
PROVISIONING HINTS AND IDEAS

BY MARILYN OLIVEIRA AND THE CREW OF *TORTUGA*

1. KEEP A NOTEBOOK/ INVENTORY

I hope you all have started an inventory system, not only for the cook, but for crew who may need to find supplies. I keep a notebook that has an internal diagram of the boat in the front with every locker named or numbered and a separate page for each locker. Working from the back of the notebook I have several pages with menu ideas broken down with a page for breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, cocktails, desserts, etc.. 'Just a list of favorite meals to help on the days when you are not feeling creative, and there is not a restaurant in sight for many watery miles. It can give you some incentive and keep you going.

2. DAY BAGS OF FOOD

Just a story to make you laugh. When my husband and I took our first two week vacation on the boat to the California Delta we had read all the books, and the thoughts at the time were to put each days food in a plastic bag numbered (all menus were done ahead) and each day you got the appropriate bag and all the ingredients for that days meals were in the bag. This way the cook could relax and not have to think about meal plans. You ate only that day's food and didn't touch the other bags until their number was up. This was such a disaster its a wonder we ever sailed the boat again. We also got so hung up on the bags and doing everything the proper way at the time that we did not have a deck of cards on board, or a single book to read for pleasure. But by the next summer we had corrected our mistakes and tried the trip again, without the bags but with cards, books and a baby.

3. SNACK LOCKER

Keep a locker that is always available for the munchies, especially during passages. The cook gets angry when woken up to dispense food in the night, but even worse is when the crucial ingredient for the next meal was eaten by some innocent crewperson and there is not a store for miles. Individually packaged treats , instant cocoa, soup, oatmeal packs, small candy bars, etc. are good. You will learn what you like to eat at odd hours .My favorite middle of the night treat is a Tootsie pop.

4. RULE of 2/3

Once you leave the U.S., no matter how long or short your grocery list is, be prepared to almost NEVER find everything on your list. Be prepared to improvise, go without, or fake it.

5. SHOW & TELL

Here are a few items to look for south of the border:

- a bean masher
- lime squeezer,
- and a few food items.

6. COOKBOOKS

Cookbooks are only as good as the ingredients are available. Get at least 1 or 2 basic cookbooks, *The Joy of Cooking* is a must for the odd basic information and one like Betty Crocker.

7. FOOD EXPLORE

Try new foods you find in the market place. Only buy a small amount to taste. My family and I tried new foods; some we liked and some we quickly decided it must be an acquired taste, but it was fun to explore.

8. CREW FOOD ODDITIES

If you have crew along for any length of time find out about food preferences. We had one friend who loved ketchup and he was with us during a time of a ketchup shortage in Mexico. Another crew member would ask right after breakfast what we were having for dinner so he could spend the day anticipating the evening meal. (Don't ask how many times dinner would come and he'd say "this isn't what you said we were having")

9. BRAND NAMES/QUALITY CONTROL

If you are hung up on a particular brand name product take what you can from the states. The same product in a foreign country may not be exactly the same. Brand name US food is usually more expensive than the local brands. Quality control differs a lot from country to country. Example is a six pack of soda bottles. The amount of liquid may be 1/2 inch different from bottle to bottle. If you see something in the market...BUY IT....it may not be available in the next town or even the next day.

10. FEED YOUR BODY AND YOUR SOUL

While you are spending all the time on the food provisioning, don't forget books to read for pleasure, trade goods, craft and hobby supplies, games, books on birds, shell, sea life, the area where you are going, music, etc. Provisioning is more than the food and drink you put on board and where it is.

Try to remember US holidays and learn about local holidays.

11. ASK OTHER CRUISERS

Ask about anything that may be a problem. I remember one cocktail party where the topic was awful smells in the head and how to get rid of them.

12. UNIVERSAL STAPLES

Basic food staples are common all over the world. Our first trip to Mexico I drove myself nuts with all the flour, sugar, rice, etc. I had on board and tried to keep dry. Some staples are good to have but give time to the condiments and treats that will liven up a meal and treat your palate.

13. FRIDGE RESPONSIBILITIES

Make one person responsible for the organization of the refrigeration unit. This means how the food gets layered in the fridge .I get very crabby when someone rummaged for a cold drink and didn't notice a bag of produce slithered to the bottom of the box and got smashed. The vegetable bags by Ziplock really do help keep food fresh longer, and I've heard West Marine has some green vegetable bags that work well (but not as well as the claims on the packaging).

14. MEAL AND MENU PLANS

After all the careful provisioning and meal plans ,your meal preparation will depend on this basic idea.....What's going bad first and how soon do we have to eat it.... white onions keep better than yellow onions.

15. MAKE MEALS EASIER

It usually helps to get out all the ingredients you need for a meal before you start to cook. Try to put ingredients away as you use them. Underway try to have dinner prepared and cleaned up before dark, then you can enjoy the sunset. At anchor, do the dishes before you go to bed. I know this can be a pain some nights but that will be the night you get blown out of an anchorage and besides the safety of the boat who needs all those dirty dishes rattling around. Another way to make cleanup easier, we all have our own color coded mugs, glasses and napkin rings and each person was responsible for their care. This way I eliminated a sink full of glasses that had just held water since no one usually likes to do dishes, especially during night watches.

16. POWER AND WATER STRUGGLES

This can be a source of grief on a cruise. Try to see what you can live without for appliances, and how you can conserve on your water.

17. HAVE A GREAT TIME!!!!!!!!!!!!

Remember, when the overall picture looks overwhelming, break it down into little bits that you can cope with. If you are heading off "to cruise for the rest of your life," don't think of

it as forever and ever, take it as short time spans and you will surprise yourself as to how far you can go.

18. P.S. BACKPACKS, ICE BAGS, AND SOCKS

My backpack became my purse for our cruises...and I could carry purchases from the marketplace. Canvas ice bags also have many uses besides carrying groceries. Have a good sturdy bag for laundry. We used old odd socks to slip over glass bottles and jars to eliminate rattle and breakage.

Compliments of...



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