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# Preface

Great bush cooks are made not born. A person can have a knack for guessing ingredient amounts and be able to mix flavors that result in crowd pleasing dishes, but it's through experience that you develop the ability to plan and manage an outdoor kitchen and a cooking fire. The guides of the northern forests of Maine have developed the skills of outdoor cooking into an art, but the methods have seldom been seen outside of the canoe and snowshoe country. Professional guides can feed a crew a satisfying and tasty meal using a few simple tools and ingredients. If you would learn how, read on.

**Part I.**

**Becoming A Professional  
Outdoor Cook**

# 1. Getting Started

Guiding, teaching, and probably everything else where you're responsible for getting things done is greatly aided by having a system. It doesn't matter so much what your system is, but that you know it, the people with you know it, and that it works for you. In this book is the system I've worked out for me over ten years of guiding and teaching wilderness courses. I rely on checklists (lots of them) to get things right because I've learned that dumb luck can't always be counted on. If you're in the business of organizing people, a kitchen, or anything else you probably already have a system that works for you.

This book grew out of our Earth Skills Semester Programs, where students routinely plan for extended trips in the bush. It started as a series of handouts to make this process easier, and grew into the current volume, tested over years of experience.

In closing, I'll share a pearl of wisdom handed down from my grandmother. She said that she never ate, but rather chose to dine because it was much more elegant. On wilderness trips you can bridge that gap between eating and dining to the great enjoyment of your companions. It's the little things that make this difference. Hopefully this book will show you how.

## 1.1. About Measurements And Terminology

In many of the recipe's in this book you'll find we use parts instead of definitive measurements such as cups. This is because many of the recipes rely on ratios of ingredients to one another, and can be scaled up or down to feed any sized crew. It also makes life easier for the camp cook who

## *1. Getting Started*

can't find a measuring cup, but has a bowl handy, as that will work fine for measuring.

# Uncooked Rice In The Everglades

We were five days into a canoe trip across Everglades National Park. It was just my friend Dan and I, each in our own canoe, and today had been our most taxing navigationally. We had come through the Nightmare, the only inland route to connect the southern and northern sections of the glades. After several wrong turns (the map and guidebook we were using were vague at best), we finally made it through to the other side. As we emerged from the tunnel of vegetation, a short paddle brought us to the Harney River Chickee. It wasn't my turn to cook, so I explored the area from my canoe. When I returned to the chickee I was ready for a meal, and was told that the grub was ready. I loaded some of the brown rice stew into my bowl and took a big bite. I soon learned that the outside of the rice was wet, but that it wasn't cooked. I asked how long it had cooked. He said ten minutes. We had a good laugh and ate our uncooked rice, vowing to pay closer attention next time. Since that trip I've always soaked brown rice before cooking it.