrate them, then grind in the coffee grinder. You can also buy tomato powder on amazon.

Nutritional Yeast - I add this to a lot of meals.

Curry Paste – I make or buy curry paste, spread it in a thin layer on a film and dehydrate it

Lemon or Lime – buy the packets of True Lime or True Lemon, it's powdered pure juice

Chicken or Beef or Veggie Bouillon:

I tried making my own once, by making stock, reducing it until it was thick, then dehydrating the result. Epic fail. Many commercially available products have a ton of MSG in them, which may or may not be an issue for you. Some good non-MSG brands I have tried include Knorr Zero Salt bouillon, Massel bouillon powder, Fody Foods soup base, Watkins soup and gravy base. Clean Monday Meals makes probably the healthiest option I have found – but I don't find it the best tasting.

If you can find a good powder or granulated bouillon, that's what I prefer.

If you use the wrapped cubes, they have some moisture in them – they will turn hard (and a little icky) after long storage. Keep them in the wrapping when you add them to the meal bag – when you boil water for the meal, fish out the cube, unwrap it, and add to the water so it has a chance to dissolve (that way you won't find the cube intact at the bottom of a very boring tasting meal)

Miso: You can buy powdered miso the Asian food section of some grocery stores, or any Asian food market. However, you can also dehydrate miso paste on film in your dehydrator. It loses some of its flavor, so I normally add a few things to the recipe to make up for that. But the dry miso adds a depth of flavor and umami to a meal. If I am making something like an Asian Noodle soup meal (think ramen bowl) I will normally add vegetable or meat based bullion to it, making it extra rich and delicious. I have dried a couple different types of miso – and while white miso is my favorite when fresh, I have to say that red miso holds more flavor when it is dehydrated. If you use the miso cubes that are available (like bouillon cubes), make sure to take them out of the paper wrapping and add them to the water while it comes to a boil, breaking it up to make sure it dissolves. That way you won't find a cube of miso at the bottom of your flavorless meal.