

# Stoves and Cookware

## Stoves

Not everyone has to own and pack a stove. A rule of thumb that works well and is the one used at Philmont is that a crew needs at least two stoves and beyond that up to four people can share a stove. Just make sure that sufficient fuel is taken. Further, often water can be boiled for more than one person's cooking, cleaning and sterilization requirements at once, cutting down on time and fuel consumption. If two leaders carry their stoves, only one or two more is sufficient for an appropriately sized crew. On troop hikes, three per stove is adequate. So, it may be possible to defer your stove purchase until you get serious about backpacking and have experienced several types and know for yourself what you need. Sharing stoves also allows distribution of weight away from less able backpackers.

Two popular "component" stoves are the MSR Whisperlite Shaker Stove -- upper left illustration -- (14 oz. + 4.3 oz. for 22 fl. oz. bottle = 18.3 oz.) and the Peak 1 Apex II Stove (Coleman) -- lower left illustration -- (19 oz. including 22 fl. oz. bottle). The Shaker is very popular, with its rotating legs, for packing into a small profile. The Apex's advantages are that its second regulator valve is easier for newbies to adjust in simmer mode and has a built-in windscreen. The shaker uses white gas, while the Apex II uses white or unleaded gas. Both have variations on their basic design. Peak (Coleman) has varieties that have the gas tank integrated into the base. In general, the Peak's are bulkier. Peak also makes several butane/propane cartridge stoves. Butane and propane stoves light easily and are dependable, but require packing a second cartridge if the trip is long or the first cartridge is already partially used. Liquid fuel bottles can just be "topped off". Several people have indicated that butane stoves lose some of their ease and effectiveness in cooler higher-altitude settings. Don't forget the waterproofed matches or lighter!

## Cookware

Unless you go to something like titanium (spelled with a "\$"), your basic choices are aluminum or stainless steel. Aluminum is much lighter but doesn't conduct heat as well, or clean up as easily, as stainless steel. Because food tends to stick to aluminum, stick resistant-coated wares are available. One important feature of cookware is that it stacks within itself, because it is bulky. Besides stacking, sometimes the stove can be packed inside the cookware. For one person, a 3/4 quart pan & lid for boiling water, a bowl, and a small plastic or aluminum-measuring cup are sufficient. A small fry pan could be substituted for the bowl. Quite often, these sets have both a bowl and fry pan. Such combination -- upper right illustration -- can easily be found in either aluminum (with anti-stick fry pan) or stainless steel. The non-coated aluminum versions are the cheapest. There are also some real nice two-person sets that, while heavier and costlier than a one-person set, are much lighter and cheaper than two individual sets. MSR makes a really nice stackable anti-stick aluminum set that would work for 3-4 people.

One set not recommended is the steel Army issue mess kit that includes a two-compartment plate and fold-over-handle skillet. These are re-e-e-eal heavy. Aluminum versions may be OK, but a better choice is the traditional Boy Scouts style cook set -- stackable bowl, fry pan (with swing-around handle), small pot and lid -- similar to that in the upper right illustration. Generic aluminum versions can often be found in department stores and work just fine.

"One-pot" cooking can be an interesting alternative and economical if the crew or troop already owns a multi-person camp-set. Eight to twelve people can easily split up a set containing an 8 qt. kettle & lid, 4 qt. kettle & lid, and a 10 inch fry pan, with each scout carrying their own bowl, cup and utensils. Texsport offer a copper bottomed stainless steel set.

Some people carry a 16 oz. (1/2 quart) stainless steel mountain or sierra cup to do double duty as a cup and small pot. Utensils should fit inside the cookware along with the stove. Lexan sets are lighter. Cut-down Rubbermaid or Lexan mini-spatulas work well. Use a tablespoon (rather than a teaspoon) so that it can triple as a stirrer, a ladle and an efficient food shovel after a long hungry day on the trail.

The examples from above can be found in most popular outdoor catalogs or websites. Department stores, such as Wal-Mart, are also potential sources. You should be able to find serviceable stoves and cookware at reasonable prices.