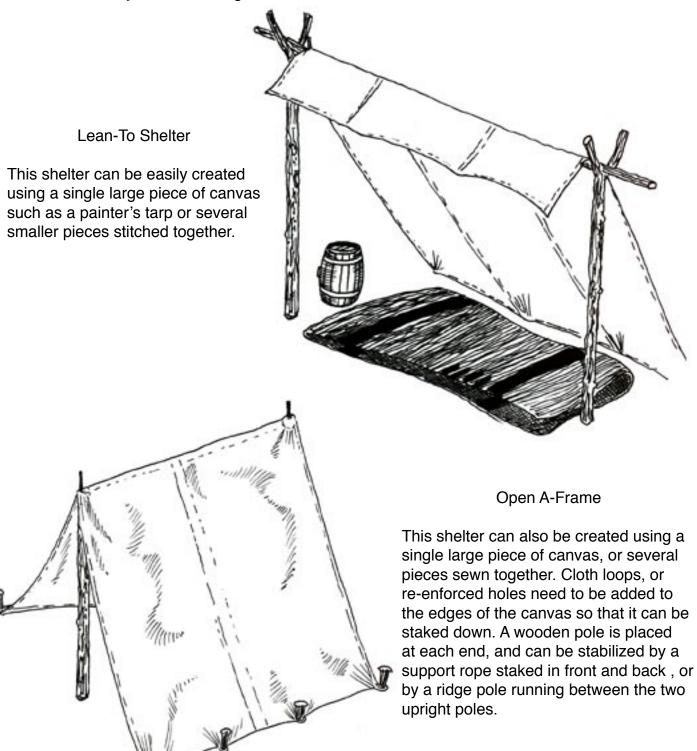
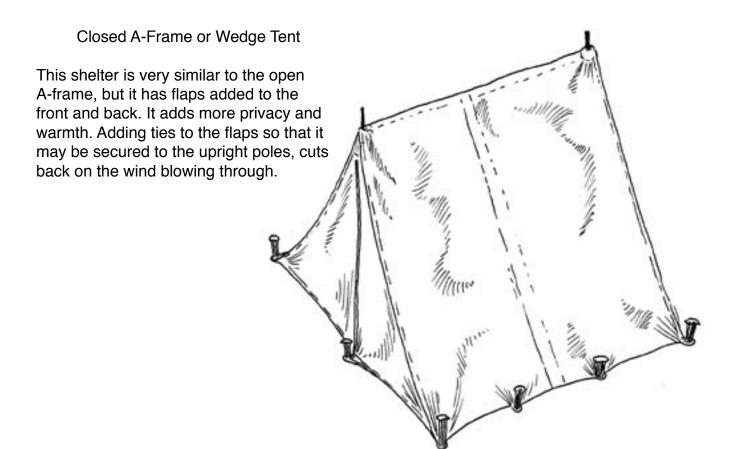
Mountain Man Camping

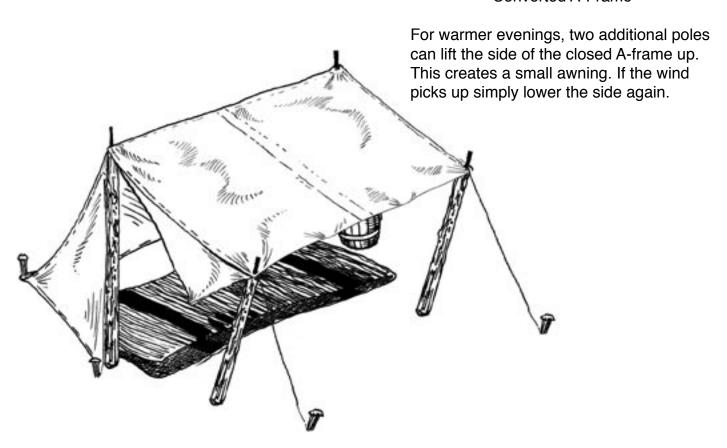
Shelters

Many different styles of lodging were used by the mountain man but most of it was quick to setup and easy to move. The replica shelters that we use today are usually made of heavy canvas, and some are even coated with a fire resistant material. These can be expensive, but there are many affordable ways to create your own authentic shelter. Here are some of the more common styles used during the mountain man era.

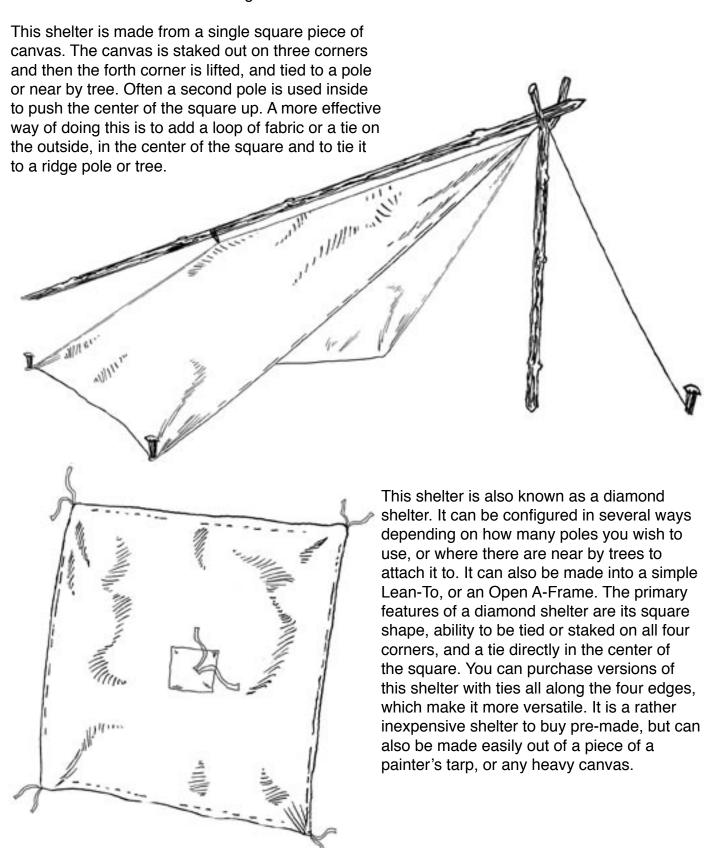




Converted A-Frame



Plow Point Wedge



Spread out view of a Diamond Shelter

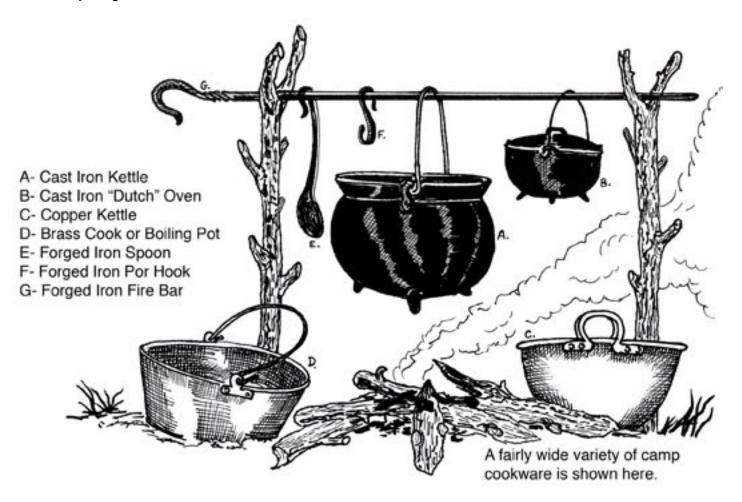
Cooking

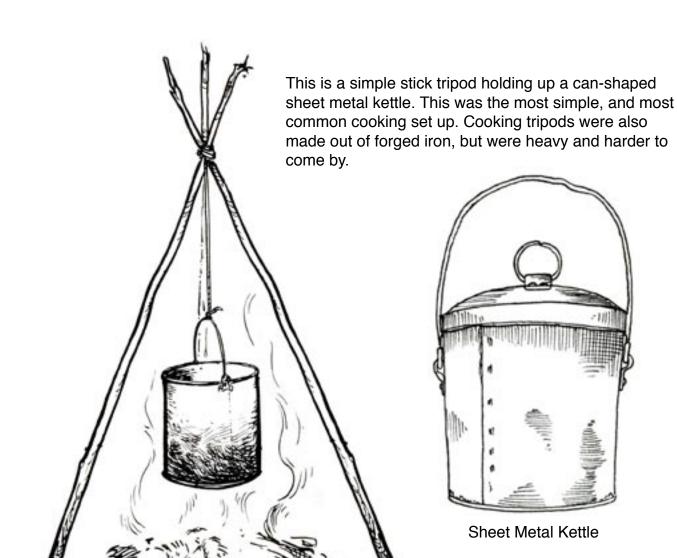
Food and water were number one priorities for a frontiersman. Skills necessary to find nourishment were essential for anyone venturing beyond settled lands. Fur traders and trappers mostly ate meat. When necessary, they could subsist on vegetable material-digging tuberous roots and eating ripe berries like a bear. They didn't consider themselves well-fed. Meat was obtained mostly by hunting, but also as a by-product of trapping. Boiled or roasted beaver tail was considered a delicacy. Most meat, however, came from hunting large game animals such as bison, elk, antelope and deer. Small game was less important because the amount of meat obtained seldom justified the effort.

While the frontiersman's staple diet was fresh meat, other food was eaten. Dried beans, dried corn, flour and salt pork were supplies carried along with condiments such as salt, pepper and sugar.

Corn was often boiled to make chowder. Flour and cornmeal were used to create biscuits, johnnycakes and hard breads like bannock. Baking soda was used as a leavening agent, although some breads were unleavened. Sourdough, a culture of live yeast, also was carried as a leavening agent. These breads were usually made in a frying pan.

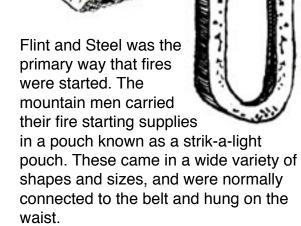
The simplest way to prepare food for a rendezvous today, is to actually cook it at home and simply re-heat it over an open fire. It is common for re-enactors to actually have coolers cleverly disguised in a wood box or covered in canvas.





A Second of the second of the

Stoneware crocks were commonly used to hold all kinds of liquids. They came in a large variety of shapes and sizes up to several gallons. The mountain men would typically use the smaller jugs because they were easier to transport.



Preservation of food

If meat was not eaten immediately, it had to be preserved. The abundance of game varied and fresh meat was not always available. Meat to be stored was preserved in several ways: drying, smoking or salting.

Meat sun-dried in long strips was called jerky. The strips, 1/4 - to I/2 -inch thick by about 1 inch wide and up to several feet long, were hung from a wooden rack in a sunny place. After several days, they were leather dry and ready for storage. Sometimes drying meat was sprinkled with pepper to discourage insects. For added flavor, jerky was made by drying meat over smoky coals.

Berries and roots were also sun-dried. In addition to preserving food, drying reduced the amount of water in the food and made it easier to pack and carry. A high-energy food, called pemmican, was made from jerky, fat and dried berries. It was made by melting fat and stirring into it shredded jerky and dried berries such as chokecherries, currants or blueberries. When the fat cooled and hardened, it was cut into bars and wrapped in rawhide. Ounce for ounce, pemmican is still one of the most high-energy food sources available.

Smoking consisted of drying meat in the heat of a smoky fire. Green hardwood such as hickory, placed on a bed of coals, provided the smoke. Fish to be smoked were split and hung on wooden racks above the fire. Smoking not only retarded spoilage, it also added flavor. The modern backyard smoker comes from this primitive technique; however, with modern-day smoking, the intent is not to dry the meat. The process, therefore, is carried out in an enclosure that reduces moisture loss.

Sometimes meat was packed in salt or a brine solution to preserve it. Large expeditions carried barrels of salted pork. The process of salt-curing is still used today.