

PROPER FOOD STORAGE

Sierra National Forest



Black bears are common in the Sierra National Forest and are apart of the natural environment. Exposed to human food sources, bears will stop their normal daytime foraging and revert to nocturnal behavior of seeking out Forest visitor's food while they sleep. Bears occasionally visit campsites during the day, tempted by the aroma of food or cooking fires. An encounter with a bear can often ruin a visit as well as personal property.

Bears are enticed by all kinds of human food. They are also attracted to grocery bags, the clothes you cooked in and anything with an odor such as soap, sunscreen, hairspray and toothpaste. Bears have been known to break into cars for a stick of gum or an empty soda can.

Proper Food Storage

- Store all food and related supplies, including ice chests in the trunk of your vehicle. Food should be sealed in airtight containers.
- In vehicles without trunks, all food and related supplies must be stored out of sight.
- Cover your food completely to hide it from a bears view.
- Clean the inside of your vehicle and remove any open drink containers and food (including food wrappers).
- Consider removing your child's car seat since they often have food spills and smell associated with them.
- Never leave food in your campsite unattended.
- Don't leave food or ice chests on your picnic table or in your tent. Dispose of all garbage properly.
- Keep a clean camp. Clean your campsite after each meal.

Backcountry and Wilderness Users

Backcountry and wilderness users are required to store food or refuse in a manner designed to keep bears from gaining access to it. Visitors are encouraged to use bear-resistant food canisters to safeguard food. If a bear canister is not available, the counter-balance method of storing food is also an expectable method.

Bear-Resistant Canisters

These portable containers are the only effective way for backpackers to store food in wilderness.

Each canister weighs less than 3 pounds, fits in a full-sized backpack, and is capable of holding up to 3 to 5 day's worth of food for one person. When using the canister remember the following guidelines:

- Store all food, cosmetics, toothpaste, soap, and refuse in the canisters.
- At night or when you are way from camp, leave your empty pack on the ground with all pockets and flaps open.
- Put the canister 50 feet from your sleeping area.
- Leave the canister on the ground.
- Do not hang the canister from a tree.

Bear Canister Purchase and Rental

Through a partnership with Three Forest Interpretive Association, the Forest Service offers bear canister rentals at the High Sierra Station located in the Florence/Edison area. Canisters are available for \$3.00 per day. A \$75.00 refundable deposit per canister is required. Canisters must be returned to the office from which they were rented.



Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
www.r5.fs.fed.us/

Sierra National Forest
www.fs.fed.us/r5/sierra

May 2003

Food canisters are generally available for purchase and rental at sporting good stores in the local area. Below is a list of vendors in the local area who sell and rent canisters:

- Backpackers Catch (559) 732-3785 (Visalia)
- California Outfitters (559) 435-2626 (Fresno)
- Herb Bauer Sporting Goods (559) 435-8600 (Fresno)

Counter-Balance Method

If you choose to store your food using this technique, consider it only a delaying tactic. Be prepared to actively defend your food and repeatedly scare bears out of your camp through the night. Without this negative reinforcement, bears **will** figure out a way to get your counter-balanced food - some bears will go so far as to literally chew the branch off the tree to get at food bags. To counter-balance:

- Find a tree with a live, down sloping branch, even if you must select a different campsite. Divide food into two balanced bags. Store soap, sunscreen, deodorant, toothpaste and garbage in the same way as food. Bears are attracted to anything with an odor.
- Use enough rope to go over the branch and back to the ground. Toss it far out on the branch where it will support the weight of the food but not a bear cub.
- Tie on and hoist the first sack up to the branch. Tie the second sack as high as you can on the rope; put the excess rope in the sack, leaving a loop out so you can retrieve it.
- Toss or use a stick to push the lower sack until both sacks are at equal height.
- To retrieve the sacks, hook a long stick through the loop of excess rope.
- Pull slowly to avoid tangles,

For More Information Contact:

Sierra National Forest Headquarters

1600 Tollhouse Road
Clovis, CA 93611
(559) 297-0706/TDD (559) 322-0425

Bass Lake Ranger District

57003 Road 225
North Fork, CA 93643
(559) 877-2218 ext 0

High Sierra Ranger District

PO Box 559
Prather, CA 93651
(559) 855-5360/TDD (559) 855-5367

All Are Welcome

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape, etc.), should contact USDA's TARGET center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington DC 20250 or call 1-800-245-6340 (voice) or 202-720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity employer.