

Cowboy Cooking For RVers

by Jim Foreman



Recipes Adapted to the RV Lifestyle

INTRODUCTION

Living for an extended length of time in an RV, as opposed to weekend camping or a couple weeks of vacation, will give a person a whole new perspective on life. It will also require a considerable change of both thinking and lifestyle if he is to gain the greatest pleasure from the experience. There is an old saying which pretty well sums it up, 'IF YOU AIN'T WHERE YOU ARE, YOU AIN'T NOWHERE.' So slow down, kick back and enjoy what is happening to you. When you are living full time in an RV, all days are good days; some just happen to be a lot better than others.

When you leave the basic security of a home with its large kitchen, equipped with countless electrical gadgets, and condense your life into the compact galley of an RV, you must also alter your thinking to match the limitations of both space and facilities. This will need to include changes in both your cooking and eating habits.

Along with the changes in both scenery and lifestyle, trying new and different foods will make life and the experience more exciting.

Over the years, I have come up with three basic rules for cooking in an RV. You are welcome to add to, subtract from, change in any way that you like or completely ignore them, but they work for me.

Rule Number One: Never cook anything which takes longer to prepare than it does to eat.

Rule Number Two: The fewer pots that you use, the fewer that you have to wash.

Rule Number Three: *No cosine de todo vaca por un taco.* (Don't cook the whole cow for one taco.)

Traveling, camping or living in an RV is supposed to be fun for everyone, including the cook. There are just too many other things to do for someone to spend long hours over a hot stove. I attempted to keep the recipes in this book easy to follow, quick to prepare and interesting enough to prevent boredom. I also tried to use items which are the most likely to be found in the average RV because there will be many times when a trip to the grocery store could prove to be very difficult. Most of the recipes are for four people but can be expanded or reduced to suit your

particular needs. Few RV refrigerators have the storage space to hold more than the basics, much less a bunch of leftovers.

My RVer's CookBook isn't a Mexican or even a Tex-Mex cookbook, although many of the recipes are based on favorites of that region. This comes from my having spent most of my life in the southwest as well as many pleasant winters camped along the beaches of Baja.

While this certainly isn't a diet cookbook, salt will not be shown in any recipe unless it is necessary for the outcome of the dish. Individual cooks can add salt to suit their tastes or it can be added at the table. Since it has been medically proven that salt is one of the major causes of heart problems, one should consider reducing their intake of sodium by using one of the many salt substitutes available on the market today. In fact, I find that a dash of one of my favorite herbs or a little lime juice will often give the food a lot more flavor than does salt. The use of fats has also been kept to a minimum in these recipes. For better health and fitness while on the road, the RV traveler should take advantage of fresh fruits and vegetables which are available just about anywhere one would be camping.

The main thing that I have to say in this book is: Have fun, enjoy life and Mucho Gusto.

BREAKFAST

For the bacon and eggs for breakfast people, here is a way that they can enjoy their favorites while getting some really good vitamins, minerals and raw fiber at the same time. Even though each person gets only one slice of bacon and one egg, this breakfast will fill you up much better than you'd think, especially if backed up with some fruit. It beats an Egg Mac-something nine ways to one. This serves two people and is a quick and easy breakfast to whip up.

GOOD MORNING ENSENADA!

2 Flour Tortillas
2 Slices Bacon
2 Eggs
2 T. Salsa

Cook and drain bacon on a paper towel. Scramble the eggs in a few drops of bacon grease. Put one slice of bacon and half of scrambled eggs on each heated tortilla. Top with a spoon of salsa and roll up. These are called *burros* in Mexico, which also means donkey. Burros are the original finger food of Mexico. When you pick up your burro to eat, clamp the lower end of the tortilla between your ring and little finger to prevent what is in it from falling out. As a side dish to go with breakfast burros, slice some tomatoes, half an orange in sections and half avocado. Squeeze lime juice over the fruit and breakfast is served.

If you are the more venturesome type, substitute a few strips of smoked fish (Pescado al humado) for the bacon. Canned smoked fish is available all over Mexico and is especially popular in Baja. Most of it comes from a plant located at Ensenada. The fish is packed in a small amount of olive oil and each can has a Chili Pequin added for excitement. One side of the bright red label on the can is in English and the other in Spanish.

There are very few things which are less inspiring for breakfast than a bowl of instant oatmeal. You know the stuff; it comes in a paper envelope and when mixed with hot water, results in something which tastes like flavored wallpaper paste. Read the list of ingredients and you will find that it contains rolled oats, sugar and salt; plus imitation apple chunks or whatever and artificial flavorings. This stuff might be OK for backpackers or mountain climbers, but it can be put to a much better use In making quick muffins

QUICK MUFFINS

2/3 Cup Bisquick® or Pancake Mix
2 T. Sugar
1 Package Artificially Flavored Imitation Instant Oatmeal Stuff
1/2 Cup Milk
1/2 Tsp. Vanilla

Use a fork to beat the egg with the milk and then stir in the dry ingredients. It is not necessary to get rid of all of the lumps. Use paper liners or grease muffin pan or spray with Pam®. Fill each cup about 2/3 full and bake 18 minutes in 375 oven, or until brown. Makes 6 large, 8 medium or 12 small muffins.

If you like French Toast, you'll love Baja Toast. Bakeries (Panaderias) in Baja make a small roll called a Bollelo and they are so good that everyone tends to buy more than they can eat. Use the day-old ones to make Baja Toast.

BAJA TOAST

2 Day-old Bollelos
2 Eggs
1 Cup Milk
2 T. Sugar
1/4 Tsp. Vanilla

Grease cake pan with butter or spray with Pam. Cut bollelos in 1" slices. Lay slices in pan and use small pieces to fill the larger voids. Beat eggs with milk, sugar and vanilla. Pour evenly over bollelos. Sprinkle top with cinnamon and bake 25 to 30 minutes in 350 oven, or until top surface is lightly browned. Cut into wedges and serve with syrup, honey or jelly.

As one travels along the highways with their CBs tuned to Channel 19, it becomes obvious that truckers are about equally divided in their opinion as to which is the most important thing to be found at a truck stop; a waitress with big boobs or good sausage and gravy biscuits. It is a well accepted fact that each has a certain effect on the heart, but in a considerably different way. This recipe for the trucker's delight is included for those who would like to abuse their bodies with saturated fats, cholesterol and enough calories to run an 18 wheeler from Los Angeles to New York. When combined with the pan of Cowboy Biscuits, this will serve four normal people or one trucker who hasn't had anything except coffee and cigarettes for the past 24 hours.

TRUCKER'S DELIGHT

1 Pound of Jimmy Dean Sausage, or equivalent
8 T. Flour
1 Tsp. Salt
1 Tsp. Pepper
1 Quart Milk
1 Pan Cowboy Biscuits

Put the pound of sausage into a skillet and break it up with a fork as it cooks. As soon as the sausage is done, remove and keep warm. Save the grease. Put the flour into the skillet and add grease back to it until it becomes a sort of thick paste. Add the salt and pepper and cook until flour begins to brown slightly. Stirring rapidly, pour in the milk all at one time. Continue stirring until it begins to bubble and thicken, then return the cooked sausage. If it gets too thick, add a little more milk. One normal serving consists of two biscuits with a cup of sausage gravy poured over them.

"There's nine biscuits in that pan, so who gets that extra biscuit?" you ask.

It's like I told you in the biscuit recipe, that's the cook's biscuit.

RV HASH

8 Oz. Frozen Hashbrown Potatoes
1/4 Cup Chopped Onion
6 Oz. Spam, chopped to match potatoes
3 T. Bacon Grease
2 Eggs

Combine Spam and onions with potatoes and cook in Bacon Grease according to directions on package. When the potatoes are done, arrange into two mounds with craters in the middle. Break an egg into each crater. Reduce the burner to very low heat cover and cook until the eggs are the way that you like them. Top eggs with your favorite salsa. Serve with sliced tomatoes, fruit or refritos.

CHORIZO AND SCRAMBLED EGGS

Chorizo is a Mexican style sausage which is seasoned with paprika, ground chilis, cumin and oregano. It comes in long links and sold in most meat markets. You do not have to buy a whole link as the butcher will cut off as much as you would like to buy. Remove sausage from its casing and break it up as it cooks. When done, drain off excess grease, add eggs and scramble.

LUNCH

Most people who have more or less honest jobs have come to think that when both hands on the clock are pointing straight up, it is time for them to escape from the confines of the office, and having no better way to waste an hour, head for the Golden Arches to take on their daily load of saturated fat and salt. Since the life of the RV traveler is no longer tied to the hands on a clock, eating a meal at noon is one of the things which sort of gets lost along the way.

In the place of the greasy donut which they once bolted down while rushing to join the bumper to bumper traffic on the way to work, the RV nomad now has the time to sit and enjoy at least two cups of coffee before even thinking about what to have for breakfast. When they finally get around to eating, the sun is usually standing high in the sky and they want something which will stick to their ribs for a while. After all, they might have to go for several hours before eating again, especially if they have to keep throwing fish back into the water after they jumped into the boat.

Even if they do want anything to eat at noon, it is seldom more than a piece of fruit or a very small snack. After all, one does not want to take his siesta on a full stomach. For these reasons, I am enclosing only this one recipe that I came across for the noon meal; it is called

COWBOY FISH DINNER

- 1 Can Sardines
- 1 Box Soda Crackers

Open sardine can with key. Place a cracker on the pommel of the saddle. Carefully lay one sardine on the cracker. Eat. Continue procedure until you run out of sardines, crackers or room in your belly. Lick fingers clean, wipe mouth on sleeve and drop empty sardine can down a prairie dog hole.

The reader can feel free to alter any part of this recipe to suit his tastes, location or temperament.

MAIN DISHES

The Armadillo, or Texas Turkey, has been around for a long, long, long time. It was busy digging holes in the ground when the first man arrived on earth, it was sniffing out grubs before the alligator crawled out of the swamps, and it was even darting out of the way to keep from being tromped on by big-footed dinosaurs. It has managed to adapt and survive just about all of its natural enemies until the automobile came along. When an Armadillo spots an approaching automobile, it will stand its ground until the last instant and then leap straight up into the air--crashing into the grill. No wonder that they are also known as speed bumps in Texas.

ARMADILLO PIE

- 1 Pound Armadillo Meat*
- 1 Onion, chopped
- 1 Package Frozen Mixed vegetables
- 1 T. Mixed Dry Herbs
- 1 Envelope Brown Gravy Mix
- 2 Pie Crusts

*If Armadillos aren't plentiful where you are camped, beef, pork, rabbit, chicken or rattlesnake can be substituted. Cut meat into small pieces and sauté in a dab of bacon grease until lightly browned. Pour in a cup of water, the chopped onions and mixed herbs. Cover and simmer until the meat is tender. More water can be added if needed. Add the mixed vegetables and continue to simmer until they are done. Adjust the liquid to slightly less than one cup and stir in the brown gravy mix. Simmer until the gravy is thickened.

Put one unbaked pie crust in a deep pie dish, pour in the meat and vegetable mixture and put on the top crust. Seal the edges and make slits in the top crust to let the steam escape. Bake about 20 to 30 minutes in a 450 oven or until nicely browned.

BAJA FISH BOIL

This is a great recipe for whipping up dinner for a bunch of people. The amounts shown will feed six people.

- 12 Red Potatoes, about the size of large eggs
- 6 Medium Onions
- 3 to 4 Pounds Firm White Fish
- 1 Tsp. Ground Black Pepper
- 2 Gallons Sea Water or Fresh + 1/2 Pound Salt.
- 3 Nylon Mesh or Cheesecloth Bags

Wash potatoes and slice a dime-size slice off each end to keeps the skins from splitting. Cut fish into 2 inch chunks. Put the potatoes into one bag, the onions in another and the fish chunks in the third. Bring the water to a rolling boil in a big pot. This works a lot better over a bed of glowing coals as few stoves put out enough heat to get the water to really boiling Put the bag of potatoes into the water and let boil for 12 minutes, then add the bag containing the onions and cook for an additional 6 minutes. Add the bag containing the fish, dust in the black pepper and tell everyone to grab their plates. Dip off any fish grease or scum which rises to the surface. When the fish has boiled for 3 minutes, remove bags and serve

CHICKEN ENCHILADAS

- 1 Whole Chicken Breast, cooked or 16 Oz. Canned or Processed Deli Chicken
- 8 Corn Tortillas
- 1 Onion chopped fine
- 1 Can Cream of Chicken Soup
- 1 Can Cheddar Cheese Soup
- 1 4 Oz. Can Chopped Green Chilis
- 1/2 Cup Salsa Picante

Shred meat with a fork. This is the way that real Mexican cooks do it instead of chopping with a knife. Combine both cans of soup, the can of chilis and about half a can of water in a pan to heat. When the soup is hot, divide in halves. Put the chicken and onions in one half and the salsa picante in the other half. Either heat the tortillas one at a time on a dry pan or dip into hot water to soften.

Divide the meat mixture equally onto the 8 tortillas, roll them around the mixture and place with the folded side down in a 6 X 10 inch baking dish. Top with the other half of soup mixture and heat in a 350 degree oven until it begins to bubble, about 10 to 15 minutes.

SALMON CAKES

- 1 16 Oz. Can of Salmon
- 1 Egg
- 1 Small Onion, chopped fine
- 10 Saltine Crackers, crushed
- 1 T. Flour
- 1/2 Tsp. Baking Powder
- 2 T. Corn Meal

Drain liquid from salmon into measuring cup and add water if needed to bring to least 1/2 cup Add egg and beat. Combine crackers, flour, baking powder and onions with egg mixture. Remove bones and skin from salmon and flake it into mixture Form into 8 balls, each about the size of a large egg Flatten slightly and roll in corn meal. Put about a tablespoon of bacon grease, oil or Crisco into a heavy skillet and cook salmon cakes over very low heat until the bottom side is browned Since the cakes will still be very tender, you will need to use a spatula and a fork to turn them over to brown the other side.

SPICY MEATLOAF

- 1 Pound Ground Beef
- 1 12 Oz. Can of Spicy Hot V-S Juice
- 2 Eggs
- 1 Small Onion, chopped
- 1 Bell Pepper, chopped
- 12 Saltine Crackers, crushed
- * Ketchup for topping

Beat eggs with V-8 Juice, then combine with everything except the ketchup. Press into loaf pan, cover with foil and bake for 45 minutes in 350 oven. Remove foil, drain off any grease which has cooked out and coat top with 1/4 Cup ketchup, mixed with 2 T Sugar and 1 Tsp. prepared mustard. Bake uncovered for additional 15 minutes. Allow to set for about 20 minutes before slicing.

SKILLET GOULASH

- 1 Pound Ground Beef
- 1 Onion, chopped
- 1 16 Oz. Can Pinto or Kidney Beans, drained
- 2 Cups Cooked Pasta (Can be macaroni, noodles, shells, etc.)
- 1 8 Oz Can Tomato Sauce
- 1 T. Sugar
- 1 Tsp. Mixed Italian Herbs

Put meat and onions into skillet. Break up meat with a spoon and cook until it is no longer pink. Stir in everything else. Cover and simmer about 10 minutes.

SUPER SHORE DINNER

- 1 Pound Firm White Fish
- 1 Cup Minute Rice
- 1 Cup Hot Chicken Bouillon or Broth
- 1/2 Cup Salsa Picante
- 1 Tomato, diced
- 1 Cup Fresh or Frozen Green Peas
- 1/4 Cup Minced onion
- 1 Tsp. Grated Lime Peel
- 1/2 Tsp. Salt
- 12 Fresh Medium Size Clams
- 12 Medium Shrimp, peeled but tails left on

Put clams into fresh water for half an hour before you begin to make them disgorge any sand. Preheat oven to 425. Cut fish into one inch cubes. In 3 quart casserole, combine rice, chicken broth, salsa, tomato, peas, onion, lime peel and salt. Mix well and add fish. Cover and bake for 20 minutes. Add clams and shrimp. Cook 10 minutes longer or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork. Fluff rice with a fork before serving.

STOVETOP SAUSAGE & RICE CASSEROLE

- 1 Pound Smoked Sausage, in 1" pieces
- 1 Cup Diced Onions
- 1 Cup Diced Celery
- 1 Cup Minute Rice
- 1 Cup Water
- 1 Can Cream of Mushroom Soup

Mix everything together in skillet. Cover and simmer slowly until rice is done, about 10 minutes.

OVEN SAUSAGE & RICE CASSEROLE

- 1 Pound Jimmy Dean
- 1 Cup Uncooked Regular Rice
- 1 Cup Chopped Onions
- 1 Cup Chopped Celery
- 2 Cans Cream of Chicken Soup
- 2 Cups Water

Quarter sausage lengthwise then cut crosswise three times to make 16 chunks. Mix rest of ingredients well and put into large casserole. Arrange chunks of sausage on top, cover and bake for 1 hour in 350 oven, stirring once after 30 minutes.

HOW TO COOK A BIG FISH

When one is camped along the seacoast, it is not unusual for someone to catch a fish which weighs as much as 30 to 50 pounds. When this happens, after the lucky angler takes what he needs, he will usually distribute the remainder around the camp. A fish of this size is usually skinned and the large fillets cut crosswise into individual servings. Each serving will be well over an inch thick and weigh as much as half a pound. Cooking a piece of fish this thick is quite different from frying thin little fillets.

By far, the best way to cook large pieces of fish is over glowing coals and one would be hard put to find anything which will give it a better flavor than mesquite (Palo Blanco). Second choice would be charcoal. The heat should be much lower for fish than for steaks. Brush both the grill and meat with oil to prevent sticking. Grill the fish off to one side of the coals as burning juices put out an awful odor when they hit hot coals. Cook until the meat flakes easily. Do not overcook!

If you don't care to fire up the barbecue, thick pieces of fish can be cooked in a small amount of oil in a skillet.

First, determine which side of the meat was the one which had the skin on it. Salt and pepper the side away from the skin side, then roll in flour to apply a light coating to all sides. By far the best oil to use for frying the fish is either butter or olive oil, however any oil will do. Heat the skillet first, then add about a tablespoon of oil. Place the pieces of fish into the hot skillet, with the skin side up. Lower the heat and cook slowly until the flour on the bottom side is brown. Carefully turn the pieces of fish and brown the skin side last.

BAJA FISH BOIL

This is a great recipe for whipping up dinner for a bunch of people. The amounts shown will feed six people.

- 12 Red Potatoes, about the size of large eggs
- 6 Medium Onions
- 3 to 4 pounds Firm White Fish
- 1 Tsp. Ground Black Pepper
- 2 Gallons Sea Water or Fresh + 1/2 Pound Salt.
- 3 Nylon Mesh or Cheesecloth Bags

Wash potatoes and slice a dime-size slice off each end to keeps the skins from splitting. Cut fish into 2 inch chunks. Put the potatoes into one bag, the onions in another and the fish chunks in the third. Bring the water to a rolling boil in a big pot. This works a lot better over a bed of glowing coals as few stoves put out enough heat to get the water to really boiling. Put the bag of potatoes into the water and let boil for 12 minutes, then add the bag containing the onions and cook for an additional 6 minutes. Add the bag containing the fish, dump in the black pepper and tell everyone to grab their plates. Dip off any fish grease or scum which rises to the surface. When the fish has boiled for 3 minutes, remove bags and serve.

FISH IN FOIL

- Both Fillets from a 2 to 5 pound fish.
- 1 Onion, sliced in thin slices
- 1 8 Oz. Can Tomato Sauce
- 4 Limes
- Salt and Pepper
- Italian Herbs

Tear off two pieces of heavy duty or three pieces of regular aluminum foil. Each piece should be twice as long as the fillets. Stack the foil one on top of the other. Lay the fillets on the foil with the large ends opposite one another. Salt and pepper the fish and squeeze the limes over them. Arrange the onion slices between the fillets and pour the tomato sauce over them. Sprinkle with Italian Herbs Wrap the foil tightly around the fillets, pulling them into a long roll. Crease edges tightly and fold up the ends to seal. Bake for 45 minutes in a 350 degree oven or can be roasted over coals.

COOKING THE MEXICAN LOBSTER

If you ask a New Englander about Mexican lobsters, or Langosta as they are called, he will simply turn up his nose and claim that there is no such thing. If he is forced to admit that they do have something which resembles a lobster, he will claim that it is nothing more than a sea-going version of the Louisiana Crawdad. Since New Englanders elevate their noses at lots of things anyway, we will just have to go on enjoying these tasty critters and let them live in ignorance.

Mexican lobsters don't have big pinchers but they tend to move a lot faster than their east-coast cousins, making them considerably more difficult for divers to catch. When someone diving off the rocks does come up with a nice lobster, he has a prize which will bring him a considerable amount of money. The going price seems to be somewhere around four dollars per kilo for a live lobster, which is awfully cheap when compared what the same thing would cost in the states.

Be sure that your pot is large enough to hold the critter, then fill it with water and bring to a rolling boil. Drop the lobster in, head first, and slap on the lid. As soon as the water boils again, cook according to the following times.

- 1 Pound (Media Kilo) 10 minutes
- 2 Pounds (Un Kilo) 15 Minutes
- 4 Pounds (Dos Kilos) 20 Minutes

When the proper amount of time has elapsed, remove the lobster and dunk into cold water to stop the cooking. Overcooked lobster, like shrimp becomes tough.

Grasp the tail in one hand and the body in the other. Twist and bend the tail upward, breaking it free from the body. Break off the legs and antenna and discard the body as there is nothing much edible in it. with a sharp knife, pierce the tail from the bottom and split it lengthwise Remove the black vein which runs down the center of the tail. It is now is ready to sprinkle with lim6 juice and eat. Dip in melted butter if you wish.

Keep the legs and antenna in the fridge until noon the following day. Getting the meat out of them will give you something to do for an hour or so, but it will be worth the effort.

The peddlers put the shrimp into plastic bag and weigh them with a small spring scale which is usually so rusty that the figures are no longer readable. There is usually a considerable amount of bickering back and forth as to how many shrimp it takes to make a kilo.

Once you have your shrimp, there are two basic ways of cooking them. The easiest is by boiling with the shells on.

In a large pot, put about three times the volume of water as you have shrimp and bring to boil. If you have ice, make an equal amount of very cold water in another container If you are short of ice, you can use tap water. Dump the shrimp into the boiling water. Move them around in the water so that they don't cool the water off in one spot. The shrimp will turn a bright pink almost

immediately. As soon as the water returns to a boil, transfer the shrimp into the cold water to stop them from cooking. If they cook too long, they become tough and lose their flavor.

Divide them up and let each person peel his own. Serve them with seafood cocktail sauce for dipping.

SHRIMP WITH GARLIC BUTTER (Camaronies Ranchero)

- 1 Kilo Raw Shrimp, peeled
- 1 Large Onion, quartered and sliced
- 1 Stick of Butter
- 6 Cloves Garlic, crushed
- 1 Tsp. Paprika
- 1/2 Cup Salsa Picante
- 1/2 Cup Cooked Rice per Person

Peeling a kilo of raw shrimp is no easy task, so everyone who is going to eat them should pitch in to help get the job done. Butter is best but lacking that, use margarine. Put the butter in a large skillet along with the garlic, onion and paprika. As soon as the butter melts, dump in the shrimp and increase the heat to start them cooking as soon as possible. Tumble the shrimp so they all cook evenly. They will be done as soon as they are hot all the way through. Mix in the salsa picante and serve over a bed of rice.

HOW TO BOIL SHRIMP (CAMARONES)

At around four in the afternoon, the shrimp boats will begin to return to port. If seagulls are following the boats, that means that they have had a good catch and are tossing the heads over the stern as they clean them. As soon as they drop anchor, several small boats will converge on the worst looking rust-buckets of the lot. The newer and better looking trawlers are all owned by large companies which sell their catches under contract. The older boats are usually owned by their captains and their catch is available for sale to anyone. Some of the people who buy from the captains sell to various restaurants and markets, while the others prefer to sell shrimp on the street or door to door. People who have been camping around there for any length of time know that it is best to meet the small boats as soon as they hit the shore because, if the catch was small that day, they will sell out within minutes.

CHICKEN-FRIED RATTLESNAKE

Cook a good rattlesnake and people will beat a path to your door--mostly because they know that there won't be any live rattlesnakes around your house because they have all been eaten. I'm often asked what the tender, white rattlesnake meat tastes like. Well, it's not chicken, nor is it frog legs and it's not fish either. Best that I can tell you is that it tastes like rattlesnake.

1 3 to 4 Foot Rattlesnake
1 Egg
1/2 Cup Milk
1 Cup Flour
Salt and Pepper to Taste
Oil For Deep Frying

Frying size rattlesnakes, about three to four feet long, are best for eating. Any rattler which has lived long enough to grow to five feet in length or accumulate more than about six rattles would be like trying to eat an old rooster. Larger rattlers can be parboiled with some garlic and onions to make them tender enough for frying.

Since few snakes are already dressed when delivered, you will probably have to skin and clean it yourself. First, Just like unloading a gun, cut off its head and bury it someplace. That gets rid of the dangerous part.

Two pairs of pliers work best for skinning a snake. Grab the neckbone where the head was removed with one pair and the edge of the skin with the other, give a good tug and the skin will turn inside-out and come right off. If you want to save the skin, rub the flesh side with lots of salt, wrap in plastic and keep in the refrigerator until It can be sent to a tanner After the skin is off, cleaning the rest of the snake is simple.

Remove any black spots in the flesh. Cut the snake into 1 to 2 inch lengths and sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Beat the milk and egg together. Put the flour into a paper bag and shake the pieces of snake in it. Dip each piece into the egg and milk mixture and coat again with flour. Set each piece aside for a few minutes to allow the batter to set, then fry in hot oil until brown.

To eat, strip the meat off the rib bones with your teeth. Cowboys claim that you ain't a real man till you've eaten rattlesnake and mountain oysters.

SALSAS

In Mexico, anything which is added to or put on food is called salsa, and no self-respecting Mexican cook would be caught dead buying ready made salsa in a store. Generally speaking, it's rather difficult to find canned salsas in Mexico.

Recipes for making salsa are handed down from mother to daughter and vary widely from one part of the country to another. The mildest salsas are found near the seacoast with the hotter varieties being more popular inland.

One can make their own Salsa Picante in the same manner as the locals by peeling the tomatoes and chilis, chopping the onions and then simmering it for several hours; or they can make Gringo salsa Picante In a matter of minutes.

GRINGO SALSA PICANTE

- 1 Can Mexican Style or Ro-Tel Tomatoes & Chilis
- 1 Yellow Onion, chopped

Whiz in a blender, add the chopped onion and simmer for 10 minutes to reduce the excess liquid.

SALSA CRUDA

- 1 Onion, chopped
- 2 Green Onions w/tops, cut in thin slices
- 1 Firm Tomato, chopped
- 1 Tsp. Chopped Cilantro
- 2 Limes
- 1 T. Olive Oil

Combine onions, tomatoes, cilantro and juice from limes in a glass or ceramic bowl. Allow to set for half an hour, then mix in the olive oil to seal out the air. Salsa Cruda is always made daily, as it does not keep well.

Cilantro is similar to parsley but has a rather different flavor. If you do not care for the flavor, it can be omitted.

PICO de GALLO

Another version of Salsa Cruda is called Pico de Gallo, or peck of the rooster. It is made the same as Salsa Cruda, except that thinly sliced jalapenos are added to give it the peck. One can make the rooster peck as hard as they like or can stand by the amount of jalapenos used or hotter still by substituting firey little things called chili pequinos.

SIDE DISHES

Just about anything that you serve as a main dish needs something to go along side it on the plate. Naturally, you can open up a can of corn, beans or peas and serve them with your nice piece of meat, but why not take that extra step and put something out which adds a shot of enthusiasm to the meal. A small salad, some sliced tomatoes or half of an avocado are fine, but here are a few ideas which you might want to try from time to time.

REFRITOS (Refried Beans)

There is a terrible old joke that goes, "Why do Mexicans eat refried beans?"

"Because they never get anything right the first time."

Actually, making refried beans shows that they have a lot more on the ball than one would think. First of all, many of the vitamins and minerals are transferred from the beans to the juice during cooking and this is a very good way to recover them. Secondly, only during the past few decades has silverware been in common use in many of the households of Mexico. Even today, it is not unusual to find people outside of the cities using tortillas for eating instead of a fork. They bring out the silverware only when they entertain gringos.

While most of the women of Mexico will use nothing except a terrazo pan called an asalejo for making refritos, one can use most any skillet.

Into a skillet which has been used to cook some type of meat, then without washing, add some diced onions to sauté in the remaining grease. As soon as the onions become tender, add about half a cup of cooked beans for each person to be served. As they begin to simmer, use a wooden spoon to mash them up while adding small amounts of bean juice to keep them from getting too thick and sticking. It is not unusual to toss in a chili during cooking for added flavor and spice.

Many cooks purposely leave bits of the meat in the pan to add flavor to the refritos. Refritos are used as a side dish in almost every meal in Mexico, as well as spread on tortilla chips to make bocadidos.

SPANISH RICE

So called Spanish Rice is nothing more than rice which was flavored with tomatoes, onions and chills while cooking to give it added flavor. The easy way to make Spanish Rice is to add about a third of a cup of salsa picante while cooking a cup of either regular or minute rice.

BAJA BAKED BEANS

- 1 Slice Bacon
- 1 Small Onion, diced
- 1/4 Cup Ketchup
- 1 T Brown Sugar
- 1/2 Tsp. Prepared Mustard
- 1 Can Pork and Beans, drained

Cook bacon and remove when done. Cook onions in the bacon grease until tender. Add the ketchup, brown sugar and mustard. When it begins to bubble, crumble and return the bacon and add the drained beans. Stir as little only as necessary to coat the beans and serve as soon as they are hot.

FRIED NOPALITOS

- 2 Fresh Nopal Palms
- 1 Cup Cornmeal
- Salt
- Oil For Frying

Nopal cacti grows wild in all areas of Baja and can be harvested at any time of the year. Cut only the smaller, topmost palms or leaves. Handle carefully as the thorns are very painful, especially the tiny ones. Using a knife with a sharp point, remove the thorn bunches by cutting little circles around them and lifting them out. Finish cleaning by trimming off about a quarter inch around the outer edge of the palm. Slice into 1/2 inch squares. Sprinkle with water and then salt. Set aside for about half an hour to allow the juice to come out. It will be rather slick and sticky. The best way to coat the nopalitos is to shake them with the cornmeal in a paper bag. In hot oil, almost smoking, fry only as many of the nopalitos at a time as will cook without stacking on top of one another. As soon as they brown, remove and drain on a paper towel. They taste almost exactly like fried okra.

CORN PUDDING

- 1 Can Cream Style Corn
- 2 Eggs, well beaten
- 1 Cup Evaporated Milk
- 1 T. Melted Butter
- Salt and Pepper to Taste

Use butter to grease a baking dish and combine all other ingredients. Pour into the baking dish which is then placed into a larger pan which contains half an inch of hot water. Bake half an hour in a 350 oven.

CARROTS AND PINEAPPLE

- 4 Carrots, scraped and cut in 1/2" slices.
- 1 Small Can Pineapple Chunks w/Juice
- 1 T. Sugar

Cook carrots until almost done and drain. Add pineapple, juice and sugar. Cook until most of the liquid has evaporated and remainder is slightly syrupy.

STIR FRY VEGGIES

- 1 Each of 4 or 5 Kinds of Fresh vegetables
- 1 T. Oil
- Salt and Pepper to Taste

Wash and cut the veggies into bite size pieces. Heat the skillet first, then pour in the oil (olive or peanut oil is great for this). Add the vegetables and pour in two tablespoons of water. Cover and cook for about three minutes at high heat, stirring each minute. Leave the lid off long enough for the excess liquid to evaporate and it is done. The veggies should still be slightly crunchy.

MEALS IN A HURRY

There will probably come the time when you will want to whip up something to eat and get it over with as quickly as possible. It can be at the end of a long day of traveling or else something is going to take place and you don't want to be tied up in the kitchen and miss any of it.

CHUNKY SOUP QUICKIE

Campbell's chunky Soup is one of the greatest things to come along since sliced bread. No RV pantry should be without a few cans of your favorite varieties of this soup.

- 1 10 Oz. Can Campbell's Chunky Soup
- 3/4 Cup Minute Rice
- 3/4 Cup Water

While the can of soup is heating prepare the Minute Rice. Chop up a few veggies to make a salad. Pour the soup over the rice and Ole, you have dinner.

HAM AND MAC CASSEROLE

- 1 Package Kraft Macaroni and Cheese Dinner
- 8 Oz. Can of Ham or Spam

Cook macaroni according to directions on package. Dice ham in half inch cubes and mix with the cooked macaroni. Using half again more milk than is called for, finish the instructions for adding the cheese. The whole thing takes only about ten minutes.

FRITO PIE

- 1 8 oz Package Corn Chips
- 1 16 oz Can Chili
- 1 Onion, chopped
- 4 Oz. Grated Cheese

Line bottom of baking dish with corn chips, spread chili over the chips, sprinkle on the chopped onion and cover with grated cheese. Bake for 15 minutes in a 350-degree oven.

BEENIE WEENIES

Beenie Weenies have long been a standard food group for growing kids, boy scouts and tired RV'ers. They are quick and easy to fix and do provide a certain amount of food value in comparison to the calorie count. Spruce them up a bit and they aren't half bad.

- 1 Lb. Wieners or Smoked Sausage, cut in 1" pieces.
- 1 Can Pork and Beans, drained
- 1 Onion, chopped
- 1/2 Cup Ketchup
- 1 T. Brown Sugar

In a dab of oil or butter, heat the onions and wieners. Add the ketchup and brown sugar and heat until it bubbles. Pour in the beans to heat. Do not overcook or the beans will turn to mush.

PREGO TO THE RESCUE

A group of my friends and I have flown to Bahia de los Frailes, near the tip of Baja, so many times that we have become known as the Baja Bunch. We go there each February for the announced purpose of celebrating one of the member's birthday, which comes on the 17th. Actually, his birthday is just a good excuse for us to fly 1500 miles so we can lay around on the beach, drink beer and catch a few fish, providing that catching fish doesn't interfere with the first two pastimes. To celebrate our first night there, we have our traditional dinner of meatballs and spaghetti, to which we invite all of the native fishermen who are camped on the beach with us.

One might think that after several hours in the air, followed by the chore of setting up camp, the last thing that we would want to do is prepare dinner for fifteen or twenty people on a Coleman stove. Actually, it is much easier than one would think. Originally, we would prepare several pounds of meatballs and freeze them to take with us, but with the advent of canned meatballs, we have switched over to the ready-made variety. Now, we simply count noses, estimate how much spaghetti to cook and heat up the meatballs and the Prego. This is a great way for us to kick off our vacation, make a lot of new friends and ensure a constant supply of fresh fish.

SALADS & DRESSINGS

The Mexican word, ensalada, far more accurately describes what a salad actually is than does the English word, salad. A literal translation of ensalada is a hodgepodge or mixture, which is what most salads really are. While we tend to think of a salad as being some shredded lettuce and tomatoes with a few other veggies tossed in, an ensalada can and does often contain just about everything in the kitchen. In Mexico, that bit of lettuce on the side of the plate isn't an ensalada, it's an aderezo or garnish.

Since lettuce doesn't keep nearly as well as cabbage, the most common aderezo or side salad in Baja consists of finely sliced cabbage and onions. Add a bit of oil and vinegar and this is one of the finest little salads that one could ever want.

Since most salads are served cold, they can be extended to become a great warm weather meal.

TACO SALAD

- 1 Pound Ground Beef
- 1/2 Cup Salsa Picante
- 1 Head Lettuce, shredded
- 1 Tomato, diced
- 1 Avocado, peeled, seeded and diced
- 1 Onion, diced
- 1 8 Oz. Pkg. Tortilla Chips
- 1 Lime
- 4 Oz. Grated Cheddar Cheese

Crumble and cook beef until no longer pink. Add salsa and continue to cook until liquid is evaporated. Set aside to cool. Toss cooled meat with the lettuce, onions, tomato and avocado. Line bowl with tortilla chips and put in the mixture. Squeeze the lime over the salad and top with cheese.

PASTA FRUIT SALAD

- 2 Cups Pasta, cooked, rinsed and cooled
- 1 Can Fruit Cocktail
- 2 Limes
- 1 T. Sugar
- 1 Tsp. Corn Starch

Drain fruit cocktail and reserve juice. Squeeze limes into the juice, add sugar and bring to a boil. Mix corn starch with a small amount of water and stir into boiling mixture to thicken. Cool sauce and combine with fruit and pasta.

CORN SALAD

- 3/4 Cup White Vinegar
- 3/4 Cup Sugar
- 1/4 Cup Vegetable Oil
- 1/2 Tsp. Salt
- 1/2 Tsp. Pepper
- 1 Cup Chopped Green Pepper
- 1 Cup Chopped Celery
- 1/2 Cup Chopped Onion
- 1 16 Oz. Can Whole Kernel Corn
- 1 8 Oz. Can Small Green Peas
- 1 2 Oz. jar Diced Pimientos

Combine vinegar, sugar, oil, salt and pepper in a saucepan and bring to a rolling boil. Set aside to cool. Drain corn, peas and pimientos and combine with vegetables. Pour vinegar and oil mixture over the vegetables and mix. Refrigerate for a couple hours to develop the flavor.

CHINESE FIRE DRILL SALAD

This is the easy way to make a salad for a bunch. As the herd departs for the market, instruct each one to buy one vegetable of their choice. When they return, they are to clean and cut it into bite size pieces. Toss everything into a large bowl and mix. Top with your favorite dressing. If someone buys something which is really awful they will have to stand the wrath of everyone else and probably will never make that mistake again.

Even though the Kraft Company is well established in Mexico and produces a number of items under their trademark, bottled salad dressings seem to be one of the things which are hard to find. One has to either take along enough of their favorite salad dressings to last out their stay or else make their own. These dressings are easy to make and are considerably less expensive than the ready made varieties.

HERBS AND VINEGAR

Add 2 tablespoons of Italian Herbs and half a teaspoon garlic powder to a 12 Oz. bottle of white wine vinegar and allow to steep overnight. Sprinkle over shredded cabbage and onions for a quick, crunchy salad.

THOUSAND ISLAND DRESSING

- 2/3 Cup Mayonnaise
- 1 T. Ketchup
- 1 T. Sweet Pickle Relish
- 1 Tsp. Prepared Mustard

Combine to produce nearly a cup of salad dressing.

FRENCH DRESSING

- 1/2 Cup Mayonnaise
- 1/2 Cup Tomato Sauce or Ketchup
- 1 T. Vinegar
- 1 T. Sugar
- 1 T. Prepared Mustard

Use wire whip or blender to mix.

HONEY MUSTARD

- 1 T. Prepared Mustard
- 1 Tsp. Paprika
- 1 Tsp. Celery Seed
- 1/4 Tsp. Salt
- 2 T. Fresh Lime Juice
- 2 T. White Vinegar
- 1/2 Cup Honey
- 1/2 Cup Salad Oil

The old Margarita maker is great for blending this dressing. Put in everything except the oil and blend at low speed. Add oil slowly while blending.

Lacking salad dressing is no problem, just squeeze fresh lime juice over fresh vegetables.

TARTAR SAUCE

While not actually a salad dressing, I could think of no other place to put this recipe. Making your own tartar sauce for fried fish is very simple and delicious.

- 1 Cup Mayonnaise
- 1 T. Pickle Relish
- 1 T. Minced Onion
- 1 T. Minced Black Olives
- 1 T. White Vinegar

Combine all ingredients. Refrigerate any unused sauce.

SOUPS & STEWS

A French lady once told me that when she was growing up, a girl learned about soup before she learned about sex. She also said that while sex will attract a mate, good soup will keep him. I suppose that is just another way of saying that sex is transitory but soup is forever.

While most soups are made from scratch, one of the best sources of supply for ingredients is hiding in the fridge in all those little plastic containers of leftovers. If you enjoyed eating it once, you can enjoy it again as a good, hot soup.

CREAM OF LEFTOVER

My kids would have let out a resounding YUCK! if I had ever mentioned anything like this to them but it is really good. Whiz half a cup of leftover broccoli, asparagus or cauliflower for a few seconds and mix with a can of cream of potato for a great soup.

POSOLE CON PUERCO

Posole (po-SO-lay con POUR-co) is not really a Mexican food at all. The native Indians of the Southwest developed it long before Columbus stumbled onto this part of the world. Posole, or Hominy as we know it, is made from mature corn which has been soaked until it swells and then the husks removed in a lye or soda ash solution. In the Southwest, one can buy dried Posole mix at Indian trading posts and some larger markets stock it in their ethnic food section. It isn't all that difficult to make from commonly available ingredients- and is a great cold weather soup or stew.

- 2 Pounds Pork, cut into 3/4 inch chunks
- 1 Onion, coarse chopped
- 3 Carrots, sliced
- 1 Tsp. Salt
- 1 T. Chili Powder
- 1 4 Oz. Can Chopped Chills
- 1 29 Oz. White Can Hominy, drained

Cook pork with the salt and onions in Just enough water to cover until it is almost tender enough to eat, then add the carrots and complete cooking. Add the chili powder, chopped chilis and

hominy. Simmer 5 to 10 minutes to develop the flavor. Serve with warm flour tortillas or corn chips. Mucho Gusto!

FIVE HOUR STEW

I know, you are already saying that I am violating my number one rule by suggesting a stew which takes five hours to prepare. Actually, it takes only a few minutes to throw together. It just takes 5 hours for it to cook properly.

- 2 Slices Bacon
- 2 Pounds Beef, cut Into 1" chunks
- 1 T. Mixed Herbs
- 1/2 Tsp. Pepper
- 1/4 Tsp. Garlic Powder or 3 Crushed Cloves
- 2 Onions, cut crosswise and then quartered
- 4 Blades of Celery, cut In 1" pieces
- 4 Carrots, cut in 1" pieces
- 3 Potatoes, cut in 1" chunks
- 1 16 Oz. Can of either V-8 or Tomato Juice

This stew can be made in a heavy pot with a lid in an oven or else in an electric slow cooker. Cut the slices of bacon and arrange to cover the bottom of the pot to keep stew from sticking as it cooks. Put the meat in first, then the seasoning. Next comes the layer of onions, topped with the celery and then the carrots. Finally, the potatoes go on top. Pour in the juice (V-8 makes it taste much better). It won't be covered with liquid, but that's OK as more will come out as it cooks. Cooks in five hours covered in a 200 degree oven or the same amount of time in a crock pot.

CORN CHOWDER

- 4 Slices Bacon
- 1/2 Cup Minced Onion
- 1/2 Cup Minced Celery
- 1/2 Cup Minced Green Pepper
- 2 Tomatoes, diced small
- 1 Can Cream Style Corn
- 1 Can Whole Kernel Corn, drained
- 1 Can Cream of Potato Soup
- 1 Quart Milk
- Salt & Pepper to taste

In a heavy pot, fry bacon till crisp and remove. Sauté onion, celery and green pepper in the bacon grease until tender. Crumble bacon and return to the pan with the vegetables. Add rest of ingredients and simmer for about 15 minutes. If the chowder needs to have more body, thicken with a tablespoon of corn starch dissolved in a quarter cup of water.

FISH (GUMBO)

1 Pound Fish Fillets, cut in chunks
1/2 Stick Butter
2 Onions₁ chopped
2 Bell Peppers, chopped
2 Cans Tomatoes and Okra
1 Tsp. Salt
1 Bay Leaf
1/8 Tsp. Cayenne Pepper
1 Cup Rice, cooked

Melt butter in sauce pan, add onions and peppers and cook until tender. Stir in tomatoes and okra, along with all the seasonings. Simmer for at least 15 minutes. Stir in fish and cooked rice, simmer for 8 to 10 minutes or until fish flakes when tested with a fork. Serve immediately.

Use a pound of peeled raw shrimp instead of the fish and you will have shrimp gumbo. Either way, this makes a meal in a bowl.

Well known Cajun cook, Justin Wilson, claims that there are only two kinds of people in the world, those who like okra and those who don't know what good eating is all about. If you are one of the people who likes okra and can't find it in Mexico, then buy nopalitos. They are available both canned and fresh and can be substituted for okra in recipes. Nopalitos are the tender, first year growth on the nopal cactus and taste almost exactly like okra, except without the seeds. Nopals grow wild all over Mexico and any native can show you how to gather them and how to get them ready to cook.

ROCK SOUP

I grew up during the depression years and had heard my dad talk about seeing rock soup made in a place called Pie Town, New Mexico. I had never actually made any of it until I was camped at the south tip of Baja, at a place called "Shipwreck Cove". The place got its name from the hulk of a Japanese fishing trawler which is rusting away on the rocks. Seems that it had been illegally fishing in Mexican waters and the locals tricked it into crashing on the rocks, but that is another one of those BS (Baja Stories) for another time.

Anyway, it was one of those unusually chilly January days when low clouds were drifting in off the Pacific and the temperature hovered around 60. A bunch of campers were sitting around discussing whether it would be worthwhile to launch a boat and try to snag a Dorado for dinner or not when someone suggested, "This would be a great day for a big pot of soup."

After a considerable amount of discussion about what kind of soup would be best for a day like this, I decided to take the bull by the tail and stare the situation straight in the face, so to speak. I got out the Coleman stove and the pot which I use to boil lobsters. While waiting for the water come to a boil, I scouted around for a smooth rock about the size of a hen egg.

When I returned, I began to tell about the fact that during the depression, people had actually made pots of soup, using nothing more than a good soup rock like the one that I had. After everyone had looked at the rock, I put it into the pot and moved it around as the water boiled.

"Sure is weak looking soup," someone remarked.

"I'll have to agree that it is a bit on the thin side right now," I replied as I dumped in an onion that I had cut up, "But I'm sure that this pot of rock soup would be a lot better if some of you happen to have some leftover meat of some find to add to it."

"I have a piece roast in the fridge," said one person.

"There are two hamburger patties in mine," said another.

"I have a small lobster tail," added a third.

"How about a few wieners?" asked another.

"Chop them up and toss it in the pot," I told them. "The rule about making rock soup is that nothing is refused and that anyone who puts something into the pot also gets to share in it."

By this time, several other people had stopped by to see what was going on. One of them had a few clams that he had dug up on the beach.

"You can join in on the soup pot if you'd like to add your clams, I told him.

"Sounds like a good idea," he said as the clams went in.

"It's beginning to smell like really good soup now," said a lady who arrived carrying a few fresh shrimp for the pot.

"If anyone else would like to get in on this pot, they can bring along a can of some sort of vegetables and their bowl and spoon," I announced as it began to simmer again.

"What kind of vegetables?" asked someone.

"Anything that's vegetable," I replied "Peas, potatoes, pork and beans, carrots, green beans, corn, tomatoes, hominy, whatever you have."

People scattered to search their rigs for something to add to the pot of rock soup.

"Should I drain off the liquid before I put it in?" asked a lady who had returned with a can of chopped chilis.

"Nope, it needs the extra liquid, just dump it in," I replied as I turned up the Coleman to bring it back to a boil as the various cans were poured in.

There must have been at least twenty people waiting with bowls in hand as I stirred the pot and waited for it to begin to bubble. I tasted the soup, added some salt and a good measure of chili powder.

"About the only thing that this soup needs now is something to give the liquid a bit of body," I said, pulling a couple envelopes of Brown Gravy Nix from my pocket and stirring it in.

The crowd filled their bowls with rock soup, once, twice and some even three times. There was even enough left to feed a couple who had just come in from a walk along the beach.

As the last of the soup was ladled out, leaving only the rock rolling around in the bottom of the pot, someone mentioned, "That was really a great rock you used, are you going to keep it for another pot?"

"Nope, once a rock is used, all of the good is gone out of it. I picked up a used rock by mistake one time and it didn't work worth a hoot," I replied.

So, if you try to make some rock soup and it turns out less successful than what you expected, it probably isn't your fault. You just got hold of a used rock.

CHILE, CHILI, CHILIS, & CHILLY

CHILE -- (Chee-LAY) A long, skinny country along the western coast of South America.

CHILI -- (CHEE-lee) A food made of beef, seasoned with onions, garlic, chilis and various spices.

CHILIS -- (CHEE-lee) The capsicum seed pods of a tropical fruit plant, mistakenly called a pepper. Like apples and grapes, chilis are always referred to in the plural form.

CHILLY -- How you feel when the temperature drops below about 50 degrees.

HISTORY OF CHILI, 101

Over the years a number of people and places have claimed that they were the origin of chili, but historians have pretty well established that chili originated in San Antonio around 1840, where it was made and sold by street vendors. It was served by placing a spoonful on a tortilla, which was folded up on three sides to produce sort of an envelope.

Chili was made then, as it is today, by simmering diced beef and onions, seasoned with a mixture of ground dry red chilis, paprika, cumin and oregano. The mixture of the spices has been pretty well established at: 12 parts ground chilis, 5 parts paprika, 4 parts cumin and 1 part oregano. The seasoning called Chili Powder, which is available just about everywhere today, is usually blended in these proportions. If the chilis used in making the seasoning are not spicy enough to suit your taste, cayenne pepper can be added to bring it up to your particular level of masochism. Most people prefer to buy Chili Powder off the shelf rather than to try to find the individual spices and mix their own.

In buying chilis in a market, the best indicator of just how spicy they are depends on their size and shape. The larger chilis are usually milder than smaller ones. Also, the fatter that they are in relation to their length, the milder. The bell pepper, which is actually a variety of chili, being both big and wide is very mild; while the tobasco, which is small and slender is one of the hottest. If a food seasoned with chilis is too hot for your taste, add a few drops of lime juice to calm it down.

And now students, for your lesson in Spanish. There are three different words which are used to mean what we call hot. Calor is used to describe something which cannot be touched, like hot

weather. Caliente is something which can be touched, like a hot skillet handle. Chilis, no matter how spicy they might be, are never said to be hot, they are picante.

It's been called Bowl of Red, Chili con Carne and Truckstop Chili, but to the accepted experts on the subject, it is simply Chili. The art of cooking chili naturally led to organized competition to see who could make the best. Chili cook-offs are now held just about everywhere, but the one thrown each Thanksgiving by the Vagabundos del Mar ranks among the best. Over the years, the cook-off held at Don Diego's place south of Ensenada has produced a considerable variety of chili recipes with such colorful names as Colorado Roadkill Chili, Mule Lip Chill, Train Wreck Chili, Rattle Snake Chili and even a pot of stuff called Canadian Wild Moose and Skunk Chili. The contest lasts for just one day, but the results might linger for a week or more.

No matter how simple chili is to make, someone always seems to be able to come along and screw it up. I recently saw a recipe for chili which had won some sort of award. It called for, among other strange ingredients, raisins and chocolate syrup. In my opinion, anyone who would put raisins in chili would put grape jelly on a taco. Also, there is an old saying that anyone who knows beans about chili knows that you don't put beans in chili. It's hard to improve on simplicity when it comes to making a really good pot of chili.

CHILI

- 3 Pounds of Beef
- 2 Yellow Onions, diced
- 2 28 oz. Cans of Tomatoes
- 2 Tsp. Chili Powder
- 6 Cloves Garlic, peeled and crushed
- 1 Tsp. Salt

Buy the cheapest cut of beef that you can find; arm, chuck, bottom round or whatever the butcher is selling at the lowest price. Remove all fat possible and save. Cut, hack and chop the beef into small pieces--real chili is never made with ground beef. Put about half of the pieces of fat into a skillet over fairly high heat. When enough grease to coat the inside of the skillet has been rendered out, remove and discard the pieces of fat. Add the beef and cook until it is gray and no longer sticks together.

Meanwhile, in a heavy pot with a tight fitting lid, preferably an iron one, put the other half of the fat from the beef and cook until you have rendered out about two tablespoons of grease. Remove and discard the fat. Put in the onions, garlic and chili powder and cook until the onions begin to soften. Transfer the beef into that pot, sprinkle in the salt and add the two cans of tomatoes, including the juice. Using your hand or a fork, crush up the tomatoes.

Cover and simmer over very low heat, just high enough to cause the liquid to bubble slowly. It should be stirred now and then to prevent sticking. A certain amount of liquid will cook out of the beef so water will probably not be needed. If additional liquid is needed, add just enough

water or tomato juice to keep the meat from burning. The beef should be tender in about four hours.

Some people think that in order to make good chili, it has to be so spicy-hot that it takes your breath away. Chili, like any other food, should be a pleasure to eat, not a contest of wills. For those who feel that it needs a bit more spice, a dash of cayenne pepper can always be added at the table.

BREADS

There was a time not so awfully long ago when a person didn't simply run down to the local bakery or super market to buy bread, they had to make their own. Cowboys, who normally worked from dawn till dark, simply did not have the time to wait for yeast to work and the bread to rise, so they came up with a recipe for making biscuits in less than half an hour.

COWBOY BISCUITS

2 Cups Flour
1 T. Baking Powder
1 T. Sugar
2 T. Crisco, Lard or Butter
2/3 Cup Milk

Preheat oven to 450, even though real chuckwagon cooks used a dutch oven and glowing coals for baking biscuits. Mix dry ingredients and cut in shortening until mixture has a texture sort of like corn meal. Add milk and use a fork, spoon or your hand to combine. Put the dough onto a floured surface and roll around until all sides are coated and no longer sticky. Place ball of dough into a well-greased cake pan or iron skillet and pat it down to an even thickness. Grease the top surface with butter or margarine.

Using a soup can, baking powder can or even a small glass; cut one round biscuit right in the middle of the pan. It should then look like a bull's-eye or the insignia on the wing of a Spitfire. For the western history buff, that center biscuit is known as the "Cook's Biscuit".

The tip of an egg turner works just great for the next step but it can be done with a table knife. Cut through the dough between the center biscuit and the rim of the pan in 8 equally-spaced places, making a total of nine biscuits.

See how much simpler that was than trying to cut individual round biscuits which are no longer round once they are shoved together in the pan.

Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until nice and brown on top.

Nine biscuits should serve four people, unless you happen to have some honey or a jar of Mexican strawberry jam to go with them, and then they will probably only serve two.

COUNTRY CORNBREAD

The son of a rather backwoods family went off to college and when he returned home for Christmas, his father asked him, "What are you studying in college?"

The son replied, "My favorite subject is geometry.

"Well, say something for us in geometry," ordered his father.

Now wanting to make his father appear ignorant in front of all their friends, he replied, "Pi R Square."

The father jumped to his feet and yelled, "Them damn fool college perfessers don't know nothing. Pie ain't square, pie are round. Cornbread are square."

1 Cup Cornmeal, preferably yellow
1/2 Cup Flour
1 T. Sugar
1 T. Baking Powder
1/2 Tsp. Salt
3 T. Bacon Grease
1 Egg
1 Cup Milk

Preheat oven to 450. While country cornbread is always baked in a square pan, cowboys cooked theirs in an iron skillet. You can use whichever turns you on. Melt bacon grease in the pan and tilt to coat interior. Mix all dry ingredients and beat egg in the milk. Stir the milk and egg into the dry ingredients. When well blended, pour all of the grease that you can from the pan into the batter and mix. Pour batter into pan and bake for about 15 minutes, or until top surface is browned and toothpick comes out clean.

For Mexican cornbread, add 1/2 cup minced onion and two finely chopped jalapenos, which have had the seeds removed, to the batter before baking.

My grandmother used to make what she called "Breakfast Cornbread" by adding a cup of raisins or chopped dried fruit which had been plumped up in hot water, three additional tablespoons of sugar and a dash of cinnamon. Served hot with butter and syrup or honey, it was fantastic.

PAN BREAD

This is really an all purpose recipe which can become flour tortillas, pie crusts, dumplings or a bread much like Pita Bread. The dough for this bread will keep for several days in the 'fridge or at least one day at room temperature. In fact, it works better if made ahead of time and allowed to set for a while.

1 Cup Flour
2 T. Solid Shortening (lard, butter, bacon grease or Crisco)
1 Tsp. Baking Powder
1/2 Tsp. Salt
4 T. Cup Cold Water

Cut flour, baking powder and salt into the shortening until it takes on the consistency of corn meal. Add water and mix into a stiff dough. If the dough is too dry and keeps falling apart, add one or two more spoons of water. Work dough on a floured surface for a couple minutes. Store in a plastic bag.

To cook as pan bread, heat dry skillet until a drop of water will bounce around a bit before evaporating. It is important that the pan not be too hot or the bread will burn. Pinch off pieces of the dough in balls about the size of an egg and pat between your hands until no more than a quarter inch thick. Put into pan and keep checking the bottom side until nice and brown. Turn over and finish cooking. Total cooking time will be about 10 minutes.

Cut the uncooked dough into one inch strips and boil about 10 minutes in chicken or beef stock to make dumplings.

Toss these pieces of dough into hot oil and brown on one side. Turn to brown the other side and you have Indian Fry Bread or Sopapillas.

To make flour tortillas, follow the directions for pan bread except that you will need to roll the dough very thin before cooking.

This recipe will also make one pie crust when rolled out to fit the average 6 or 9 inch pie pan.

QUICK & EASY ROLLS

There is nothing like a pan of hot, home-made rolls to brighten up the evening meal, however few RV cooks care to take the time and effort required to make them. Here is a recipe which is easy to make and require only about an hour from conception to consumption.

1 Cup Warm Water
1 Pkg. Dry Yeast
2 T. Sugar
1/2 Tsp. Salt
1 Egg
2 T. Oil
2 1/4 Cups Flour

The time-tested way of getting water just the right temperature to activate yeast is to use your finger as a gauge. It should be about as hot as you can stand to hold your finger in it and no more or it will kill the yeast.

Dissolve the yeast in the water then blend in oil, sugar, salt and 1/2 cup of the flour. Stir in the egg and then the remainder of the flour. Let rise in mixing bowl for about half an hour or until double in volume. The dough will be very sticky but that is the way that it should be.

Stir the dough down and spoon into greased muffin pans to about 3/4 full, then set aside for 25 minutes to rise. Bake 15 minutes in 400 degree oven, or until nice and brown on top. Remove from oven and let cool for 5 minutes before turning out of the pan.

BAJA BEER BREAD (Pan Tecate)

For best results, this recipe should be followed exactly, otherwise you might have some awfully mad people to contend with. To make enough beer bread for the evening meal, you will need a minimum of the following and you should start making it just after siesta.

2 Six Packs of your favorite Cerveza*
6 Cups Flour
2 T. Baking Powder
2 T. Sugar
1 Tsp. Salt
1 8" Iron Skillet
Several neighbors**

* 2 of the beers should be left out of the fridge to come to room temperature. Begin by opening one of the cold beers and sample its flavor. Set the oven to 375 degrees to heat and grease the skillet. Combine 3 cups of the flour, 1 tablespoon of the sugar, 1 tablespoon of the baking powder, half of the salt and one of the warm beers. Dump the dough into the skillet and set aside

for about 20 minutes to rise. This will also allow you time to finish your first beer. Open a second cerveza frio for yourself and put the skillet into the oven.

Within about 15 minutes, the aroma of the cooking beer bread will have reached **neighbors at least five rigs away and they are bound to come sniffing around to see what's cooking. Offer each of them a cold beer. By the time that the bread has been in the oven for 40 minutes, it should be done and your two six-packs will probably be all gone. Send the neighbors back to their own rigs for more beer while you remove the pan of bread from the oven. Let everyone tear off pieces of the hot bread with their fingers and it would be nice to have a little butter spread on it.

After all the bread, beer and neighbors are all gone, if you happen to think of it and can still find the kitchen, use the remaining half of the ingredients to make another pan of beer bread for dinner.

SWEET THINGS

Something to pamper the sweet tooth is always a nice way to end a meal and these recipes are styled to use ingredients which can be found in most RVs.

WINNEBAGO CHOCOLATE CAKE

- 1 Cup Flour
- 1/2 Cup Sugar
- 1 Tsp. Baking Powder
- 2 Pkg. Instant Hot Chocolate)4~x
- 1 Egg
- 1/4 Cup Oil
- 1/2 Cup Water
- 1/4 Tsp. Vanilla
- 1/2 Cup Chopped Nuts (Optional)

Combine dry ingredients. Add egg, oil, water and vanilla , Beat by hand with wire beater about 200 strokes or 2 minute with electric beater on medium. Fold in chopped nuts if used. Grease and flour a six-inch round baking dish or spray with Pam. Bake 25 to 30 minutes in 350-degree oven. Done when toothpick comes out clean. This recipe also works great In the microwave, about 6 minutes on high.

BAJA BROWNIES

- 1/3 Cup Melted Margarine
- 1 Cup Sugar
- 1/3 Cup Cocoa
- 2 Eggs
- 1 Tsp. Vanilla
- 1 Cup Flour
- 1/4 Tsp. Baking Powder
- 1/4 Tsp. Salt
- 1/2 Cup Chopped Pecans

Grease bottom and sides of an 8 X 8 or 6 X 10 glass baking dish with solid shortening. Sprinkle sugar in dish and tilt to coat bottom and sides. Pour off excess sugar. Stir sugar and cocoa into

margarine add eggs and vanilla; blend well with a plastic or wooden spoon. Add flour, baking powder and salt; blend with spoon. Fold in the chopped pecans. Bake 25 minutes in 350-degree oven or 3 minutes on high in microwave, turn and bake for 3 more minutes. Cool for 15 minutes and cut into 2" squares.

Baja is famous for its pecan groves, and no cookbook would be complete without some tried and true pecan recipes.

PECAN CRUNCHIES

It's hard to believe how easy these are to make.

8 Oz. Graham Crackers
1/2 Pound Butter
1 Cup Brown or Raw Sugar
1 Cup Chopped Pecans

Oil a large, flat pan and line with graham crackers. Melt butter in a sauce pan, add brown sugar and stir until the mixture bubbles vigorously. Remove from heat, add pecans and quickly spread over the graham crackers. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 minutes. Cut along the lines in the crackers, leave in the pan and freeze for one hour. Don't eliminate the freezing as that is what makes them so crunchy.

TEXAS PECAN PIE

4 Eggs, slightly beaten
1 Cup Brown Sugar
1 Cup Light Corn Syrup
1 Tsp. Vanilla
1/8 Tsp. salt
3 T. Melted Butter
1 1/2 Cup Pecan Halves
1 9" Pie Shell, unbaked

Mix and pour into the pie shell. Bake at 325 degrees for 50 to 55 minutes or until the filling is almost firm.

BAJA 1000 CHERRY COBLER

Faster than a speeding dune buggy and almost as good as what grandmother used to make.

- 1 Can Cherry Pie Filling
- 1 Pie Crust
- 2 Pats Butter
- 2 T. Sugar

Shove pie crust down into a loaf pan and pour in pie filling. Fold excess pie crust over filling. Top with butter and sugar. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes or until brown.

MANZANA EMPANADITOS (Little apple pies)

- 6 Flour Tortillas
- 1 Can Apple Pie Filling

Warm the tortillas to make them pliable and place an equal amount of pie filling in the center of each one. Fold four sides together to make little square pies and pin with toothpick. Brush tops with butter and bake on a cookie sheet at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes or until they are lightly browned

PINEAPPLE UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

- 1 Jiffy Yellow Cake Mix
- 1 Egg
- 1 Can Pineapple Slices
- 1/4 Cup Brown Sugar
- 1 T. Butter or Margarine

Line round cake pan with aluminum foil. Melt butter in pan and coat bottom. Arrange slices of pineapple in single layer in pan and cover with mixture of brown sugar with one tablespoon of juice. Prepare cake mix as directed on package, substituting pineapple juice for water. Pour batter over pineapple slices and bake 25 to 30 minutes in 350-degree oven. Invert on plate, remove pan and carefully peel away the foil.

PINA COLADA PIE

- 1 Pkg (4 serving) JELL-O Instant Vanilla Pudding or Pie Filling
- 1 Cup (1/2 pint) Sour Cream
- 1 Cup (10 oz can) Crushed Pineapple
- 1/1 Cup Milk
- 2 Jiggers Rum
- 1 Lime
- 1 10 Oz. Container COOL WHIP Topping
- 1 Prepared Pie Crust

Put half of the COOL WHIP, the package of JELL-O, sour cream, crushed pineapple with juice, milk, rum and juice of the lime (save the peel) into a mixing bowl. Beat with a wire whisk or electric beater until well blended. Pour into the pie shell and chill in the fridge for about 3 hours. Top with remaining COOL WHIP and grate some of the lime peel on top to garnish.

CHUCKWAGON PEACH COBBLER

No one is sure where this recipe came from, but chuckwagon cooks were rated on the quality of this cobbler which is made from ordinary ingredients and canned peaches.

- 1 Cup Flour
- 1 Cup Sugar
- 1 T. Baking Powder
- 1/2 Stick Butter
- 1 Can Sliced Peaches

Combine flour, sugar and baking powder. Pour juice from peaches into measuring cup, add water if necessary to make 2/3 cup and mix with dry ingredients to make the batter. Melt butter in baking dish and pour batter on top of melted butter. Place peach slices on top of batter and bake in 350-degree oven for about 45 minutes or until light brown.

RICE PUDDING

- 2 Cups Cooked Rice
- 2 Eggs
- 1 Large Can Evaporated Milk
- 1/2 Cup Raisins
- 1 Tsp. Vanilla
- 1/4 Tsp. Salt
- 1/4 Tsp. Cinnamon

Beat the eggs with the milk, vanilla, salt and cinnamon. Combine with rice and raisins. Pour into 1-quart baking dish. Place that dish into a shallow pan which contains 1/2 inch of hot water. Bake at 325 degrees for 1 hour.

POTLUCKS & PARTIES

Just as sure as you put two or more cats into a bag, a fight will break out. By the same token, any time that two or more RVs are parked next to one another, a potluck is bound to break out. They are usually a spur of the moment thing with little time in which to prepare anything very exotic. It is not unusual for a potluck meal to consist of pork and beans, prepared seven different ways.

One of the secrets to being the hit of the potluck is to bring something which does at least double duty or even triple duty as a vegetable, meat and a salad, all in one. The other trick is to show up with something which is totally different from what anyone else might bring.

POCO LOCO POSOLE

- 1 28 oz Can Hominy, drained
- 1 4 oz Can Chopped Chills
- 1 Can Cream of Chicken Soup

Mix and heat--that's it! Add 8 oz chopped chicken, ham or even tuna and you have both a meat and a vegetable dish.

MAIZ y CHICHAROS RANCHEROS (corn & black-eyed peas)

- 1 16 Oz. Can Corn, drained
- 1 16 Oz. Can Black-eyed Peas, drained
- 1/2 Cup Salsa Picante

Mix and serve chilled as either a salad or vegetable.

BROCCOLI -RICE CASSEROLE

- 1 Onion, chopped
- 1 Cup Minute Rice
- 1 Cup Water
- 1 Can Cream of Chicken Soup
- 1/2 Cup Evaporated Milk
- 1 Cup Cubed or Grated American Cheese
- 10 Oz. Fresh or Thawed Chopped Broccoli

Cook onion in a bit of oil until tender. Combine with remaining ingredients and mix well. Bake at 325 degrees for about 45 minutes. Can be topped with buttered bread crumbs before baking if desired.

TEXAS YA-HOO CASSEROLE

- 1 8 to 10 Oz. Bag Corn Chips
- 8 Oz. Cooked Chicken, Tuna or Ham, diced
- 1 Can Cream of Chicken or Mushroom Soup
- 1/4 Can Water
- 1 Chopped Onion
- 1 Chopped Green Pepper
- 1 Tsp. Chili Powder
- 1 Can Ro-tel Tomatoes With Chilis
- 8 Oz. Grated Cheddar Cheese

Combine the meat, soup, water, onion, pepper and chili powder. Layer half of the corn chips in a casserole dish and top with half of the mixture. Add the other half of the chips in another layer and top with the rest of the mixture. Spread on the tomatoes and chilis and top with the grated cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes.

IT'S PARTY TIME!

In Baja, party time is any time when the sun is shining.. or when it isn't. Something to munch on with the cold cerveza is always a welcomed treat. Should a party break out at your rig and you feel the urge to become Suzie Homemaker and a gracious host, here are a few ideas. One wants to stay away from serving anything which requires a plate to hold or a fork to eat. These are commonly known as bocaditos or little bites. We call them finger foods.

BAJADITOS

- 4 Large Flour Tortillas
- 4 Eggs
- 1 Can Condensed Milk
- 8 Oz. Grated Swiss or Monterey Jack Cheese
- 1 6 oz. Can Chopped Chilis
- 1 Cup Salsa Picante

Beat the eggs with the milk and mix in the cheese, chilis and salsa. Since most RV ovens will bake only two pies at a time, lightly grease two pie tins or spray with Pam. Place a tortilla in each pan like a pie crust and pour in 1/4th of the mixture. Bake in 350 oven for about 30 minutes or until it is firmly set. Cut each one into 16 slices and serve hot. Make the other two in the same manner. By properly pacing the bocaditos, one can keep the party going for a considerable amount of BS (Baja Stories).

CLAM DIGGERS

- 4 Bollelos
- 16 Oz. Sour Cream
- 1 Can Minced Clams, drained
- 2 Limes
- 2 Squirts of Tobasco Sauce

Slice off the tops of the bollelos and hollow out the inside of the bottom section to make little boats. Shred the bread that you removed and combine with the sour cream, clams, juice of the limes and Tobasco sauce. Place an equal amount the mixture in each boat. Slice the tops into strips to use for dipping. When they run out of bread to dip, cut the bottoms into slices for eating.

CHILI con QUESO

Chili con Queso is simply melted cheese with chopped chilis. It is great poured over vegetables such as cauliflower, broccoli and brussels sprouts or as a party dip.

- 12 Oz. Velveeta
- 1/4 Cup Milk
- 1 4 Oz. Can Chopped Chilis, drained

Over very low heat, melt cheese and combine with milk. When hot and completely blended, stir in the chopped chilis. Serve with chips or raw vegetables for dipping.

NACHOS

I suppose that there is no end to what a person can pile onto tortilla chips and call them nachos, but real Mexican cooks make them this way. Spread each chip with a layer of refritos, sprinkle on grated cheese and top with a dab of salsa picante and a slice of jalapeno. Pop into the oven long enough to melt the cheese and serve.

POTENT POTABLES

People of the southwest were fermenting and drinking the juices of the maguey cactus long before the town of Tequila was ever thought of, much less getting around to calling the fiery liquid by that name. Early explorers found the Indians getting roaring drunk on a similar stuff which they called Tiz Win. For many years Tequila was considered to be the drink of the lowest class of people and not until some enterprising bartender came up with a way to mix it into a more palatable form did it become the Mexican national drink. After all, how could one have bad thoughts about a drink named after something as delicate as a daisy.

There is an old saying that if you are lonely, mix up a batch of margarita, and within minutes, someone will come along to tell you that you did it wrong. There are probably as many different recipes for making margaritas as there are mixologists, as bartenders like to be called. Some people feel that no Baja evening will be complete unless it begins by shaking hands with Jose Cuervo.

GRINGO MARGARITAS

Actually, there are three levels of the Gringo Margarita: Chica, Grande and Mucho Macho, which are really vicious. Get out your blender and go for it. Each of these recipes will make 32 ounces of Margarita. Serve over ice cubes or add ice to the blender to make them frozen.

Chica:

- 1 6 Oz. Can Welches Frozen Limeade
- 1 Can Tequila
- 3 Cans Water
- 1/2 Can Orange Juice

Grande:

- 1 6 Oz. Can Welches Frozen Limeade
- 2 Cans Tequila
- 2 Cans Water
- 1/2 Can Orange Juice

Mucho Macho:

1 6 Oz. Can Welches Frozen Limeade
1 1/2 Cans Water
2 Cans Tequila
1/2 Can Damiana
1/2 Can Contreau or Triple Sec

BAJA MARIA

1 Shooter Tequila (2 Oz)
6 Oz. Tomato or V-8 Juice
1 Lime cut in half
1 Tsp. Worcestershire Sauce
1 Tsp. Tobasco

Squeeze half the lime into a glass and mix in other ingredients. Save the other half to suck on if the Tobasco gets too vicious. It is claimed that this drink will cure anything from hangovers to hangnails.

SHOOTERS

The glasses used for drinking straight Tequila in Baja look something like large shotgun shells, from whence they got their name. A shooter holds about one and a half jiggers. Swapping shooters, a popular game in the local cantinas, is about as hazardous to your health as letting a monkey play with a hand grenade. This should be left to the old hands who have measured well, both their capacity and endurance.

BENIGN BAJA BEVERAGES

For those who want to serve something which is somewhat less deadly than Carrie Nation's ax, here are a few suggestions which will warm the hearts and please the masses.

SUMMER HUMMERS

6 Oz. Kahlu'a
6 Oz. Rum
3 Cups Vanilla Ice Cream

Blend to the consistency of a milk shake and serve in dessert glasses.

YELLOW BIRDS

1 6 Oz. Can Frozen Orange Juice
12 Oz. Canned Pineapple Juice
12 Oz. White Rum
6 Oz. Creme de Banana
18 Oz. Water

Blend and serve with lots of ice cubes in a pitcher or punch bowl.

IT'S RUMMY DUMMY TIME

I first became acquainted with this great cool weather drink while attending the Vagabundos del Mar annual crab and artichoke feed. This is a bash which the club holds each May at a marina and RV park near their Isleton, California headquarters. This particular rummy dummy party began innocently enough, but before the night was over, making the rummy dummies had progressed from a few small containers to one of the pots used for boiling crabs. Everyone kept adding various and sundry things to the mixture until it took on the form of a witches' brew. Some of the participants claimed that it actually glowed in the dark. I doubt that anyone will ever be able to duplicate that particular bunch of rummy dummies, or would want to, but here is the basic recipe. I accept no responsibility for, nor do I guarantee what direction it will take once a Rummy Dummy party gets up a full head of steam. Here is the recipe for four people, but it can be adjusted to fit the crowd.

2 Pkg. Instant Hot Chocolate Mix
2 Tsp. Instant coffee
4 Cups Hot Water
4 Jiggers Rum (mas o menos)

Combine the first three ingredients and pour into four mugs. Carefully pour at least one jigger of rum into each mug. Stir as little as possible or the heat will cause the alcohol to evaporate.

BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

Lest you think that I am talking about a bowl of Wheaties, read on. Early one morning when I was looking for a cup of coffee in the town of San Felipe, I stopped at a cantina where they also served food. As I sipped my coffee, one of the locals hoisted himself onto a bar stool and ordered "Breakfast of Champions". The bartender handed him a cup of black coffee and poured a shooter of tequila. The customer dumped the tequila into the coffee and sipped away. Talk about the hair of the dog that bit you!

THE SPECIAL CHAPTER

Every cookbook author seems to come up with a few recipes which he would like to include but they simply do not fit in any of the ordinary chapters, so a special chapter is needed for them. If it were not for this chapter, where in the world would one put the recipe for GORP? I haven't the faintest idea what GORP means or where it came from, but no RV'er should be without at least one container of the stuff. I've also heard it called floor sweep, trail mix and cat litter, but call it what you like, it will still be plain old GORP to most people.

GORP

- 1 Cup Granola or Similar Cereal
- 1 Cup Raisins
- 1 Cup Sunflower Seed Kernels
- 1 Cup Peanuts
- 1 Cup Plain M&Ms

Mix and store in air-tight container. Eat dry as a snack, or add milk for a super cereal. I put about 2 tablespoons of GORP into plastic bags and hand it out to Mexican children. After that, I am Uno Bueno Gringo.

TEXAS TRASH

- 1 Box Rice Chex
- 1 Box Wheat Chex
- 1 Box Corn Chex
- 1 12 Oz. Pkg. Pretzel Sticks
- 1 16 Oz. Can Mixed Nuts
- 1 Stick Butter
- 4 T. Cayenne Pepper

Combine all three boxes of Chex, the mixed nuts and the pretzels in large metal container. Melt butter and combine with cayenne pepper. Drizzle over Chex mixture. Heat in 200-degree oven for half an hour, tumbling every 10 minutes. Let cool and store in airtight container. Texas Trash is a great munchie with beer.

GUACAMOLE

2 or 3 Large, Ripe Avocados
2 Tomatoes, peeled, seeded and chopped
1 Onion, chopped very fine
1 4 Oz. Can Chopped Chilis
4 Limes
1 Tsp. Salt
1/4 Tsp. Garlic Salt
1/4 Tsp. Cumin

Mash peeled avocados with a fork until just well broken up. Should have about 3 cups of mashed avocado. Squeeze limes over the avocado and fold in remaining ingredients. Refrigerate in tightly covered plastic or glass bowl until time to serve with chips for dipping.

BASIC BAKING MIX

Most people take along a box or two of Bisquick, but you can make your own for a lot less. Once made, it can become biscuits, pie crusts, pancakes or even the basis for cakes. Make enough to fill whatever container you are using to these ratios.

1 Cup Flour
1 Tsp. Baking Powder
1 Tsp. Sugar
1/8 Tsp. Salt

BASIC MARINADE

1/4 Cup Red Wine Vinegar
2 T. vegetable Oil
2 T. Soy Sauce
2 T. Ketchup
1/4 Tsp. Onion Powder
1/4 Tsp. Garlic Powder
1/4 Tsp. Black Pepper

Marinate beef 4 hours, pork or chicken 2 hours, fish 1 hour. Can be used for basting while grilling or roasting.

TEXAS HOTS

I don't know where this recipe really belongs, so I'll just stick it in here.

While driving through rural New York, I kept seeing roadside signs which advertised "Texas Hots". My family has been around Texas since it was spelled Tejas and was a part of Mexico, but I had never heard of anything called a "Texas Hot".

My curiosity finally got the best of me so I stopped at a roadside diner which advertised "Award Winning Texas Hots". I told the owner that I was from Texas but had never heard of "Texas Hots" and wanted to see what they were all about. He proudly pointed to a blue ribbon and a certificate which were hanging on the wall, proclaiming that he had served the best "Texas Hots" at the local county fair.

"You are in for a treat," he said as he set the "Texas Hot" in front of me. It was something like a Chili Dog, except that it would be awfully messy to try to eat with your hands. It was what we commonly call a Hot Link Sausage on a thick slice of bread which had been toasted on the grill. I suppose that it got its name from the fact that bread sliced about an inch thick is often called "Texas Toast". The whole thing was then covered with a meat sauce which had a mild chili flavor. He gladly gave me the recipe to his award winning sauce, which is included in case you would like to sample some Award Winning Texas Hots.

SAUCE FOR TEXAS HOTS

- 1 Pound Ground Beef
- 1 Onion, minced
- 1 12 Oz. Can Tomato Sauce
- 1 T. Chili Powder
- 1 T. Sugar
- 1 Tsp. Corn Meal

Crumble the meat and cook with the onions until meat is no longer pink. Add everything else except the corn meal and simmer for about half an hour. Add corn meal to thicken sauce. Split a hot link and grill split side down while also toasting a thick slice of bread on the grill. Put the hot link on the toast, spoon on the sauce and you have an Award Winning Texas Hot.

SHOPPING ON THE ROAD

One of the hardest habits to break while shopping for an RV is impulse buying. You go into the market to buy two items, come out with two bags full and then wonder where to put all the stuff. The solution to this problem is to make a menu and then shop for what is needed to fill it. Also, avoid the specials or else you might wind up hauling around six quarts of pickles Unless you plan to camp for two weeks at a camp which is really out in the boonies, a two or three day supply is usually all that one needs to have on hand at any time. When I am traveling, I usually try to combine my afternoon rest stop with a trip to the grocery store where I buy what I need for that night plus the following morning.

When most people set about buying groceries for a trip south of the border, they tend to load up with everything which they might possibly ever need and a lot which they never would. Mexico is not a vast wasteland into which one must carry everything needed, but in some ways, very well equipped to serve the needs of their people.

No matter how small a village might be, one will usually find a Conosupo located there. While these stores are operated by a local merchant, they are sponsored and supported by the Mexican government. Conosupos are opened in places which would normally have so little business that they could not support a privately owned store. Since they are forced to carry a rather limited stock of supplies, it is not unusual to buy something in a Conosupo one day and not be able to find it there a few days later [just like Wal-Mart]. I've never been able to figure out how or when a certain item will be in stock in these stores. You have to more or less catch when catch can when shopping at Conosupos.

Whether it is in a tiny Conosupo, a public market or in the huge CCC or Astra stores found in the larger cities, shopping for food on the local economy is one of the cultural and social events that everyone should experience. Most first-time travelers south of the border usually find that they have brought a lot of things only to find that they could have saved a considerable amount of money by shopping for them on the local economy.

Actually, what to take and what to expect to buy while south of the border can be broken down into two categories: convenience foods and the basics Convenience foods such as prepared mixes, specialty foods and kits are hard to come by in any but the largest of stores or those which cater mostly to the tourist. Even if they do have such items in stock, they will probably have been imported from the states and will be rather expensive. This includes such things as cake mixes,

frozen dinners and Macaroni and Cheese Dinners. In fact, anything which has been imported from the states will cost about twice as much there as what it would sell for here at home.

A very good selection of canned fruits and vegetables are available under Mexican labels and names at much lower prices than one would expect to pay here at home. One does not need to be able to speak Spanish to know that the can marked "Ejotes" contains green beans. Green beans will be pictured on the label. This is true for just about everything in the way of foods as it is not uncommon to find a Mexican housewife who cannot read the labels and has to rely on the pictures.

The real bargain in food is fresh produce. You will seldom find anything which costs more than about ten cents per pound and it is usually fresh and of good quality. This is to be expected because much of the fresh produce found in your local super market comes from Mexico.

Most of the prices will be shown in Pesos per Kilo. A Kilo (Kilogram) is about two pounds and depending on the current exchange rate, you will have to do a certain amount of mental calculation in order to arrive at price in cents per pound. A pocket calculator is a handy thing to have along when shopping. Fresh food is one of the things which is not subject to the 15% VAT (Value Added Tax) in Mexico.

In the big stores which go under the name of Astra, you will probably get the feeling that the PA system will come on at any moment and say, "Attention K-Mart Shoppers..." There is a good reason for this because Astra is the Latin American division of K-Mart operates under much the same system.

Public markets can be found in many of the medium to large cities and offer the buyer products and services at prices which are somewhat lower than can be found in regular stores. They are divided up into a number of small booths where people usually sell only a few individual items. Some of these booths operate on a continuing basis while others are rented for only two or three days. Many times one will find the same item or product being sold in more than one booth. When this is the case, the prices are usually the same for all of them and are firmly established.

The final place to buy things is at the door of your RV. Peddlers will come by, selling Just about everything. One doesn't have to be around an RV park very long before he learns that the shrimp man comes by every day at four, the vegetable man comes on Wednesday and the fruit man comes on Monday and Friday.

One of the main things to remember when you head for the mercado is to take along your own shopping bag. Only the largest stores furnish anything in which to carry your purchases. Also, as you enter a market, it is customary to check the bag at the door (deposito la bolsa). Many stores have a shelf by the door for the bags and when entering those which do not, simply hand it to the checker and they will place it under the counter for use when you leave.

MOO, OINK AND CLUCK

A trip to the meat market is an experience which you will never forget. There is an old saying that the way to become a confirmed vegetarian is to visit the fresh meat department in a public market. Along with the more recognizable pieces of meat will be animal parts which most people have never seen. Very little in the way of animal protein is wasted in Mexico. If you see something which you do not recognize, it's probably better that you never know what it really is.

In the meat display cases in the larger stores, one will see various cuts of beef in styrofoam trays and wrapped in plastic, much like here in the states. The only problem is the fact that they do not cut the beef in the way that we do here in the states. While the names may be the same, the cut is totally different. Also, the beef in Mexico tends to be much tougher and with little or no marbling of fat. Actually, Mexican beef is much more healthful to eat than what comes from our commercial feed yards. If you like big, Juicy T-Bone steaks to sizzle over the grill, better take some frozen ones with you. Mexican beef is especially good when cooked slowly, such as in stews, soups and barbecued.

EGGS

You will probably be surprised to find that most stores do not refrigerate fresh eggs and that those on display look really awful. This is because they have never been washed which enables them to be kept at room temperature for several weeks without spoiling. Since the eggs have never been cleaned, they should not be allowed to come in contact with fresh vegetables or other foods. It is a good idea to carry a few empty egg cartons along with you on your trip to Baja. To check eggs to see whether they are good or not, put them in fresh water. Good eggs will sink to the bottom and those which float should be thrown away. Don't use salt water as all eggs will float in sea water.

A TRIP TO THE PANADERIA

You haven't really experienced Mexico until you discover bollelos. In Mexican bakeries, they make their own version of French bread in rolls which are about the same size and shape as a large sweet potato. These are called Bollelos. They usually come hot out of the oven at 6:30 AM and at 3:00 PM. There is a saying that the reason for siesta is to give the bollelos time to rise. There is almost always a line of people waiting to buy hot bollelos as they come out of the oven. Fresh bollelos smell and taste so good that people tend buy more than they need, but there are ways of using the surplus.

While all panaderias have the basics in the way of baked goods, each one seems to have some specialty in the way of sweets. Often they make it only once a week and there will always be a crowd waiting for it to come out of the oven.

If you can manage to be there on the right day to catch their specialty, you will be pleasantly rewarded.

SPLISH-SPLASH

Seafood is plentiful and very inexpensive in cities along the coast and usually very fresh. Let your nose do the walking when buying seafood in Mexico or anywhere else. All fish markets have a strong "fishy" smell, so you will have to sniff the particular piece of fish that you intend to buy. Fresh fish has almost no odor. If seafood is not fresh or else has not been stored properly, it will have a strong odor and should not be eaten.

BOOZE

If your tastes run toward some label brand of Scotch or Rye, then you'd better bring your own with you. After import fees and the 15% VAT, a bottle of Cutty Sark will set you back nearly fifty bucks. On the other hand, local products are some of the biggest bargains to be found. Tequila runs about two bucks a bottle and a very good local brandy will cost about the same.

AT YOUR DOOR

In RV parks which are located some distance from a market, various food merchants will come by, usually on a twice-weekly basis. They will be known as the vegetable man, the fish man or the fruit man. It is not unusual for their produce to be somewhat fresher than what one will find in the local stores. The reason for this is that they can get more money directly from the customer than if they sell it wholesale to the market.

There is usually a continuous flow of peddlers who make their way through RV parks; selling blankets, wood carvings, dolls, and just about everything else which is picked up by tourists. You can bargain with these people and almost always be able to buy at a lower than the first price asked. They know that they will have to come down on their price, so they start high enough to allow for some bickering. In fact, they have a name for people who buy at their first asking price, it is Bobo, which means goose or fool.

These camper to camper peddlers have a most amazing grapevine. If you ask one of them for something which he does not have, you can almost bet that someone will come along a short time later with that exact object.

While we were camped at Old Keno on the west coast of the mainland, several peddlers would come by each day, selling ironwood carvings. My wife wanted to find a special carving to give to a friend of hers who was a cat lover. She asked each of the peddlers if they had a carving of a cat but none of them did. She finally gave up on the idea and forgot about it.

A few days later, a peddler whom we had never seen before came into the park and headed right for our rig. He showed us his carvings of marlin, quail, mountain lions and roadrunners. When it seemed that he had shown us everything that he had and he was about ready to leave, he pulled one last one from his bag. He unwrapped the carving and handed it to my wife. It was a rather bad carving of a cat. Obviously, the man had far more experience in carving fish and birds than he did in carving cats.

Since the man had gone to so much trouble to carve a cat for her, we figured that the least that we could do was to buy it from him, even if it did not match the quality of his other carvings.

HINTS & HAUNTS

HINTS:

These are just a few of the things which I have discovered to make life a lot easier for you as you go along the road in your RV.

When you are shopping for an RV, always buy whatever you can in plastic containers. They weigh less and aren't nearly as likely to break as glass. Along with mustard, you can now buy ketchup, mayonnaise, salad dressing, margarine and even jelly in squeeze containers. Most of these packages are just about the right size to fit in the racks in the average RV refrigerator door.

Always buy pop in aluminum cans. First off, most bottles are too large to fit in the door shelves and they weigh a lot more than cans. Secondly, even if there is no deposit on the bottles, they take up a lot more room in the trash than does a crushed can. And the final reason, aluminum cans cool much faster than bottles.

If you are going to turn the refrigerator off for a period of time, wipe out all of the water possible, then leave the door open for a day or so to completely dry. Wad up a few sheets of newspaper and stuff them between the shelves before you close the door. They will keep it fresh smelling for several weeks.

One of those little battery-operate fans will make the fridge a lot more efficient and prevent spoiled food.

A hair dryer turns defrosting the freezing compartment of the fridge into a quick and easy job. You don't even have to shut it off before defrosting.

Need extra storage space for things like potatoes and onions? The oven makes a great place to get them out of the way.

Mash the roll of toilet paper flat before you put it onto the roller. This keeps the paper from unrolling into the floor as you drive.

Did some stogie-smoking visitor come in and stink up the place with his El Ropo? Slice an apple or two and lay the slices here and there to remove the odor of tobacco.

HAUNTS:

I've never heard of an RV which was actually haunted by a ghost₁ even though it seems that at times, some of them take on a personality and mind of their own. While RVs may not be the favorite hiding places for ethereal residents, they do seem to attract their share of other unwanted varmints, both large and small.

The pests which are the easiest to get and hardest to get rid of are ants. Little brown ants, commonly known as sugar or p155 ants are especially fond of taking up residence in RVs. They can be found galloping around on counter tops, running along walls and in just about everything that you open to use.

Since most RVs are moved now and then and have no direct contact with the ground, termites are seldom a problem, however I heard of one man who kept hearing strange chewing noises coming from the walls of his motorhome at night. He finally discovered that a colony of carpenter ants had moved in and were busily eating away at the wood structure of his rig. He had to have it tented and fumigated to get rid of them.

These pesky little critters usually get into your rig by climbing up the electrical cord or the water hose. Each time that you park and hook up to shore connections, spray a rag with OFF, RAID or even diesel fuel and tie it around the hose and power cord about half way between the ground and where they go into the rig. This seems to stop most of the unwanted visitors with eight legs.

Roaches, while not as likely to infest an RV in the same manner that they do houses, do take up residence there once in a while. Each time that the bug man comes to spray your house, have him give the rig a shot. He probably won't even charge extra for doing it.

RVs are supposed to be pretty tightly constructed, but it seems that every once in a while a mouse will find a way to get in. Once inside, one of these little fur balls can play havoc with all sorts of things. Not only do they eat holes in boxes of food and make nests in stored clothing, they have been known to chew right through electrical wiring. It is either Murphy's or mouse law that they do this in the most inaccessible places. I always carry a mouse trap in the rig, especially in Mexico where they are almost impossible to buy.

If a dog decided that right in front of your step is a great spot for him to do his business, sprinkle a little ammonia around on the ground and he will head for other places in a hurry.

As unpleasant as little critters can be on the inside of a rig, big critters can really become a problem if food or garbage is left on the outside. These varmints range from the RV park dog to wilder varieties of animals. This is especially true when camped in more primitive areas. Raccoons, coyotes, bears, wild pigs and even cows have been known to literally wreck camps where food was left outside. The best bet is to keep everything which even smells edible inside of the rig at all times.

THE COW THAT ATE BAJA

My favorite story about camp robbing animals is the one about the old yellow cow which lives around Bahia los Frailes. Los Frailes, as it is known, is a beautiful cove located on the eastern tip of Baja. This cow seems to know exactly how far the average Gringo can throw a rock and will stand about four feet past that line as long as you are looking at her. Turn your back and she will come creeping up as quietly as a kitten on carpet. Once Inside your camp, she will eat anything and everything.

Over the years that we have been camping there, she has been known to consume: dozens of oranges, apples and bananas, ten pounds of raw peanuts, ten pounds of flour and a skillet of grease which was used to cook fish. She has slurped up loaves of bread, sweet rolls and cakes in a split-second gulp. She has learned how to remove plastic lids from cans to get at such things as two pounds of Crisco, three pounds of coffee and even dry beans.

She has somehow learned how to open ice chests and has been credited with eating bacon, eggs and even raw fish. About the only thing which is still safe from her is canned goods and I suspect that before long, she will become as smart as the bears in Yellowstone and go after them.

So, if you happen to stop at Los Frailes and a lonesome looking old yellow cow comes along, guard your food well because in the realm of camp robbers, she is a pro.

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

Conversions

BAJA	GRINGO
1 Kilo (kilogram)	A little over 2 pounds
Media Kilo	About a pound
1 Litro	Slightly over a quart
1 Gram	Same weight as 1 raisin
25 Grams	1 Ounce
1 Manojó (Handful)	1/3 Cup (1 Serving)
1 Taza	1 Cup
1 Cucharadita	1 Teaspoon
1 Cucharada	1 Tablespoon
1 Piez(a)	1 Each
1 Pizca	1 Pinch
Pizca con sal	Sprinkle with salt
Sazonar con pimienta	Season with pepper
Mas o menos	More or less
Poquito mas	A little more
Poquito menos	A little less
Mervor	Boil
Freir	Fry
Frito	Fried
Cocinar	Cook
Hornear	Bake
Conservar	Keep
Helar	Freeze
Refrescar	Cool

Temperature conversions:

Celsius or Centigrade	Fahrenheit
100	212
125	257
150	302
175	347
200	392
225	437
250	482
275	527

For engineers, scientists, REALLY serious cooks or anyone who's just curious:

$$C = (F - 32) * 5/9$$

$$F = (9/5 * C) + 32$$

A simple rule of thumb is to double the Celsius temperature to get Fahrenheit. As they say, it's close enough for government work.

THE LAST PAGE

When most authors come to the end of a book and find that there will be one or two blank pages, they usually label them "NOTES" in order to show that there is some reason for them being there. Instead of "Notes", I will use the space to tell you the story about how I came to be known as "Don Coyote"

Several years ago, I owned an older motorhome which I decided to name Rocinante, after Don Quixote's horse. I had a sign painter remove the original maker's decals and paint the name across the back.

My wife and I were traveling through far west Texas when we decided to spend the night near the small town of Van Horn. Since we were on the road and wanted to get moving, we decided to drive into town the next morning for breakfast. As we were driving along the sleepy main street, a man wearing a cowboy hat and big star jumped out in front of us, waving his arms to stop us.

"Yew caint drive no truk on main street on Satiday," he shouted. "It's agin the law."

"This isn't a truck, it's a motorhome," I told him.

"It's got dual wheels on it, so it's a truk an yew pay a fine."

"But it is classed as a motorhome and has a motorhome license on it," I protested, pointing at the tag.

"Don't make no difference, I'm writin' yew a ticket for drivin' a truk on main street on Satiday an' it will cost yew ten bucks," he said as he hauled out his book and began to write.

"Whut kind of a truk is a Rocinante?" he asked, looking at the name.

"That's the name of Don Quixote's horse," I replied.

"Don Coyote. Is he one of them Hol-lewood cowboy stars or sumpin?"

Not wanting to cause him to have a mental overload, I simply replied, "You might say that."

He ripped the ticket from his book and handed it to me, saying, "Yew will have to hang 'round till nine when the jedge gets to his office."

I looked at the ticket, which wasn't made out to me but to Don Coyote. Needless to say, we drove right on out of town and kept going. That ticket is now one of my more memorable pieces of worthless paper.