

# Backcountry

## The Gear Closet »

### Put a Spork in It

#### Pots, plates, cups, and, yes, sporks for the outdoors

For some hikers, food consumption in the backcountry is strictly business. Freeze-dried gruel eaten out of a foil bag, perhaps accompanied by some reconstituted drink mix. For others, those meals are a delightful and memorable meals of fresh caught trout or an elaborate pad thai. Similarly, some eat with a flimsy plastic fork from a fast food joint, while others enjoy fine titanium flatware and collapsible silicone dishes. Here's a look at some of the myriad options of backcountry dishes and utensils.

**MSR's Quick 2 system** (\$100) is not just a cup and a plate. Rather, it's an entire cooking setup. Two pots, two plates, two cups and a spoon all cleverly nestled inside one another to make a tidy package. There's even space for a canister stove. It's not the lightest setup out there, nor the least expensive, but the pieces are all quite durable and should last a good long time. Nice feature: the cups are insulated and have sippy cup lids.

**Sea To Summit's X-cup/bowl/plate system** (\$11-\$18) is both ingenious and highly functional. The silicone sides are made to collapse flat, and the bottom of the bowl and plate can do double duty as a cutting surface. The flat base on them makes for a stable surface so you don't splatter your ramen all over your lap. The bowl in particular was one of the pieces I reached for often while I was testing. There is always a concern that a collapsible cup might collapse when full of liquid, but the X-cup stood up nicely to the task.



Sea To Summit's X-cup/bowl/plate system



MSR's Quick 2 system

**GSI Nform Gourmet nesting cup and bowl** (\$6) is the minimalist's dream, weighing in at just over 3 ounces. There's room inside for a stove, and the insulated cup has a sippy top on it. The fit of the lid could be a little tighter, though no leakage was experienced while testing. Did I mention it's \$6?



**Allison Woods**

WTA Gear Editor



**Guyot Designs  
Squishy Cup and  
Bowl Set**

The **Squishy Cup and Bowl Set** (\$15) come to us from Guyot Designs. These pieces have major “cool factor” and will no doubt be a hit with kids. Made from silicone, these virtually indestructible dishes will wedge into even the tiniest crevice in your pack. I found the cup a little too squishy for liquids and wished it was a bit more rigid.

To-Go Ware makes the **RePEat bamboo utensil set** (\$12) that includes a spoon, fork, knife and a set of chopsticks, all in a handy case. This is a neat set that has a handmade feel to it. My only objection is the knife, which is ergonomic, but for a right-handed person. Lefties will find the knife all but useless. The addition of the chopsticks is a nice touch. This set will be just as at home in your lunch bag for work as in your backpack.



**RePEat bamboo  
utensil set**



**REI's titanium spork**

REI brings us the **folding titanium spork** (\$11), considered by some as the ultimate in lightweight backcountry flatware. It's sleek and compact, though some people don't like using a spork, preferring a spoon AND a fork. Multifunctional tools don't always do everything well, but, for a spork, this one is pretty good. Also from REI, the **Chefware Mini Spatula** (\$1.50) is a must-have if you like to cook in the mountains. Its simple design and flat bottom go a long way toward keeping food from sticking while cooking, and the serrations on the underside of the handle keep it from falling into the pan when not being used actively.



**GSI Nform Gourmet  
nesting cup and  
bowl** (from pg. 31)

The **MicroBites set** from Guyot Designs (\$5) are on the quirky side. This set includes a nylon polymer spork which works fine but is a bit small and not well-suited for eating a freeze-dried meal in a bag. The other tool, a sort of spatula/knife combo, is just a bit odd. A spatula can be very handy for keeping food from sticking to the bottom of the pot, but this one is so stubby I'd worry about burning my knuckles. This combo is part of Guyot's successful C-minus program, where production is not simply carbon-neutral, but carbon-negative. Pretty cool for a spork.



**Guyot Designs  
MicroBites set**



Photo by Verde PR.

## Allison Woods's Award-Winning Couscous

At the Outdoor Retailer trade show held in July in Salt Lake City, Allison Woods took part in a cookoff sponsored by Jetboil. And by “took part” we mean she totally won and got \$500 to donate to her favorite nonprofit! (Even better, it was WTA!)

Here is her award-winning recipe. She apologizes that the measurements aren't more refined, but, hey, it's for the woods! Inside advice from Allison: “The original recipe had fake bacon bits in it. If you want to add a protein, I'd go for a pouch of chicken or a high lake trout, poached or cooked on a stick.”

### Ingredients:

1 1/4 cup water  
1 cup couscous  
dried peas  
raisins  
unsweetened shredded coconut  
unsalted cashews, broken up  
a bit o' brown sugar  
curry powder  
cinnamon (smidge)  
salt

### Directions:

Bring water to boil.  
Add peas and couscous.  
Boil a minute or so.  
Add the rest of the ingredients.  
Mix well and cover.  
Let stand ten minutes or so.  
Fluff, serve.

*Makes about 2 cups.*

**WTA's gear editor  
takes camp cook-  
ing seriously!**