

# FINAL DRAFT National Park Service Healthy and Sustainable Food Choice Guidelines for Backcountry Operations



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The National Park Service (NPS) has hundreds of concession contracts providing services to visitors entering the backcountry. These backcountry activities range from day-trips on bicycles and overnight stays at hike-in lodges to multiday rafting trips and mountaineering expeditions. Whether they involve sit-down meals at an alpine camp or snacks on the river or trail, many of these activities have some level of food service. While nowhere near those of NPS front country visitor services, these backcountry food and beverage operations provide opportunity deliver healthy and sustainable food to visitors and help meet the NPS *Call to Action* Goal 8: Eat Well and Prosper, which states that the NPS will:

*Encourage park visitors to make healthy lifestyle choices and position parks to support local economies by ensuring that all current and future concession contracts require multiple healthy, sustainably produced, and reasonably priced food options at national park food service concessions.*

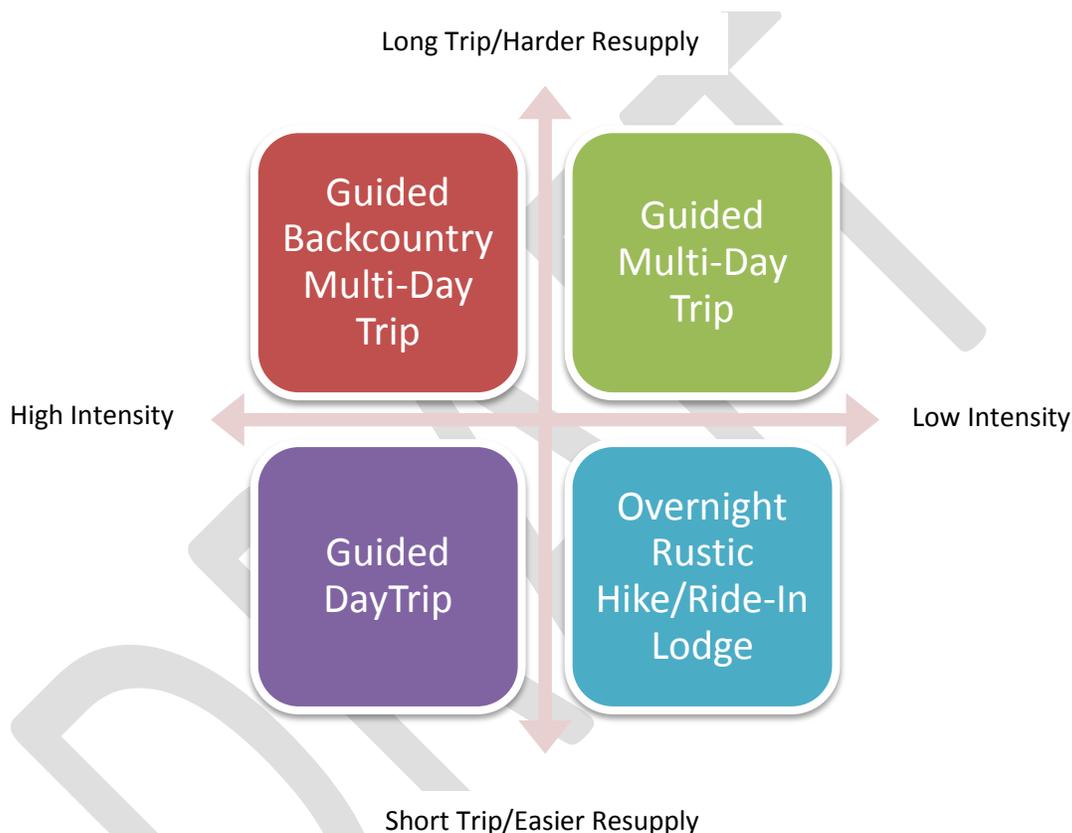
Backcountry food and beverage operations have some fundamental considerations that are different than those of the front country. To a much more substantial degree than in the front country, the NPS concessioner must make sure visitor nutritional needs are met during these outdoor activities. They are also confronted with the technical and economic challenges of delivering food service in the backcountry. In addressing these needs, healthy and sustainable food opportunities in the backcountry can be evaluated by looking at two primary factors: level of physical activity (i.e., intensity) of the visitor experience, and the length of the trip/remoteness and potential for resupply. In regard to intensity, health and sustainable food for higher intensity activities must consider the caloric and electrolyte replacement requirements and other nutritional factors associated with the activity. For lower-level intensity activities, foods with lower calories, fat and sodium choices can be offered. Length of trip and remoteness and resupply capability also affect the ability of the concessioner to provide healthy and sustainable choices. For example, fresh produce may be available early but not later in the trip. Healthy and sustainable food may be more feasible at locations that are accessible in a day via equipment or pack-animal accessible trail versus a more remote location without such access.

Using these factors, ***NPS Healthy and Sustainable Food Choice Guidelines for backcountry Operations*** have been developed which can be used by Parks and concessioners to identify appropriate food and beverage requirements for new contracts and opportunities for concessioners to voluntarily implement practices in existing operations. These guidelines have been segregated into four categories as outlined in Figure 1 below. This segregation can be

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useful in understanding the opportunities for services but some operations may not fit neatly into a particular category. Parks and concessioners should use their own judgment to determine where they fit and the best healthy and sustainable food strategies that are technically appropriate and economically feasible for their specific operation and location.

Figure 1 – Matrix of Backcountry Operations



Definitions for terms identified in the guidelines are provided in a separate ***NPS Healthy and Sustainable Food Choice Glossary***. Guidelines for healthy and sustainable food in front country operations are also provided in a separate document. Healthy and sustainable retail food sales guidelines are under development.

## HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD GUIDELINES – BACCOUNTRY COUNTRY OPERATIONS

These guidelines should be used to determine requirements for new contracts, following an analysis of what is technically and economically feasible and appropriate given services, location and other factors specific to the contract. These guidelines may also be used to identify criteria for existing contracts which can be applied on upon mutual agreement by the Service and the concessioner. Concessioners are also encouraged to voluntarily apply the guidelines where appropriate.

Type of Trip	Trip Description	Concessioner Examples	Guidelines for Consideration
Guided Day Trip	Day trips that provide snacks and bag lunches to guests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Float Trips, GRTE</li> <li>• Fishing Trips, GRTE</li> <li>• Horseback Riding, ROMO</li> <li>• One Day Raft Trips, GRCA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer a choice of healthy meals and snacks that are lower in calories and lower in fat. Target healthy lunch calories are 400 calories, target snack calories are 150 calories.</li> <li>• Offer fruits and vegetables with snacks and meals.</li> <li>• Fruits and vegetables are seasonal, local or regionally produced when possible.</li> <li>• If offered, use fat-free dairy products.</li> <li>• Where grains are offered (e.g., bread for sandwiches), use whole grains.</li> <li>• Of the beverage selection offered, several have no added sugar (i.e., high-fructose corn syrup, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, honey, sucrose, dextrose), such as natural fruit juices.</li> </ul>
Guided Multi-Day Trip	Multi-day trips that provide several daily meals and have basic facilities for food storage available (e.g., ice chests and coolers).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3-18 Day White Water Raft Trips, GRCA</li> <li>• Kayaking Tours, GRTE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide healthy meals and snacks that include a combination of calories, proteins, carbohydrates, and healthy fats appropriate to the level of activity. These may include low calorie, low sodium and low fat choice(s) within the more limited menu that may be offered.</li> <li>• Offer all meals with at least one fruit or vegetable (use fresh where possible).</li> <li>• Fat-free dairy products are used.</li> <li>• Where grains are offered, use whole grains.</li> <li>• Of the beverage selection offered, other than water, coffee, tea, and alcohol, several have no added sugar (i.e., high-fructose corn syrup, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, honey, sucrose, dextrose), such as natural fruit juice.</li> <li>• Entrees have no artificial trans-fats.</li> <li>• Meat, seafood and eggs have no hormones and no antibiotics added.</li> <li>• Steam and grill food rather than using fat in cooking.</li> <li>• Where seafood options are offered, provide only those that are “Best Choices” or “Good Alternatives” on the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch list, certified sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council, or identified by an equivalent program that has been approved by the NPS.</li> <li>• Produce is seasonal, local or regionally produced when possible.</li> <li>• Organic foods may be used.</li> <li>• Coffee is fair-trade certified and shade grown.</li> </ul>

Type of Trip	Trip Description	Concessioner Examples	Guidelines for Consideration
Rustic Hike/Ride-In Lodge	Facilities with complete but primitive kitchen with rustic food storage and preparation facilities. Meals are typically served family-style. Access of supplies is challenging but equipment/animals are available to pack in.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LeConte Lodge, GRSM</li> <li>• Granite Park and Sperry Chalets, GLAC</li> <li>• Kantishna, DENA</li> <li>• Phantom Ranch, GRCA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide healthy meals and snacks that include a combination of calories, proteins, carbohydrates, and healthy fats appropriate to the level of activity. These may include low calorie, low sodium and low fat choice(s) within the more limited menu that may be offered.</li> <li>• Where grains are offered, use whole grains.</li> <li>• Offer all meals with at least one fresh fruit or vegetable.</li> <li>• Of the beverage selection offered, other than water, coffee, and tea, several have no added sugar (i.e., high-fructose corn syrup, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, honey, sucrose, dextrose), such as natural fruit juice.</li> <li>• Meat, seafood and eggs have no hormones and no antibiotics added.</li> <li>• Where possible, offer the choice of steamed and grilled food rather than using fat in cooking.</li> <li>• Where seafood options are offered, provide only those that are “Best Choices” or “Good Alternatives” on the Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch list, certified sustainable by the Marine Stewardship Council, or identified by an equivalent program that has been approved by the NPS.</li> <li>• Produce is seasonal, local or regionally produced when possible.</li> <li>• Organic foods may be used.</li> <li>• Coffee is fair-trade certified and shade grown.</li> <li>• Provide signs or other educational materials to visitors on the importance of healthy food in the context of the facilities and activities at the location.</li> </ul>
Guided Backcountry Multi-Day Trip	Multi-day trips in very remote locations with limited access to resupply. Several meals per day may be provided. Cooking and food storage facilities are very limited.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sport Hunting, DENA</li> <li>• Mountaineering, DENA</li> <li>• Backpacking, GRTE</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide healthy high calorie meals and snacks that include a combination of proteins, carbohydrates, and healthy fats. For example, seeds and nuts, peanut butter, energy bars, sweet potatoes, eggs, etc.</li> <li>• Where grains are offered, there is an emphasis on whole grains. For example, breads, pasta, granola bars, etc.</li> <li>• Offer all meals with at least one fruit or vegetables; these may not be fresh; particularly later in the trip.</li> </ul>