



Galley guide: Tips and tricks for cooking and eating onboard

As with all cruising **Heather Francis** explains that simple planning ensures a good galley.

When we first bought *Kate* seven years ago I found myself standing over our esky-sized Engel fridge wondering how we would ever manage to keep enough fresh food on board, let alone cold beer.

I had sailing experience and professional cooking experience but never had to combine the two in such a small space.

There was a mountain of good advice out there about how to kit out the galley and what constituted as boat food, but I could not imagine us eating out of dog bowls or regularly dining on instant noodles, canned asparagus and bully beef.

The kind of food you like to eat is as personal as the kind of boat you own. Cooking is often a trial and error process. Whether you are a weekend warrior, a seasonal sailor or a full time live-aboard, here are a few ways I have found to make time in the galley more efficient and cooking and eating more enjoyable.

Stay sharp

My number one must have kitchen tool are good quality knives and the sailboat galley is no exception.

You do not need to buy a full set; just two well-chosen knives will do almost any job. A high quality 8 to 10 inch chef's knife and a good 4" to 6" paring knife are all you need for chopping carrots, slicing steak, peeling pineapple or filleting fish.

Spend a little money on a good quality professional blade and treat it with respect; no using it on deck to cut rope or prying open paint cans! When taken care of and stored properly a good knife will last a life time.

A great way to store knives on a boat is a magnetic knife strip. They are inexpensive and strong enough to hold several knives securely even in rough seas. Mounted on a bulkhead it will keep your blades sharp and away from crowded drawers where accidental cuts to fingers are just waiting to happen.

Don't forget to buy a hone and a sharpener that you are comfortable using. Keeping knives sharp will not only make them last longer it will make them easier to work with. A dull blade is more likely to cause a nasty cut.

The right tools for the job

It is true that a poor craftsman blames his tools but having the right tools for the job certainly makes things easier and less time consuming.

A quick look through any kitchenware store and you will no doubt find more gadgets than

you can shake a wooden spoon at, but with space on board at a premium it is important to consider what tools you really need.

Besides good knives I have two other galley gadgets I always have around: a microplane and a good veggie peeler. These two basic tools make short work out of meal preparation and the less time I have to spend beside a hot stove on a sunny day, or while underway, the better.

Suggesting a peeler might sound silly but the number one recommendation when worried about the quality of fruit and vegetables is to peel it. Removing the skin will take with it any potential contamination from not so savoury storage ashore. Sure you can do this with a knife but peelers can also be used to create fun ribbon shapes with carrots, zucchini or cucumbers. You can jazz up a plain salad, get kids to eat their veggies or create 'noodles', a great alternative to wheat-based pasta.

A microplane takes only seconds to finely grate things like ginger, garlic, coconut and nutmeg. You can use it to zest a lemon or grate a hard cheese such as parmesan or spruce up dessert with a little chocolate dust. Whatever you use it for it is a quick way to make a little go a long way and it is easy to clean. It is one of my favourite galley tools, and since it is not much bigger than a ruler, does not take up much drawer space.

Put a lid on it

Synonymous with the word 'galley' are the words 'pressure cooker'.

I admit that I bought ours because so many 'how to' books that I read when we first bought *Kate* recommended them. Even if you know very little about cooking they seem like a good idea on paper; makes tough cuts edible, cuts down cooking time, saves on gas and time standing over a hot stove. I use mine a lot, especially on passage, but one-pot-wonders can get pretty boring.

The pots and pans that I use almost every day are my cast iron cookware. Cast iron can be heavy but its heat distribution and durability make it worth its weight.

A well-seasoned cast iron frying pan can be used for a breakfast fry up or baking a cake on the stove top.

Camp ovens are great for cooking bread either on board or over an open fire on the beach. To make your rail-mounted barbecue more efficient, or to eliminate hot spots, try putting a rectangular cast iron pan directly on the grill.

With camping being a popular leisure activity these days you can find a wide range of cast iron pots and pans at affordable prices. But I still maintain that the best cast iron pans are ones that are well loved. So save some cash and check Op Shops and yard sales for that perfectly seasoned pot.

Just make sure, if you are buying used enamelled cast iron, that the cooking surface is free of chips and cracks.

Spice things up

When provisioning you want to stock things that are versatile, but that does not mean they have to be boring.

Buying a few speciality items is an easy way to spice up your mealtime. A simple can of beans can not only make an appearance at dinner but be turned into a delicious dip for cocktail hour with the right ingredients. Smoked mussels and tins of octopus or squid are perfect for lunch time picnics on the beach. A bottle of chillies, a special jar of chutney or a can of olives can do a lot to brighten up a boring dish and boost morale.

Herbs and spices are a perfect way to add big flavour to your cooking. By mixing and matching a few key flavours you can transport your taste buds to exotic locales without ever leaving your anchorage. Just by having a jar of each: dried basil, oregano and chillies and ground cumin, turmeric and ginger, you can make Italian, Mexican, Indian and Asian inspired meals.

Spices can also be a great way to take a little of the places you visit away with you without taking up a lot of storage space. So explore local flavours and grocery stores.

Keep in mind that the longer spices sit around, especially in hot climates, the less flavour they will impart to your cooking. Try to buy only what you will use in four to six months and keep them in airtight containers.

MAIN: Homemade preserves ready to store.

BELOW: Knives and hand tools stored on a strong magnet.

BOTTOM: Our onboard range of cast iron cookware.



Grow your own

If you own a catamaran or larger monohull you might have room for a few potted plants. I have seen lush herb gardens, tomato vines and even small citrus trees flourishing on aft decks.

The salty marine environment can be hard on most plants, so if you do a lot of blue water sailing a cockpit garden may not be an option. But that does not mean you need to forego the satisfying crunch of fresh veggies. Sprouting is an easy way to brighten up your sandwiches and add green to your salads.

Growing sprouts does not require any fancy equipment; you can start with a regular glass jar and some seeds if you want to experiment. However, after several years of growing sprouts myself, I find that purpose-made sprouting trays produce a better crop. A \$20 to \$30 investment will buy a set up that will allow you to grow fresh, healthy greens all year round and will only take up a small amount of counter space.

There are a wide variety of microgreens, grains and seeds available for sprouting. I prefer inexpensive green or puy lentils that are available at most grocery stores. They are quick growing, three to five days depending on weather, are hearty and require very little attention.

I have also had fine results with radish seeds, mung beans and broccoli seeds.

Sprouting is a great way to get kids involved in the galley too.

Putting them in charge of checking on and watering the sprouts each day will teach seed germination and photosynthesis while they literally watch their food grow!

Get some culture

Getting to know the locals is always a great idea but your diet can benefit from culture too.

The live bacterial cultures found in foods such as yogurt and sauerkraut are essential to maintaining a healthy gut. Making yogurt on board is not only easy, it is inexpensive.

There are a couple of ways to make yogurt: by using milk and some commercially made all natural yogurt as your starter; or buying a premixed formula that is combined with water. In both methods the mixture is heated and then kept at a steady warm temperature for several hours to let the bacteria activate and do its magic.

There are fancy yogurt makers on the market but a large glass jar and a couple of thick towels are all you need to successfully make all natural, thick delicious yogurt in just a few hours.

I have purchased Hansell and Easi-yo premixed yogurt packets all over the world. They are available in plain and flavoured varieties and are practically a no-fail method for making yogurt; just follow the simple directions on the packet.

Using ready-made yogurt, either commercially-made or the last of your previous batch as your starter will also result in thick creamy yogurt. I have used fresh, powdered and even UHT milk with equally good results, allowing me to have fresh yogurt even while on a three week passage.

Recently I starting using a freeze-dried culture, some of which are developed to work with soy milk and coconut cream for people with dairy intolerances.

Yogurt makes a great breakfast on its own or mixed with muesli. It can be made into savoury dips for crudités or sweetened with honey for dunking fruit slices.

You can even make cheese by hanging yogurt wrapped in fine cheese cloth over a bowl for several hours. With the excess liquid removed you will be left with a thick, tangy spread that can be used in place of cream cheese or sour cream.

Preserve the moment

Nothing beats a homemade jar of jam, chutney or pickles.

Making preserves is a labour of love, but not a very difficult one. Making preserves in a small sail boat galley sounds daunting, but it is a great way to use the glut of fresh, cheap produce available seasonally at local markets.

A good recipe, very few ingredients and a couple of big pots (a perfect use for that pressure cooker you bought) it is quite simple.

BELOW: Dinner doesn't have to be boring, plastic dishes and reuseable table linens.

BOTTOM: Bread cooked on the stove top in a cast iron camp oven.





I have made tomato relish, mustard pickles, kumquat marmalades, mango chutney, passionfruit curd and even hot sauce all in the tiny galley of our Newport 41.

Besides making jams and jellies, pressure canning is also an excellent way to preserve a variety of meats and fish for storage without refrigeration. Canning meat is a little more time consuming but provides another way to have a well-balanced diet far away from the conveniences ashore.

Canning and preserving has gained popularity recently so there are a lot of online resources and several good cook books now available, many of which have modernised and simplified the process.

There are even books dedicated to preserving in small batches, perfect for a small galley or a first timer.

If you think making preserves is beyond your cooking skills there are still several things you can do to prolong various foods. Fresh ginger can be kept for months without refrigeration peeled, chopped and stored in a jar covered in vodka or rum. The alcohol will prevent spoilage as long as the ginger is fully submerged and will burn off when cooked. When the ginger is all used you will have a jar of lovely ginger flavoured spirits to make sundowner cocktails.

Fresh basil can be chopped, covered with good quality oil and kept in the fridge. It will add bright, fragrant flavour to pasta sauces or tomato dishes for weeks.

Drying and salting has been a staple of preserving foods on boats for hundreds of years. Gone are the days of hard tack and salt fish thank goodness, but you can still make

everything from fruit leather to biltong or jerky on board.

Fruit and fish can be sliced and dried flat on a standard cooling rack in the sun (check out 'Cruising the farm' CH October 2013). Meat and things like chillies can be strung up and dried in a well ventilated, salt free area of the boat.

By investing a little time in the galley now and then you can stretch both your budget and the seasons.

Cook outside the book

There is nothing like a good hot meal at the end of hard day sailing. It not only fills the belly it feeds the soul.

Cooking, especially on a boat, can be a scary endeavour. But unless you marina hop and eat out every night you are going to have to get in that galley. You do not have to put fancy four course dinners on the table, just good hearty food that people enjoy eating.

If you are not comfortable in the galley I recommend getting yourself a good all-round cookbook and I mean a physical copy. Cooking can be messy and space in the galley limited; you do not want to spill something on your iPad or Kindle. Besides, opening a paper book does not require electricity.

Do not get hung up on buying something galley specific, you want a book that will cover everything from veggie prep to cuts of meat to baking techniques. Cooking is a popular subject, a little time in your local book store and you should find a book that you like.

Once you are comfortable with the basics, it is time to think outside the book. If you plan on doing more than coastal cruising you will

LEFT TO RIGHT: Yogurt making - yum!; Bit of seed, bit of sunshine and voila!; Ginger in vodka and basil in oil.



Making mango chutney, too easy.

probably find yourself with too much of one ingredient or not enough of another. To get as much out of what you have on hand you have to be creative.

Been given a whole stalk of bananas and do not know what to do with them?

Bananas are an excellent stand-in for your typical starch at dinner. When green they are more savoury and can be cut in half and browned in a pan or sliced thin and fried like chips. Sautéed when slightly ripe they are a perfect accompaniment for chicken or pork. If you have a freezer you can peel and freeze ripe bananas. They are great to use in banana bread or make a healthy, icy-cold treat for the kids on a hot afternoon.

Substitute green pawpaw for zucchini in a recipe, it will soak up any flavour you cook them with. Or, sliced in half and seeded, it can be stuffed as you would a capsicum. Once ripe, pawpaw can be mashed and added to cakes and muffins to cut down on fat.

Breadfruit, the ubiquitous tropical tree-growing starchy fruit, can be used in place of potatoes in almost any recipe. It can be boiled, fried or baked whole in a fire on the beach. I have even made the Italian classic gnocchi with breadfruit and thought it was better than the original.

Think green

As yachties we get to experience the world in its most raw and beautiful natural state and it is our responsibility to try and keep it as pristine as possible. It is important to consider our impact to the environment and to make smart choices to help preserve the planet.

Here are a few things you can do in the galley to help make your boat a little greener.

Everything on a boat eventually goes overboard, so buy biodegradable dish soap and cleaning products when possible. Or use vinegar and baking soda, it will get rid of salt and stains without damaging surfaces or the environment.

To cut down on garbage and save storage space use cloth napkins and micro-fibre cleaning cloths instead of disposable serviettes and paper towels. If you are grossed out by sharing linens, sew a small piece of coloured thread to each and assign everyone onboard a colour.

To sanitise and remove stubborn grease stains, boil napkins in clean water with a squirt of dish soap every few months.

Paper plates may seem like a quick and easy way to save on water and dishes, but very few brands are actually biodegradable. Never toss paper plates directly overboard. Instead buy durable plastic or melamine bowls and plates. No need to pay big prices just because they have a picture of an anchor on them, check your local hardware or two dollar store and brighten up your meals with a bit of colour.

When provisioning try to buy products in packaging that is recyclable. Buying in bulk is not only a great way to save money but will also cut down on garbage. When back on board try to break down and discard any excess packaging so rubbish can be disposed of properly ashore.

Wash and reuse plastic bags or ditch the Ziplocks totally and opt for airtight BPA free containers instead. Keep in mind that square containers are more space efficient.

Choose reusable cloth bags instead of plastic bags when out shopping. There are several on the market that fold small and flat and are easy to keep tucked in a pocket of a backpack or purse for unexpected purchases.

If you do bring home plastic bags reuse them as bin liners or recycle them instead of just tossing them in the trash.



cruisinghelmsman Heather Francis



Heather is originally from Nova Scotia, Canada and has cooked professional on land and on private yachts. Now you'll find her in the galley of *Kate*, the Newport 41' she and her Aussie partner Steve are slowly sailing around the world. For recipes, photos and to follow their adventures log onto www.yachtkate.com