



*150<sup>th</sup> New York Volunteer Infantry*  
*the "Dutchess County Regiment"*

**AUTHENTIC FOOD IN THE FIELD:**



National Regiment  
Officer & NCO School  
March 1-2 2008

## INTRODUCTION

You know how to stack arms, load in nine times (or give the orders to do it), buy the correct uniform... so much for the outer man. Now, it is time to look to the inner man. Authenticity regarding food does not mean you have to eat dirt, insects or some unidentifiable glop from the bottom of your haversack... (although be our guest)... But it also means you should not be eating Vienna sausages, Wonder Bread, Bagels, Snickers or Ball Park Franks...

This handout is meant to provide you with useful information about food packaging, period appropriate food items and its preparation to enhance your field impression. Besides, its more fun to try and do things the right way...you'd be surprised how creative you can be.

Throughout, we have inserted some primary references. The goal is to provide you with some interesting reading, as well as some verification for ways to look at food in the field.

## ISSUING RATIONS

John D. Billings in the book "Hard Tack & Coffee published in 1887 describes issuing rations as follows:

" It (rations) was usually brought to camp in an oat sack, a regimental quartermaster receiving and apportioning his among the ten companies, and the quartermaster -sergeant of a battery apportioning his to five or six detachments. Then the orderly-sergeant of a company or the sergeant of a detachment must devote himself to dividing it. One method of accomplishing this purpose was to spread a rubber blanket on the ground, -- more than one if the company was large, -- and upon it were put as many piles of the coffee as there were men to receive rations...the sugar which always accompanied the coffee was spooned out at the same time on another blanket"

## RATIONS FOR THE U.S. ARMY, 1861-1864

The items below constitute the full Army ration. The weights represent the quantities issued per ration, and are therefore tripled for three days rations. Items issued per 100 rations are broken down to individual portions accordingly.

Understandably, not all of the items would be available all of the time. So, following the regulation listing are various menus, and what they would be likely to weigh.

ITEM	1 DAY	3 DAYS
<u>Meat:</u>		
Bacon	12 oz	2 lbs 4 oz
Fresh or Salted Beef	20 oz	3 lbs 12oz*
<i>*But preferably fresh meat was to be used, when practical</i>		
<u>Bread/flour:</u>		
Flour or Soft Bread	1 lb 6oz	4 lbs 2 oz
<i>or</i>		
Hard Bread	1 lb	3 lbs
<i>Or</i>		
Cornmeal	20 oz	3 lbs 12oz

### Item issued per 100 rations broken down into individual measure:

Beans or peas (15 lbs.)	2.56 oz	7.68 oz
Rice or Hominy (10 lbs.)	1.6 oz	4.8 oz
Green Coffee (10 lbs.)	1.6 oz	4.8 oz
<i>Or</i>		
Roasted Coffee (8 lbs.)	1.28 oz	3.84 oz
<i>Or</i>		
Tea (1 lbs. 8 Oz.)	0.24 oz	0.72 oz
Sugar (15 lbs.)	2.56 oz	7.68 oz
Vinegar (4 Quarts)	1.28 fl. oz.	3.84 fl.oz.

Adamantine or Star Candles (1 lbs. 4 oz.)	0.2 oz	0.6 oz
Soap (4 lbs.)	0.64 oz.	1.92 oz.
Salt (3 lbs 12 oz.)	0.60 oz.	1.8 oz.
Pepper (4 oz)		
Potatoes (30 lbs.)	4.8 oz	14.4 oz
Molasses (1 Quart when practical)		

Substitution items:

Desiccated Vegetables	1 oz	3 oz
Desiccated Potatoes	1.5 oz.	4.5 oz

Below are a variety of "menu's representing different combinations of items and the approximate weights for single and three days rations:

	<u>Single Ration</u>	<u>3 Days Rations</u>
<b>Full Ration</b>	2.82 pounds	8 pounds 7.68 ounces
Bacon, Hardtack, Coffee, Sugar, Beans, Rice, Potatoes, Salt, Pepper, Candles, Soap		
<b>Menu #2</b>	2.28 pounds	6.84 pounds
Bacon, Hardtack, Potatoes, Coffee		
<b>Menu #3</b>	2.23 pounds	6.69 pounds
Bacon, Hardtack, Beans, Rice, Coffee		
<b>Menu #4</b>	2.07 lbs	6.21 pounds
Bacon, Hardtack, Desiccated vegetables, Coffee, Sugar		
<b>Menu #5</b>	3.04 pounds	9.12 pounds
Fresh or Salt Beef, Cornmeal, Potatoes, Coffee, Sugar		

### PACKAGING MATERIALS & CONTAINERS

Reynolds Wrap won't cut it. The items below will help give you the right look. Keep in mind however, that not all of these materials work with all events. Mason Jars are fine, but would you really be carrying one in a bivouac style event?

1. Brown Paper: Plain brown paper, such as the kind used for mailing packages or in grocery bags. Cut off the bottom of a bag and any printing that is on it, and you have reasonably good paper. Butcher paper is also excellent, as it has a waxy coating.

2. Waxed Paper: To preserve freshness/moisture of some items, you can first wrap the item in waxed paper. Although not 100% accurate to the period, it can be used as an accommodation to 20th century standards of edibility and hygiene. The kind available at health food stores is closer to the original. It is a brownish-yellow color. The jury is still out on what form of this paper existed at the time...

3. String: Plain bakery string is appropriate for wrapping food items.

