REQUIREMENTS BY SKILL

Cooking & Menu Planning Requirements by Rank

From helping with one meal to running the patrol kitchen.

Cooking builds in three clear steps. At Tenderfoot a scout helps prepare a meal and learns cleanup. At Second Class they plan and cook one hot meal themselves. At First Class they plan a full day's menu, budget and shop for it, and serve as the patrol cook. The whole progression is meant to happen on real campouts. A single well-planned campout can move Tenderfoot, Second Class and First Class scouts forward at the same time.

> Requirements are paraphrased for planning, and numbers follow the current Scouts BSA Requirements book. Verify wording at scouting.org before signing off.

How Cooking & Menu Planning Builds Across the Ranks

Tenderfoot

2a On a campout, help prepare a meal and explain why everyone in the patrol shares in cooking and cleanup.

Sign-off: Scout did real prep work — chopping, stirring, managing the stove with a buddy — not just showing up to eat.

2b On a campout, demonstrate how to safely clean the gear used to prepare, serve, and eat a meal.

Sign-off: Watch them run the wash, rinse, and sanitize line properly.

2c Explain why it matters for the patrol to eat together.

Second Class

2e On a campout, plan and cook one hot breakfast or lunch using current USDA nutrition guidance. Explain good nutrition and show how to transport, store, and prepare the food.

Sign-off: The scout chose the menu and did the cooking. Adult help with shopping is fine. Adult cooking is not.

First Class

2a Help plan a campout menu with a breakfast, lunch, and dinner (at least two of them cooked), and explain how it meets nutritional needs for the activity.

2b Using that menu, make a budget and a list of food amounts for three or more people, then get the ingredients.

Sign-off: Ask to see the actual shopping list and budget, with quantities worked out.

2c Show the pans, utensils, and other gear needed to cook and serve those meals.

2d Demonstrate safe handling and storage of perishable foods, and proper disposal of garbage and wastewater at camp.

2e On one campout, serve as cook: supervise assistants using a stove or fire, prepare the planned meals, and supervise cleanup.

Sign-off: The scout runs the kitchen. A leader should see them directing others, not doing every task alone.

After First Class

Cooking merit badge is Eagle-required and builds directly on the First Class menu work, adding home, trail, and backpacking cooking. Scouts who did the First Class cooking properly find the merit badge much easier. Fire building and stove safety (Second Class 2a–2d) are covered under Tools & Fire Safety.

Cooking EAGLE — Eagle-required. Expands the First Class menu planning into home, camp, and trail cooking.

Camping EAGLE — Eagle-required. Includes planning and cooking on campouts.

Backpacking — Lightweight trail cooking builds on stove skills.

Can rank work count toward a merit badge? Sometimes. Under the Guide to Advancement (4.2.3.6), one activity can count for both when the two requirements match exactly and have the same purpose, like camping nights for the ranks and the Camping merit badge. For safety skills such as first aid and CPR, the counselor should be satisfied the Scout still remembers what was learned. When requirements only look alike, the Scout still does each one's own work. The unit leader or merit badge counselor makes the call.

One Campout, Three Levels of Cooks

A patrol weekend campout. Menu planning happens at the meeting two weeks before.

1. **Two weeks out: menu meeting**
   The First Class candidate leads menu planning for the weekend (FC 2a), builds the budget and shopping list (FC 2b), and lists the gear needed (FC 2c). The Second Class candidate picks and plans Saturday breakfast or lunch (SC 2e).

2. **Shopping**
   The First Class candidate buys the food with a parent. Review the receipt against the budget afterward.

3. **At camp: food storage**
   The First Class candidate shows the patrol how perishables are packed and kept cold, and sets up garbage and wastewater handling (FC 2d).

4. **Meals**
   Saturday: the Second Class scout cooks their hot meal (SC 2e). Over the weekend, the First Class scout serves as patrol cook, directing assistants (FC 2e). Tenderfoot scouts are the assistants (T 2a).

5. **Cleanup**
   Tenderfoot scouts run the wash line (T 2b) under the First Class cook's supervision. At the last meal, ask the Tenderfoots why the patrol eats together (T 2c).

Signing It Off

Cooking requirements should happen on an actual campout. A kitchen demonstration at home doesn't meet the intent.

For First Class 2e, one scout should clearly be in charge. If the meals were a group effort with no one leading, it doesn't count for anyone.

Keep the menu and budget from First Class 2a/2b. It's the easiest evidence to point to at a Board of Review.

Common Mistakes

Adult "grubmasters" or parents planning and buying the food. The scouts lose the requirement and the learning.

Signing off Tenderfoot 2a for a scout who only ate the meal.

Running every scout through a cooking requirement on the same campout. One First Class cook per patrol per weekend is plenty.

> **Safety:** Stove and fire use requires trained supervision. Follow your council's guidance on liquid fuel and propane, and keep fire extinguishing materials ready.