# Questions to Ask When Planning Meals for a Project

**(Submitted by Shirley Hearn and Charles Crain and is the way they handle meals for a project)**

1. **Where is base camp?** This is important and will dictate the kind of menu, location of water, and overall what equipment is needed.
2. **What equipment will be provided by host?** We have everything needed to cook, feed and clean for large groups. We have collected our equipment over the years and prefer to use our own when possible however if you have volunteers designated for cooking and cleanup the equipment must be provided by the host.
3. **Will you have volunteers designated for cooking and cleanup or will duties be shared by the whole crew?** We prefer to do everything from shopping to cooking and clean-up after meals (we do not usually do any trail work with the crew). We like to provide good hot meals for volunteers who have been working hard on the trail all day. They are tired and it is good for them to be able to relax and enjoy the meal not worry about having anything to do after dinner except relax by the fire. If the crew will be involved with cooking and cleanup, you will have them signup using the “Duty Roster” below.
4. **Will we access to fresh water nearby?** We do have water filters that we can use however if we are near a source of fresh water that is what we prefer. We have large 5-7 gallon containers we use when we have to get water from some place other than near base camp.
5. **How will payment for groceries and supplies be handled?** We prefer to purchase everything and then be reimbursed by the host. We keep receipts and submit them when the project is complete. This may not be possible for most volunteers so be sure to have a clear understanding from the host prior to purchase of supplies.
6. **How will you keep perishables cold?** You need to inquire about availability of ice (we have several large ice chests of our own; the host might be able to provide some as well). If ice is not available nearby you will need to plan on how much you will need for your project and resupply if necessary.
7. **How many volunteers will I need to plan meals for and are there any special dietary needs such as food allergies, vegetarian or vegan diets?** The meal planning is so much easier if you know in advance how many people you will have for each meal. Sometimes this is not possible and you will always have a few more or less, than you planned for at each meal but you do want to make sure that all volunteers have something on the menu that they can eat. We usually plan for meat and vegetarian options for each meal just in case.
8. **How will lunches be handled?** If the crew will be working near base camp, we will have lunch set up for them at lunchtime. Sometimes it is more practical for the volunteers to make their lunch after breakfast and take with them to eat on the trail. It is nice to know this in advance for planning purposes. If the crew will take lunch with them out on the trail, the morning breakfast crew will set those items out while preparing breakfast. That way volunteers can prepare their lunch after they finish their breakfast.
9. **Are campfires permitted?** To us it’s not camping unless we can have a campfire but it’s not always allowed and even when it is most times you will have to bring firewood because collecting of wood is not allowed in most parks and public places.
10. **What equipment will volunteers provide for themselves?** We always suggest that volunteers bring their own eating utensils. We do have some utensils in our gear for those who forget but it always helps if they to be reminded before they arrive. Paper plates and plastic cutlery are an option but add to the expense and not considered an ecological option. However if you do decided on that paper plates are what you prefer it cuts down on cleanup after meals.