

Campouts and Cookouts

Tim Ryan

The sun was low over the treetops in the west; as the old bell was rung, campers left their games and chores and ran to assemble for a brief period of thanksgiving. This devotional over, the camp's director rose to make the traditional announcements for the evening's activities. Acting the part of one who knows a secret and is known to know a secret, he put off "telling" with statements about the wonderful week that lay behind them. Finally, when the children felt they would burst with curiosity, he declared, "And since we've enjoyed such a wonderful week together, the staff and I decided that we would surprise you with a cookout."

Giving careful instructions for finding the "secret path" to the meadow (where part of the staff was already building several small fires and arranging the food for quick and convenient distribution), the director left the mess hall and led the campers to the "secret" glade,

There, to the delight of both young and old, they ate and engaged in lively games. When everyone had eaten and after all had exhausted themselves in the games, another devotional was held around the largest of the cooking fires. On a pledge of silence the campers retired to their cabins and prepared for sleep.

Campouts and cookouts are natural companions. Perhaps no camp activity is so universal as the cookout. Easily prepared and simply executed, cooking out is enjoyed by the staff as well as the campers.

A good menu for young campers would probably include something which the campers themselves could prepare, plus salads and vegetables prepared by the staff. The staff prepares the salad ahead of time and keeps it chilled. The vegetables, perhaps baked potatoes wrapped in tin foil, are cooked at the time of the cookout or immediately beforehand. Young campers always find "hot dogs" a treat, but the cooks might consider teaching their young helpers to roast pork chops or some similar meat basted with a simple sauce.

The older campers are quite capable of cooking better foods. The seniors will enjoy cooking prepared pieces of chicken on a grill or on a stick. They can also be successful cooks with roasted ears of fresh, buttered corn or baked sweet yams. Such menus are rarely more expensive than the traditional meals of potato chips, beans, and frankfurters, and are much finer eating. When provided with small cuts of meat, simple sauces and spices, fresh, prepared vegetables, simple utensils, and brief instruction, campers are surprisingly good chefs.

Staff members who plan the cookout must remember that their preparations are not complete until all the necessary materials are ready for cooking. Making the sauces in spare time, husking and cleaning the corn, and furnishing paper plates are not hard jobs, but they are essential to the enjoyable cookout.

Officials should insist that the campers leave the cookout area as neat and beautiful as it was before the meal. Fires must be built safely, watched carefully, and properly extinguished. It would be so wasteful to spoil a day with carelessness in these areas.