RECIPE

Trail Vegetable Soup Mix, Home-Dried

Carrots, onion, celery, green beans and spinach, blanched and dried at home, then jarred with garlic, thyme and pepper: a light trail snack that soaks and simmers into a warm cup of vegetable soup at camp.

MAKES

6 servings US Metric

TOTAL

17 h

Ingredients

- [ ] 3 cups carrots, peeled and sliced ⅛ inch thick, fresh weight
- [ ] 2 cups sliced onion, ⅛ to ¼ inch thick, fresh weight
- [ ] 3 cups sliced celery stalks, fresh weight
- [ ] 2 cups green beans, cut in ½-inch pieces, fresh weight
- [ ] 6 cups loosely packed spinach, washed and shaken dry, fresh weight
- [ ] ½ tsp salt
- [ ] 1 tsp garlic powder
- [ ] 1 tsp dried thyme leaves
- [ ] ½ tsp black pepper
- [ ] About 3 quarts water for the blanching pot, boiled, then poured away
- [ ] Ice water for chilling the blanched vegetables, poured away

Method

1. Wash all the vegetables. Peel the carrots. Slice the carrots ⅛ inch thick, the onions ⅛ to ¼ inch thick and the celery stalks thin; cut the green beans in ½-inch pieces. Trim the spinach and shake it dry.

2. Fill a large pot about two-thirds full of water and bring it to a rolling boil. Blanch one vegetable at a time in a wire basket or colander, and start timing as soon as the vegetables are in the boiling water, keeping the water at a steady boil (Colorado State). Blanch carrots, onions, celery, green beans and spinach 5 minutes each. Colorado State's table says 4 minutes for 3,000 to 5,000 feet and a little longer above that, so we add 1 minute at 5,430 feet.

- [ ] 12 cups water in all, 2 cups per portion, added at camp

3. Lift each vegetable into ice water for a moment, then drain it. Spread each one on its own tray, ½ inch deep or less, in a single layer. The drying times differ, so keep one vegetable to a tray.

4. Dry at 140 °F in a dehydrator, which has a fan and takes about half the time of an oven. In an oven, only a setting that goes down to 140 °F will dry rather than cook, and the door must stay propped open 2 to 6 inches.

5. Start checking at the low end of each range: spinach, carrots and onions 6 to 10 hours; green beans 8 to 14; celery 10 to 16. They dry fast at the end, so look often. Take a piece off the tray, let it cool, and test it: it is done when it is brittle and snaps.

6. Let all the trays cool completely, about 30 to 60 minutes. Warm vegetables packed in a jar sweat, and the wet is enough to grow mold.

7. Tip the vegetables into one bowl and stir in the salt, garlic powder, thyme and pepper. Weigh the mix and divide it into 6 equal portions by weight, about 20 g each (the dried vegetables are about 18 g of that and the seasoning about 2 g). Seal each portion in its own freezer bag or small jar.

8 Optional: before sealing, a jar filled two-thirds full can sit four to 10 days (Colorado State) and be shaken daily; if any moisture shows on the glass, put the vegetables back in the dryer until they are brittle again.

9 At camp, pour one portion into a pot with 2 cups of cold water and let it soak 30 to 90 minutes. Do not pour off the soaking water; it goes into the soup. Do not soak longer than 2 hours, or longer than 1 hour if it is above 90 °F.

10 Bring the pot to a boil, then keep it at a simmer for 20 minutes. Taste a carrot piece. If it is still hard, simmer 5 more minutes at a time until it is tender. Eat it within 2 hours of simmering, or within 1 hour if it is above 90 °F, and do not carry it on for later.