The CHARLIE RATION COOKBOOK

OR HOW TO EAT WELL IN A FOXHOLE

During the Vietnam war Brig. Gen. Walter S. McIlhenny son of the 2nd company president of McIlhenny Company from his experiences with C-Rations as a soldier during WWII came up with the idea to send soldiers copies of the Charley Ration Cookbook filled with recipes for spicing up C-rations with Tabasco Pepper Sauce wrapped around two-ounce bottles of Tabasco Pepper Sauce along with a handful of a P-38 type can openers all in a waterproof canister. What follows will be a copy of the cookbook.
THE CHARLIE RATION COOKBOOK

OR
NO FOOD IS TOO GOOD
FOR THE MAN UP FRONT

FRED RHoads
Great battles have not only produced famous generals, but gourmet dishes as well. Chicken Marengo was named after the battle of Marengo, in which Napoleon Bonaparte defeated the Austrians on the 14th of June, 1800. This dish was first cooked on the battlefield itself by Dunand, chef to Napoleon.

Bonaparte, who ate nothing until after a day’s battle was over, had gone forward with his general staff and was a long way from his supply wagons. Seeing his enemies put to flight, he asked Dunand to prepare dinner for him. All the chef could find were three eggs, four tomatoes, six crayfish, a small hen, a little garlic, some oil and a saucepan. He then and there created the Chicken Marengo.

The dish was served on a tin plate, the chicken surrounded by the fried eggs and crayfish, with the sauce poured over it, the water being laced with brandy borrowed from the General’s flask. Bonaparte, having feasted upon it, said to Dunand, “You must feed me like this after every battle.”

The American fighting man today does not have a personal chef, but he does have his C-
Rations. The contents of these remarkable packages contain far more nutriments than normally required for any man in the field and offer solid, good-tasting meals that are the envy of fighting men all over the world. Occasionally, though, a trooper will find it necessary to depend on C-Rations for a prolonged period of time . . . and it is with this in mind that TABASCO brand pepper sauce thought of a recipe book to help add dash and variety. There is no telling what gastronomic creations can be concocted with the C-Rations as a basic, combined with what the American trooper can find in the field or village near the combat zone. All he needs is imagination and a buddy who will act as assistant chef.

Whether eaten alone, with a buddy or two or in a group, the recipes found in this book are predominantly based on the single units and various combinations of the basic C-Rations. Outside ingredients may help, but they are not essential to the menus. (Another thought: when combat situations make it impossible to do anything with your C-Rations except open them up and eat them cold, adding Tabasco right from the bottle will always add a distinctive bright flavor.)

G.I. Joe has gone gourmet. These recipes were created for the fighting man in the field. Bon appétit.
The following ingredients may be found in the battle theater by begging, borrowing or bartering. When available, these items have been incorporated with the C-Rations to bring out their hidden secrets, whatever they may be:

- Eggs
- Pineapple... fresh
- Soya sauce or a fish sauce (rather smelly but peculiar to the natives and used in almost everything)
- Bean sprouts
- Oranges... a special variety in Viet Nam
- Bananas or plantains
- Lemons
- Breadfruit
- Fat... pork or oil
- Onions
- Bamboo shoots
- Rice
- Water chestnuts
- Peanuts
- Fish... from the streams
- Fresh water shrimp

A young hen or old rooster. (Occasionally the chance will come up to “regulation” one of these birds from the countryside; some fast hand-work with a fishpole and a steel pot will usually do the trick.)

Whenever flour is called for, soya or rice flour can be substituted for plain flour. Wherever butter is called for, margarine, fat or oil may be used.

The following are the basic measurements you will need for all recipes. You will find them in your basic C-Rations.

In all measurements, the plastic spoon found in each C-Ration Unit will be used as a standard.

When cans of liquid are required, either the small C-Ration Can or the large C-Ration Can will be indicated.

In all cases, a complete can of each C-Ration is used for one person. Add as many cans as is necessary for a formal fox hole dinner or the usual scroungers. Cigarettes will be found in all C-Ration Accessory Packets. Most gourmets frown upon smoking between courses. However, a special dispensation is granted to the man up front.
FOX HOLE DINNER FOR TWO
(Turkey and Chicken Poulette)

Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Two spoons flour
*One can chicken or noodles
*One can turkey loaf, cut up into pieces
Three dashes TABASCO pepper sauce
*Salt and pepper to taste
*One can cheese spread
*12 spoons milk
*Crackers from one C-Ration can, crumbled

No one likes to dine alone, and this recipe is ideal to combine a variety of C-Ration Units.

Melt butter or oil or fat, add flour and stir until smooth. Add milk and continue to cook until sauce begins to thicken. Add cheese spread and cook until cheese melts and sauce is even. Empty cans of turkey loaf and chicken noodles into the cheese sauce. Season with Tabasco, salt and pepper to taste and continue cooking. Cover poulette with crumbled crackers and serve piping hot.
*This is from your Basic C-Ration

BATTLEFIELD FUFU
Chicken with Peanut Butter Sauce

*One can boned chicken
*One can peanut butter
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
One spoon soya sauce
Two dashes TABASCO pepper sauce
Two to three spoons milk

Ham slices or pork steaks may be substituted for the boned chicken. No matter what you do to it, though, it is still Battlefield Fufu.

Melt the butter or oil or fat and add the peanut butter. Stir until well blended. Add the milk and continue cooking until sauce is smooth. Now add the can of boned chicken, pulled apart, and the soya sauce and Tabasco. Continue cooking until hot and smooth. This may be served over boiled rice or crumbled crackers or with white bread.
*This is from your Basic C-Ration

BREAST OF CHICKEN UNDER BULLETS

*One can boned chicken
*One can cheese spread
*Salt and pepper to taste
One dash TABASCO pepper sauce
*White bread
Two spoons butter or oil or fat, if available

Breast of chicken under glass was never intended for areas where glass and shrapnel fly. This dish can be prepared in quick time, using only the Basic C-Ration.

Heat the can of boned chicken in a meat can. Melt the cheese spread. If butter or oil is available, add two spoons. Season with salt and pepper and Tabasco. Cut loaf of white bread in half, trimmed if so desired. Place a mound of chicken over each half of white bread and cover each with the hot melted cheese sauce. This should stick to your ribs.
*This is from your Basic C-Ration

HAM WITH SPICED APRICOTS

*One can fried ham, sliced with juices
*One can apricots with juice
*One can jam
Three spoons flour
Three spoons butter or oil or fat
One spoon lemon juice
One spoon soya sauce
Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce
*Salt and pepper to taste

Melt butter or oil or fat, add flour and stir until well blended. Add the jam and cook until melted. Now add the juices from the ham and the apricots as well as the lemon juice, soya sauce and Tabasco. Salt and pepper to taste. Con-
PORK MANDARIN

*One can pork steaks
Green onions, chopped
Two spoons water chestnuts, chopped
Three spoons butter or oil or fat
Three spoons flour
Five spoons pineapple chunks, fresh or canned
Small can pineapple juice, fresh or canned
Half a can orange juice
Two spoons lemon juice
Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce

*This is from your Basic C-Ration

TIN CAN CASSEROLE

*One can frank and beans
*One can beefsteak with potatoes
Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce
*One can crumbled crackers
*One can cheese spread, melted
Four spoons green onions, chopped coarsely
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
One small can of water, if necessary

The casserole can be elegant, but as most men know, women often use it as camouflage for a hasty meal after a long bridge game. Here's a recipe to put the Old Lady's Bridge Casserole to shame.

Melt butter or oil or fat and sauté onions in it. Then add the cheese until it is melted and well blended. Now add the crackers for a few minutes and then return to tin can or other cooking utensil. Combine a can of franks and beans with the beefsteak and potatoes to this mixture and correct the seasoning. Cook for as long as necessary, seeing that the...

Continue cooking until sauce is thick. Separate the ham slices and continue cooking this mixture til hot. At the last five minutes, top each ham slice with a half apricot and keep basting for a few more minutes with the thickened sauce. Serve this hot with white bread.

*This is from your Basic C-Ration
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CREAMED TURKEY ON TOAST
Four spoonfuls bamboo shoots or bean sprouts
Two spoonfuls green onions (green part only)
Two spoonfuls butter or oil or fat
1/2 spoonful milk
Three drops TABASCO pepper sauce
Salt and pepper to taste
One can turkey loaf, sliced
One can white bread
Two spoonful flour

This is a more elegant version of War II's S--on-a-shingle.
Melt butter or oil or fat and sauté onions or bamboo shoots. Add flour and cook until smooth. Now add the spoonfuls of milk, a few at a time, and continue cooking till sauce is thick and smooth. Add other ingredients and then the sliced turkey, and continue cooking till turkey is well heated through. Serve immediately over rounds of white bread, which have been fried in butter or oil or fat or toasted, if possible.
*This is from your Basic C-Ration

FISH WITH FRONT LINE STUFFING
Green onions, chopped (green and white parts)
Two spoonfuls butter or oil or fat
Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce

COMBAT ZONE BURGOO
Two spoonfuls butter or oil or fat
Three spoonfuls chopped onion
One chicken, cut up and boiled until almost tender

PATROL CHICKEN SOUP
Four spoonfuls minced onion or green onions
Four spoonfuls butter or oil or fat
Four spoonfuls flour
One dash TABASCO pepper sauce
Salt and pepper to taste
Two large cans of the chicken stock from the above recipe
Crackers
One small to one large can milk
Melt butter or oil or fat. Sauté onions in butter or oil or fat, and add flour. Stir until smooth and thick and gradually add the hot chicken stock until soup is well blended and thickened. Add Tabasco and salt and pepper, and serve immediately with broken pieces of crackers.

Catch a fish. The above stuffing is enough for about a two pounder. Scale and clean the fish and stuff with the above, prepared as below. The stuffing may be doubled depending on how many and what size fish you caught. Rub the fish inside and out with a little lemon juice and a few drops of Tabasco, as well as a little melted butter or oil or fat. Melt butter or oil or fat and sauté onions in it. Then add bean sprouts and water chestnuts and cook for about five minutes. Add the minced ham and egg mixture and then add all other ingredients, adding the milk last and just enough to moisten the stuffing. Stuff the fish with this mixture and secure with a string if necessary.

If a make-shift oven is possible, bake the fish till done. Fish does not have to cook for very long, no matter how it is cooked. If an oven is not available, the fish can be cooked in a skillet with some butter or oil or fat and turned frequently until done, basted with a little water. In the latter case, the stuffing should be heated separately.

*This is from your Basic C-Ration
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If a potato or two is available in the field, cut up in small pieces and cook in the chicken stock mixture until the pieces completely disintegrate. Add milk to the thickened mixture and you have COMBAT ZONE VICHYSSOISE. If rice is available, try the same with the overcooked rice, but don’t mention it to a real gourmet.
*This is from your Basic O-Ration

GUARD RELIEF EGGS BENEDICT

*White bread
*One can ham and eggs, chopped
*One can cheese spread
One dash TABASCO pepper sauce
One spoon butter or oil or fat
One spoon flour
*Four to six spoons milk
Four spoons butter or oil or fat for frying the bread
*Salt and pepper to taste

Most recipes for Eggs Benedict called for split and toasted English Muffins. However, there is no reason why G.I. white bread can’t be used now. Just be sure to split your loaf in half; never cut it with a knife. Don’t ask why... it just tastes better.

In a meat can, fry the two halves of white bread. Cut the can of ham and egg mixture and heat. Place a piece of the ham and egg mixture on each half of bread and cover with a sauce made as follows:

Melt the butter or oil or fat and add the flour, blending well with a spoon. Add the milk and blend until smooth. Add the can of cheese spread and stir until melted. Add Tabasco and salt and pepper. Pour immediately over each half of the egg and bread combination.

This is a very simple breakfast dish for two or more, especially if one guy prepares the sauce while the other heats the eggs and bread mixture.
*This is from your Basic O-Ration

BEEFSTEAK EN CROUTE

*White bread
Two spoons green onions (white part) or plain onions... minced
*One can beefsteak with juices, cut up into small pieces
Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce
*Salt and pepper to taste
One spoon butter or oil or fat
*Bread crumbs from center of loaf of bread
One to two spoons water

En croûte simply means in a pastry shell, and the regulation white bread lends itself to such a shell with no trouble whatsoever.

Scoop out the center of the white bread till you have a shell. Reserve the bread as crumbs. Saute the onions in the melted butter or oil or fat for a few minutes. Sprinkle the bread crumbs over this and moisten with the juices from the meat, plus a spoon or two of water. Cut the meat up into fine pieces and season with salt, pepper and Tabasco. Spread melted butter or oil or fat inside the shell and fill with the meat mixture. This mixture is enough for two shells.
CURRIED MEAT BALLS OVER RICE

*One can meat balls and beans. Separate them and reserve the beans for a soup.
One can of water
Two spoons flour
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Three spoons curry powder
Three dashes TABASCO pepper sauce
*Salt and pepper to taste

Use only the meat balls and some of the juices. Add a can of water.
In a meat can, melt the butter or oil or fat and add the flour and curry until smooth. Gradually add the water from the can of meat balls until the sauce is good and hot and smooth. Add the meat balls and heat thoroughly. Season and serve over boiled rice, if available.
*This is from your Basic C-Ration

CEASE FIRE CASSEROLE

Three spoons chopped green onions
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Two spoons flour
Four spoons bean sprouts
*One can beefsteak with juices
*One can spiced beef with sauce
Three drops TABASCO pepper sauce
*Salt and pepper to taste
Two cans water (using can from spiced beef as a measuring cup)
One spoon soy sauce

Melt butter or oil or fat in skillet. Sauté green onions and bean sprouts for a few minutes. Sprinkle flour and mix until well blended. Add one can of water, a little at a time, until sauce is thickened. Transfer this to a steel helmet or other cooking utensil and add the beefsteak with juice, the spiced beef with sauce and the second can of water. Cook slowly till all ingredients are well blended and the sauce is good and thick. Serve the casserole over boiled rice or sprinkle the casserole with crumbled crackers just before serving.

If enough men get together to contribute Basic C-Rations, there will be enough food to feed a squad.
*This is from your Basic C-Ration

RICE PADDY SHRIMP

Enough shrimp, cleaned and peeled, to fill a large empty C-Ration can
Two spoons green onions
Three dashes TABASCO pepper sauce
*One can cheese spread
Three spoons butter or oil or fat
Three spoons flour
*Salt and pepper to taste
*1/2 spoon milk

Fresh-water shrimp is available in the village market. However, you may have to wait in line with the natives. There are fresh fish available in lakes, waiting for you to come and catch them. All you need is a net.
Melt butter or oil or fat and sauté the green onions. Add the flour and stir until smooth. Now add the milk gradually and continue cooking till well blended. Add cheese and stir till melted. Add the seasonings and then the shrimp and cook till well blended and the shrimp hot. Serve over boiled rice.
*This is from your Basic C-Ration

LEFTOVER BEAN SOUP

*Beans from a can of meat balls and beans
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Two spoons minced onions
One spoon flour
*Salt and pepper to taste
Generous dash TABASCO pepper sauce
One can water

Mash the beans slightly so that soup is still whole. Add to this mixture one can of water

Melt the butter or oil or fat and sauté the onions. Add the flour and stir till smooth. Gradually add the water-bean mixture and continue stirring until thick and smooth. Correct seasoning and serve piping hot. Just before serving, top with some crumbled crackers and an added dash of Tabasco.
*This is from your Basic C-Ration

POUND CAKE WITH CHOCOLATE SAUCE OR BATTLEFIELD BIRTHDAY CAKE

*One can pound cake
*Two cans chocolate candy
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Three spoons milk

Everyone has a birthday. With all due respect to Mom, this is much better than theashed-in, smashed-up crumbs that were baked at home months ago.
Open pound cake and set aside. Melt butter or oil or fat in a mess can. Add broken pieces of chocolate and continue cooking until melted. Do not overcook. Add milk to make a smooth and creamy consistency. Pour the chocolate mixture over the pound cake and allow to set till icing is firm. Candles are optional. If butter or oil or fat is not available, it is best to make the icing with just the milk.

*This is from your Basic C-Ration

**DATE PUDDING WITH FRUIT SAUCE**

*One can date pudding
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Two spoons flour
One can jam
One can fruit salad

Melt butter or oil or fat and add flour and cook until smooth. Add juices from fruit cocktail and jam. Continue cooking until sauce is thick and smooth. Add the pieces of fruit and a few drops of lemon juice, if available. Pour the hot sauce over the date pudding and serve.

*This is from your Basic C-Ration

**PECAN CAKE ROLL WITH PEANUT BUTTER SAUCE**

*One can pecan cake roll
Four spoons butter or oil or fat
One can peanut butter
Two spoons butter or oil or fat
Slice cake roll, fry slices in the four spoons of butter or oil or fat and, when crisp, put to one side. Cover each slice with the following sauce;

Melt two spoons butter or oil or fat, add peanut butter and melt till smooth and thick. Immediately pour over the pecan roll slices and serve with hot coffee.

*This is from your Basic C-Ration

**BISCUITS AND TEA**

Some C-Ration Units contain sweet biscuits or cookies, and these appear to be the real thing. No self respecting teetotaler will turn them down. Save them—you never know when an Englishman may drop in for high tea.

When alone, away from fox hole, company headquarters and with no time to follow even the simplest of these recipes, open your can of C-Ration, eat it cold and thank God you're an American.

Original Idea by BGW. S. McIlhenny, as a result of letters from G.I. in VietNam asking for tasty recipe ideas.

Recipes and Text by Christopher Blake, well-known gourmet/playwright and War II G.I.

Cartoons and Illustrations by Fred Rhoads, author of the famous "Gismo" and "Eight Ball" series in LEATHERNECK.