

My Favorite Camping Memory

If you've been reading my blog as of late, you know about my family's impromptu camping trip – my husband and I, in a fit of outlandish spontaneity (read: **his** idea), decided to take our 4 children – ages 9, 5, 2, and almost 1 year – on a surprise, last-minute, week-long camping trip. Despite our family being very inexperienced and mostly camping-inept, it's been going pretty well! My husband was shipped off to camp for entire summers when he was a kid, and it's fun to see this side of him – the skills that he learned in the campgrounds of his youth since we've never been camping together... well, not like this anyway, with 4 kids and 2 dogs to look after. As for me, the camping experiences of my youth consist of a few over-nighters for Girl Scouts, and one week-long venture at Girl Scout camp that I did not like one bit – it was cold, we had to get up early, I had to be away from my beloved family dog, which made me incredibly homesick. To top off my week of misery, the counselors at the camp wanted us to do a *mandatory* (believe me, I did ask about the mandatory part!) art project that involved catching frogs, dipping them in paint, and letting them hop across a piece of paper. Call it art, if you will, but there was no way I was going to be anywhere near that art project due to my intense fear of frogs and toads which I am still conquering as we speak (guess what my 5-year-old's favorite camping activity has been this week?). Luckily for the kid-version of me, it rained at Girl Scout camp, meaning I did not have to participate in the frog-filled art project. But it took 3 days for that project to get canceled, and I was panicked about it the entire time. Plus, when we got up in the morning, it was very cold outside, and first things first – we had our swimming lessons first thing in the morning. Anyone who was too cold to participate in the morning lessons lost their privilege to partake in free swim after lunch when the sun was scorching. But as miserable as I thought I was at camp, I did have a favorite camping thing

that we did – something that just isn't the same without a campfire: we made pie-iron pizzas.

A pie-iron is a camping cooking utensil that consists of two small, shallow metal square pans with long handles. You can build sandwiches and desserts and all kind of culinary creations between the squares, then you latch them together and hold them over the campfire to cook the filling. My long-term memory continues to serve me well – even as an adult, pie-iron pizzas are delicious! After a trying day yesterday with my girls being tired and throwing tantrums all day, making pie-iron pizzas was a great way to close the day – they honestly cheered everyone up, including me! Not only are they yummy, but to make them is actually a fun project that is easy for kids and can easily burn a good 30 minutes of off kid boredom time! The kids might need help cooking their pie-iron pizzas over the campfire for safety reasons, but any age kid can enjoy preparing her pizza for cooking. There is something about kids helping to prepare their own food that makes them eat better than ever, too – works every time for my kids.

So yeah – the \$10.99 pie-iron turned out to be a great investment. Not only was it a fun family experience (I built the sandwiches with the girls while Dad helped cook them over the fire) which also accomplished the task of feeding the family, but the activity accomplished the near-impossible task of cheering up a tired family! I am excited about the [many experiments](#) I plan on conducting with the pie-iron – you can make mini-casseroles, desserts, pita pockets, stir fry... so many possibilities!

As I cheesily began to sing the other night, “Pizza... Roasting on an open fire...”