

BEST OF THE MONTH

Six of the best: Hot meals

We taste the best hot meals for a warming autumn picnic – and no stove required, as all work with a heat-pad (included) or hot water from a flask.

*Weight includes water for rehydration or heat-pad activation.

Batchelors Super Noodles to Go – Chicken Chow Mein Flavour

Price 80p Weight 360g
Calories 375 Method Add hot water

A pleasant bowl of soupy veg and noodles at a bargain price, but we felt it was the subtlest – or blandest – of those tested, even after we added the sachet of soy sauce. From a green point of view, we preferred its cardboard container to the plastic used by others. www.supernoodles.co.uk



Wayfarer Hot Food Kit – Meatballs & Pasta in Tomato Sauce

Price £6 Weight 377g
Calories 375 Method Heat-pad

It takes a few minutes work with heat-pads and water to get the meal hot – but the system works well and lunch is ready in 12 minutes. We thought it was tasty in a school-canteen tinned-ravioli way, but the aftertaste lingers (for some hours) and the price is high. www.westlerfoods.com



Expedition Foods 800 Kcal Range – Chicken Korma

Price £4.50 Weight 540g
Calories 807

Method Add hot water
Designed as expedition food, this packs in almost double the calories of the others – good for long, energy-hungry, winter hikes. It's also the heaviest and an eye-watering orange, but it's absolutely delicious, with spice, coconut, rice and big bits of chicken. A top feed, worth every penny. www.expeditionfoods.com



Pot Noodle – Bombay Bad Boy Flavour

Price 89p Weight 320g
Calories 415 Method Add hot water

It has a great hot-chilli kick, ideal for warming you on a cold day (the hot sauce comes separately so don't fret if you're faint of tastebud). The noodles and veg are nice, but we thought the soya bits were a bit grainy. Great price and so light you could pack two. www.potnoodle.com



Ainsley Harriott Meal in 5! – Macaroni Cheese Pasta

Price 99p Weight 370g
Calories 467 Method Add hot water

There's something appealing about the idea of creamy mac and cheese on a chilly walk – especially when it costs less than a quid. We thought this was a bit disappointing, though, as the onion flavour overwhelms the cheese, and it tastes salty enough to require very long drinks of water. www.ainsley-harriott.com



Crosse & Blackwell Heater Meals – Halal Lamb Stew with Potatoes

Price £4.30 Weight 420g
Calories 381 Method Heat-pad

Like the Wayfarer, this relies on a chemical reaction between heat-pad and liquid to bubble your lunch to a nice hot temperature. It's a hearty hotpot with a good savoury flavour, although we found it left a fatty-tasting film on the tongue. www.heatermeals.co.uk



PHRASE OF THE MONTH

Nochschlepper: Yiddish phrase meaning a fellow traveller or tag-along, with connotations of 'pain in the a*se'. We've all had one. Some of us have been one.

Taken from 'Toujours Tingo', by Adam Jacot de Boinod – a guide to all the words for things we don't have words for. Penguin, £6.59 from Amazon.

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