

## Washing Dishes at Camp

### First Class rank requirement

2e. On one campout, serve as cook. Supervise your assistant(s) in using a stove or building a cooking fire. Prepare the breakfast, lunch, and dinner planned in First Class requirement 2a. Supervise the cleanup.

### Cooking Merit Badge requirement

[https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/Merit\\_Badge\\_ReqandRes/Cooking\\_2016.pdf](https://filestore.scouting.org/filestore/Merit_Badge_ReqandRes/Cooking_2016.pdf)

5. Camp cooking.

g. Explain to your counselor how you cleaned the equipment, utensils, and the cooking site thoroughly after each meal. Explain how you properly disposed of dishwater and of all garbage.

All Scouts and leaders must know and must practice the **3-pot method**, for scraping, washing, rinsing, sanitizing, and air drying dishes, utensils, and cookware.

<https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2017/03/30/how-to-wash-dishes-at-campsite/>  
<https://www.freshoffthegrid.com/washing-dishes-while-camping/>

To help Scouts remember what the process is, please learn this jingle:

“3-pot hot-hot-not”

or

“scrape-your-own-plate, mean-and-clean,  
 3-pot, hot-hot-not,  
 soap-nope-reach-for-the-bleach,  
 dry-where? Here, in the air”

The first pot contains hot water with soap.

The second pot contains hot water with no soap for rinsing off soap from the first pot.

The third pot contains cool water of tap water temperature for sanitizing dishes.

In the third pot with cool water for sanitizing dishes, Scouts can add household bleach with 6% or 8.25% sodium hypochlorite (without scents or added cleaners) to non-potable water for drinking. Here is a link to instructions:

<https://www.epa.gov/ground-water-and-drinking-water/emergency-disinfection-drinking-water>

Edwards-Councilor 1G Steramine™ quaternary ammonium sanitizer tablets

<https://www.sanitize.com/>

are often used to sanitize dishes and surfaces in restaurants. These can work well for camping also and are convenient to carry for backpacking. When dissolved in water at a ratio of one tablet per gallon, the solution turns a pale blue, indicating that the final rinse sink contains sanitizer.

The page at <https://www.info.gov.hk/info/sars/en/useofbleach.htm> includes this statement: “Cold water should be used for dilution as hot water decomposes the active ingredient of bleach and renders it ineffective.”

The page at <https://stopfoodborneillness.org/fft-clean-sanitize-disinfect/> indicates that hot water makes bleach ineffective for sanitizing (killing bacteria).

The technique described on the page at <https://troopleader.scouting.org/information-camping/> for a 3-pot method with hot water with soap for washing, cold water rinse to remove soap, and a hot water rinse with disinfectant is **not correct**.

The **Philmont 2-pot method** for washing, rinsing, and sanitizing dishes, utensils, and cookware is a variation of the 3-pot method. The steps in the process are the same, namely, scraping, washing, rinsing, but air drying occurs next, with sanitizing occurring in boiling water right before dishes are used again at the next cooked meal.

Philmont crews use a variation of the 3-pot method using 2 pots, each up to 8 quarts in size, depending on crew size, one as a “boiling pot /rinsing pot” and the other as a “cooking pot / washing pot”.

<https://www.philmontscoutranch.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/ShakeDownGuideP1.pdf>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLt8XjCG7So>

Steps for the Philmont 2-pot method:

1. Boil 4 quarts of water in the 8-quart boiling pot, depending on the meal. When the water has reached a rolling (aka roiling) boil, place all dishes and utensils into the boiling water for at least 30 seconds to sanitize them. By sanitizing immediately before a meal, crews save fuel and water by using the same hot water for both sanitizing and rehydrating/cooking. Place dehydrated food in the 8-quart cooking pot; then pour hot water into the cooking pot to rehydrate and cook your meal. If needed, continue heating water in the boiling pot to wash and rinse dishes.
2. When the meal is complete and the cooking pot is empty of food, pour 2 quarts of hot water from the clean boiling pot into the dirty cooking pot. Add 3-4 drops of Campsuds® biodegradable soap into the dirty cooking pot, which has now become the “washing pot”. Reserve 1 quart of water in the clean boiling pot, which now becomes the “rinsing pot”. Cut a scrubbing pad into a one-time use patch of 1.5” x 2”.
3. Scrub dishes and utensils in the washing pot, starting with the cleanest items first, rinse them in the rinsing pot, and stack them to dry.
4. Scrub washing pot of all food particles. Pour washing pot water through the food strainer and into the sump.
5. Using a rubber scraper, remove food particles from the food strainer and place food particles into a plastic bag to discard.
6. Pour rinsing pot water into the washing pot, swirl the washing pot to rinse out food particles and soap, then pour washing pot water through the food strainer and into the sump.

7. Remove food particles from the food strainer and sump screen and place food particles and the used scrubbing pad into a plastic bag to discard.
8. Place the rubber scraper and food strainer into a separate plastic bag.
9. Place both the food particle bag and the scraper-strainer bag into a bear bag to hang for overnight storage.