

# Backpacking Stoves

A hot meal doesn't have to be a luxury

Just because you've left behind the modern amenities of a house doesn't mean you have to sacrifice all the comforts of home such as a hot meal. On a cold night, a hot stove can be your best friend. Your typical outdoor retailer offers a variety of stoves that will meet your budget and weight requirements.

- **Priming stoves.** These are stoves that require you to manually pressurize the fuel source. The fuel canister is a refillable container that typically uses white gas, but some models are versatile enough to run on any liquid fuel. Also, these stoves require priming the stove itself by allowing a small amount of gas into a drip container where it will be lit. This heats up the stove so that the gas is converted from a liquid form into a gaseous state. Priming stoves are favored for their durability and the fact you can tell how much gas you have left. They can be complicated to use, but learning the inner workings of one allows for easy maintenance and performance on the trail.

- **Pressurized canister stoves.** These simple devices are lightweight and nearly foolproof. One merely screws the stove apparatus onto a pressurized canister, turns a knob, and lights the flowing gas. They generally run on a mix of butane and propane. They are less easily maintained and it is often simpler to purchase a new one than to repair one. Also, it can be difficult to determine how much fuel is left in a canister or how long your stove will run. On long hikes, empty canisters are dead weight. Cold weather diminishes the function of this stove compared to liquid gas stoves. Additionally, some models can be more easily tipped over.

- **Alcohol / Fuel-tablet stoves.** An ultra-light hiker's favorite, these are no frills, indestructible stoves. Fuel is cheap, if using alcohol, and easy to carry. However, the tradeoff is that that these stoves do not burn as hot so water takes longer to boil. Since there are no moving parts, temperature control is also more difficult. Typically, these are the stoves used by solo backpackers. Many hobbyists and Boy Scouts enjoy these since they can be made at home with only a few aluminum cans.

