

THE NATIONAL  
JEWISH  
COMMITTEE  
ON SCOUTING

*A Minimalist  
Guide to Kosher  
Camping*



[www.jewishscouting.org](http://www.jewishscouting.org)



**Note to the Reader:**

This guide is a practical how-to guide to kosher camping; it is not intended to provide you with religious advice. For religious advice, please seek out a local religious authority. The guide reflects the practical measures taken by one Cub Scout Pack to implement the advice of its Pack Chaplain when planning and carrying out its camping activities.

The goal of this guide is to enable a Jewish Scouter in a Shomer Shabbat unit to carry out a successful, fun Shabbat-compliant campout. While you may accept and follow the guide “as-is,” it is also reasonable to review and adapt it with your Troop or Pack Chaplain and the local rabbinical authorities who guide your program.

For example, your Rabbi may tell you that you need an Eruv and offer you a different guide or a book on how to build it. This guide has a one-paragraph explanation of how to build one type of Eruv. Many other designs exist; there is no need to follow this example.

## Be Prepared

The secret to Shomer Shabbat camping is the same as everything else in Scouting, Be Prepared. If you can spend two hours preparing prior to the campout to save 15 minutes during the campout, do it. A little extra time planning during a Scout meeting can help save precious minutes before Shabbat when you are at your campsite.

### Building an Eruv

If you need to construct an Eruv at your campsite, creating a pre-made “Eruv Kit” will simplify the process. Though the laws of Eruv are complex, the construction of this Scout Eruv is simple. The “kit” will consist of premade poles, heavy duty twine and sometimes a drill with an auger. To determine the number of poles and the amount of twine you will need, you will have to decide how much of your campsite will be within the Eruv.

The premade poles, are placed 8-10 feet apart around your camp. These poles can be stored with your unit gear for rapid construction – allocate 4-8 hours over a scout meeting or two for preparing them.

The poles should be at least four feet long. Screw an eyelet into the top of each pole. The bottom ends of the poles can be sharpened so they can be pounded into the ground. For easier pounding, a hole can be drilled into the bottom of each pole and a rebar can be attached. Alternatively, a drill with an auger can be used to start the hole into the ground.

Once the poles are securely placed in the ground, run heavy twine through the eyelets. Tie the ends of the twine together with a clove hitch, creating a fenced in area. Be certain that at least 40 inches of the pole is above ground (more if the twine sags). Consult your religious authority for details.

If your campsite has a gateway, the Eruv can go over it or include the gateway, but angles of twine and methods of attaching them to the gateway will require religious guidance. [Methods can include, a “double pole” with two twines, a slow rise toward the gateway with a suitable angle, or halachically “attaching” the Eruv poles to the gateway.]

Make sure your Eruv encloses an area that is large enough to include bathroom facilities, your sleeping area, your food preparation and eating area and your campfire site. The Eruv will take 30-45 minutes for several Scouts to construct and must be completed before sundown. Start the Eruv at least 90 minutes before Shabbat in case you run into problems. It is best to assign this task to the first people to arrive at the campsite.

Remember to test your Eruv at home or at your unit meeting place before trying to build it at a camp site. Once you have built the Eruv and used it successfully you also have a readymade service project for a Jewish chartered organization. Do demonstrations of the construction for your Chartered Organization.

### Overview

Designate one Shomer Shabbat adult as the authority to insure that the unit equipment/campsite is Shomer Shabbat (individual Scouts/families follow their own family procedures). Have this adult advise campers as they prepare the site.

Grey Water/Sanitation	An empty trash can be designated for grey water storage. Dump all water in there during Shabbat; pour it out after Shabbat is over. We recommend that you set up a second, similar station in a separate location for hand washing.
Cooking Fires	All stoves/grills/ovens may need to be lit by a Shomer Shabbat Jew. Check this out with your religious authority.
Meal Preparation	Shabbat dinner and lunch are cooked before Shabbat starts. Consult a knowledgeable religious authority for the details of Shabbat cooking. Those details and exceptions to them exceed the scope of this guide. If all food is fully cooked before Shabbat begins you should be compliant. A stove with a bleach, a grill with a bleach, or a camp oven can be used to keep food warm over Shabbat. Chafing trays can also be used for Shabbat dinner. For Dutch oven cooking or overnight heating of food, follow religious guidance and BSA safety procedures.
Plates, Dishes and Utensils	The Scouting unit should acquire its own plates, serving dishes and utensils in two different colors to maintain kashrut [such as red for dairy and blue for meat]. Dishes and utensils are inexpensive and it is a good idea to overbuy so you never run short. Your washing station should have interchangeable colored basins. If you intend to use individual mess kits, consult a religious authority for any Kashrut concerns. Keep in mind the fact that individual mess kits tend to be forgotten, lost or incomplete. There will be no problems if the unit has its own cooking and eating utensils; this will also permit you to also feed guests.
Activities	<p>Activity planning can be limited if the campout is conducted as a part of a local BSA Council or District event. Consult your religious authority for rules on participation. It will likely be relevant to the religious authority that the events are probably going to be set up by predominately non-Jewish volunteers for the majority non-Jewish Scouts participating so be certain to mention that.</p> <p>Suggestions for Observant camping activities are available on the National Jewish Committee on Scouting's website, <a href="http://www.Jewishscouting.org">www.Jewishscouting.org</a>.</p> <p>Additional camp activity ideas are these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Astronomy</li> <li>Campfire skits.</li> <li>Crafts – consult your religious authority for what is acceptable</li> <li>Day hikes</li> <li>Free time to play ball and relax – consult your religious authority</li> <li>Night hikes</li> <li>Scout games</li> <li>Scout songs and cheers.</li> </ul> <p>Depending on where you camp, your campsite may be supervised by a ranger who may provide a program for you. Coordinate ahead of time to plan the activity and remove any parts that may be problematic.</p> <p>Do not avoid spending time during Shabbat just being among G-d's creations.</p>

Campfires	Campfires should only take place on Saturday night after sundown. If you camp during Daylight Savings Time, it may be possible to set up a fire before Shabbat and let it burn out naturally but that is not preferred due to fire hazards. A Friday night campfire may not be tended by Jews, including feeding or re-arranging the fire unless serious threat to life is present. A Friday night campfire requires full buy-in from the unit, advice from your religious authority and a means to properly supervise the fire.
Finding Your Way at Night	Purchase solar powered pathway lights and place them at critical points across the campsite and adjacent to the latrine.
Meal Prayers	Kiddush/Hamotzi should be made at Shabbat Dinner, Shabbat Lunch and Seudah Shlishit. Depending on your Saturday breakfast menu, Kiddush may need to be made before breakfast. When in doubt, make Kiddush before eating. Daytime Kiddush/Mezunot is faster to make than it is to discuss the necessity of making it and it can't hurt to do it.
Keep the Sabbath	Plan all activities, especially cooking, based on candle lighting time. Backtrack the amount of time you need for each activity and be sure to add extra time in case something doesn't go right the first time. A spreadsheet with a field for "Candle Lighting Time" with a subtraction function simplifies this process.
Share Cooking Responsibilities	It is suggested that Friday cooking be supervised by a Shomer Shabbat Jew accustomed to making Shabbat on a weekly basis. Remember to pad time in your planning since a camp kitchen lacks home kitchen conveniences like electricity and running water.
Formal Services	As you become more comfortable with Shabbat camping and if you have enough campers you can have a minyan and conduct a Shabbat service Friday night or Saturday morning. At some point down the road if a minyan is normally available and if you can find the proper means of transporting and safeguarding a Torah, you may wish to have a full Shabbat morning service. The laws governing a Sefer Torah, including transporting, safeguarding and reading from it are extremely complex. Contact a religious authority before conducting a Torah service at camp. It may be more practical to have a D'var Torah (Sermon) in place of a Torah service due to logistics and skill levels. There is a "canned" Havdallah service on the web at <a href="http://www.Jewishscouting.org">www.Jewishscouting.org</a> .
Meal Preparation	Pre-camping food planning and shopping are necessary activities. Meals need to be kosher, compliant with USDA My Plate Guidelines and simple. Some menu ideas follow. Costs may be kept low by cooking from scratch and avoiding pre-prepared food [except for Challot/Bread].
Tents	If tents are personal gear instead of unit gear, urge novice campers to acquire simple to erect tents. Arrange a time for novice campers to set up their tents in a "dry run," before coming to their first camp. Even the most experienced campers have difficulty setting up unfamiliar tents. All tents need to be up before Shabbat. Large 4 room tents should be avoided as the setup effort can derail your entire schedule.

Guidance	Remember that this is a how-to guide, not a religious law explanation. You need to consult your Rabbi for details. Some Rabbis may prohibit practices suggested in this guide; others may not require all of them.
Diversity in the Community	In a Unit made up primarily of non-Shabbat observant Scouts, you may wish to ask your religious authority if more lenient alternatives are available to keep all the Scouts engaged. If your Unit is primarily Shomer Shabbat, your families may be uncomfortable without a more stringent approach to camping. This is a discussion for your Unit Committee, Unit Chaplain and religious authority.
Questions	<p>These are some specific questions you may wish to consult your religious advisor about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are LED based headlamps turned on before Shabbat acceptable? What about being clipped to a hat? – Details may matter.</li> <li>• Can clipped water bottles be taken outside an Eruv?</li> <li>• Are Safety whistles and compasses permitted? Can they be clipped to a belt?</li> <li>• Must the Eruv be constructed with a blessing?</li> <li>• Can we have a Saturday morning “early Kiddush?”</li> <li>• How can we conduct a Jewish Scout Service on Shabbat?</li> <li>• Be Prepared, ask questions at least two weeks before the campout, not on Friday morning. Creative solutions to camping questions may require research by the unit or the Rabbi; give yourself time so you don’t get forced into inconvenient stringencies.</li> </ul>

## Sample Menus

Friday Setup Snack	Vegetable Platter, Chips, Hummus
Seudah Shabbat (Dinner)	Corn, Pasta, Pasta Sauce, Challah, Chicken Soup, Hot Dogs or Grilled Chicken <i>Meat is served as a protein option</i>
Saturday Breakfast	Cereal, Milk, Hard Boiled Eggs, Berries / Bananas <i>Cold dairy meal is served without meat</i>
Shabbat Daytime Seudah (Lunch)	Challah, Chullent, Cut Vegetables, Salad, Cut Fruit. PB&J for Vegetarians/Vegans <i>Seudah: meat is served as a protein option</i>
Saturday Snack	Fruit, Cut Vegetables, Hummus <i>Fruits and Vegetables are served as a healthy snack</i>
Seudah Shlishit (Dinner)	Chopped Salad, Tuna Fish Salad, Egg Salad, Sandwich Bread, Cut Fruit. PB&J for Vegetarians/Vegans <i>Neither meat nor milk is served</i>
Malava Malka (Saturday night snack)	Hot Chocolate, S'mores, Fruit <i>Hot dairy food is available</i>
Sunday Breakfast	Berries/Fruit, French Toast, Scrambled Eggs, Milk <i>Hot dairy food is served</i>

Note: To comply with Jewish Dietary restrictions or Kashrut, milk and meat are not served at the same meal or within several hours of each other.

Here is an alternate approach for your campout meals:

### Friday Afternoon

#### Stove Duty

- Put up boiling water for hard boiled eggs - Hard boil approximately 2 eggs for each scout. Place eggs in boiling water, set timer for 15 minute. At 15 minutes, remove and place eggs in ice bath. When boil returns to boiling, do next round. On a good stove boiling eggs will take approximately 20 to 25 minutes per round (dozen), start early. Once cool, place the hardboiled eggs in a ziplock bag in a cooler.
- Heat chullent pot with oil for browning
- Brown chicken, move to soup pot
- Brown chullent meat
- Brown vegetables, divide between soup and chullent pot
- Add beans to chullent pot, add water
- Add water to soup pot, bring to boil then simmer
- Transfer chullent pot to oven
- Boil water for pasta, prepare sauce, vegetables etc.

#### Grill Duty

- Heat up grill
- Grill potatoes or other root vegetables
- Grill corn or other vegetables
- Lower one of the burners, relocate grilled vegetables there
- Season and grill protein fully

#### Sous Chef

- Cut any vegetables needed by Stove Duty
- Wash and cut vegetables
- Rinse lettuce
- Assemble salad

### Saturday Morning

- Get out berries, rinse/wash them
- Get out milk and cereal. Put all out on table

### Saturday Afternoon

- Cut up fruit for dessert in pieces
- Cut up vegetables for salad
- Remove Chullent from oven
- Get out sandwich bread, peanut butter and jelly

### Saturday Evening

- Get out eggs, have Scouts peel them
- Open tuna can
- Have scouts make Tuna Salad / Egg Salad

### Saturday Late Night

- Heat up milk
- Add Cocoa Powder, Sugar
- Whisk

### Sunday Morning:

- Take remaining Milk, Bread and Eggs. **M**ake French Toast, Scrambled Eggs, etc.