



## BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA TROOP 29

### Mess Kits:

The basic requirements for a good mess kit are:

1. Bowl/plate
2. Fork/knife
3. Cup
4. String bag.

#### **Not a great idea:**

#### **Camp Kits:**

Ok. Every scout I've ever know has wanted one of these. From a kid 'coolness' factor they are WAAAAAY up there. From a parents point of view – this is what they envision when they think of camping plus they are cheap ~\$10. These kits also seem like a great idea since they give you so many options...you get a plate, bowl, cup, pot, etc.

What you also get from a kid stand point is:



- Lost wing nuts. These things list exactly 1 outing unless dad/mom are managing.
- Few scouts can manage putting them back together without assistance. They require both spatial and physical coordination which is usually beyond most Webelos. Do YOU want to assemble 20 sets of these at every meal?
  - Because scouts can't manage you end up with lost parts and a 'lost and found' collection of cups, lids, handles etc.
- Dropped food when wing nut gets loose and plate swings around.
- Since they are made of Aluminum they act as highly efficient heat sinks. Hot food goes in...plate gets hot....food gets cold.
- Food makes plate hot. Burns hands.
  - This is VERY bad for things like Hot Cocoa – a Webelos staple – hot cocoa in an aluminum cup is a recipe for burnt lips and eventually cold cocoa.
- By their very design as you seal them up you have to dry these things off ... a constant fight for paper towels (which we don't bring on camping trips).
  - Scouts do a poor job of doing dishes and drying.
  - Wet mess kits when sealed make a great medium for mold growth. Uck.

## Knives & Forks

Again. High on the 'coolness' factor are pocket knife style knife/fork/spoon devices. Or the more traditional nesting boy scout knife/fork/spoon kits. All I can say is: "RESIST".

- The pocket knife style is an interesting idea. Yes...I bought one. No I don't use it any more. Largely because it never seems to get clean. Anybody seen peanut butter embedded in a knife slot after about 3 days? Uck.
- The pocket knife also has a tendency to close itself at odd times. The handles are also large and clumsy for small hands.
- The Scout kit style is somewhat better but still has the drawback of heat convection.
- Rarely are the scout style kits EVER put back together.
- The case will last 1 outing or end up embedded with food from improperly cleaned silverware stuffed inside. Impossible to clean inside the case. Another great mold experiment.
- SPORKS. Somebody mad millions selling the camping community on these. A less functional design I have rarely seen. Lets see.
  - The serrated knife portion is on the fork end. Like sticking a knife in your mouth with every bite?
  - The shape of the thing makes using the knife impossible.
    - How do you hold your meat and cut it? There is only one tool.



### A better idea:

So, what's the better solution?

- Slightly more expensive plastic kits will run ~\$15.
- Made of flexible plastic they resolve most of the heat problems. Food stays hot, they don't burn fingers/hands when held.
- Being made of plastic names written on the bottom stay on longer for better identification of lost items.
- With a mesh bag they are easily managed by the scout.
- Being in a mesh bag the plates will air dry even if put away wet.
  - Less likelihood of getting moldy even if poorly washed.
- The mesh bag can serve as a dryer.
  - Place the wet plates into the bag and then grasp the cord and spin the bag around. Spinning will eject water on the plates and dry them.
- Being made of plastic it can easily be packed inside backpacks or duffels and not take up much space. Plus they are light weight.
- This style mess kit also doesn't seem to lose parts as frequently. Probably because it's easier to manage.
  - Scouts will lose the entire kit....but less frequently lose parts.
- Plastic silverware does not retain heat, is easily cleaned, and inexpensively replaceable when lost.
  - With a separate knife/fork/spoon you can eat properly.



### The Best idea:

What do we recommend? A Scout is thrifty! So, here is what I use. This kit has all the advantages of the “Better Idea”, but is cheaper and honestly just as good.

- Does this container look familiar? Yup. You saw it last time you ordered Chinese food. I don't think my family even uses Tupperware any more. These things are great.
  - Total cost \$0. The containers even come with food!
  - Plastic doesn't retain heat.
  - Easily cleaned.
  - Have form fitting lids to keep food hot if you have to get up.
  - Lids can serve as second plate.
- My cutlery is plastic. I buy a box of mixed plastic utensils. When they break or get lost I grab another set.
- Cups. We ALL have these insulated cups kicking around. Probably given to you as a free gift at some time or another. They keep hot beverages hot; cold beverages cold. Perfect.
- All of this is stuck inside a mesh bag. The only thing I specifically bought for my mess kit.
  - Helps keep my mess kit together.
  - Keeps my mess kit dry and mold free even if I don't do a great job at washing.

### What makes this the best idea?

- It's cheap. Manageable by the boys. Easily replaced when lost/broken. Cleans up easily when out camping.

