

Cool Tears Welcomes A New Writer!

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March / April
2014

COOL Tears™

and tiny campers

14 Year Old Sets Out to
Build His Own Teardrop

And Then
Does It!



**A Teardrop
Built For 6!**

**Retro Ride
Teardrops**

An interview with
Blake Johnston
and Stuart Thiele

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M A G A Z I N E

Vol. 2 No. 2

March/April 2014

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Let the camping season begin!

I know there are those of you fortunate enough to live in a part of the world that has nice weather year around. There are also some hard core campers that will camp no matter what the temperature. However, think I can speak for those of us who are fair weather campers and don't live where it's always warm and say: "Yahooooooo!!! Spring is here!!!" Well almost. Not every weekend is warm yet so some of us will still have to wait be ready to head out on the good weekends but... I'm ready!

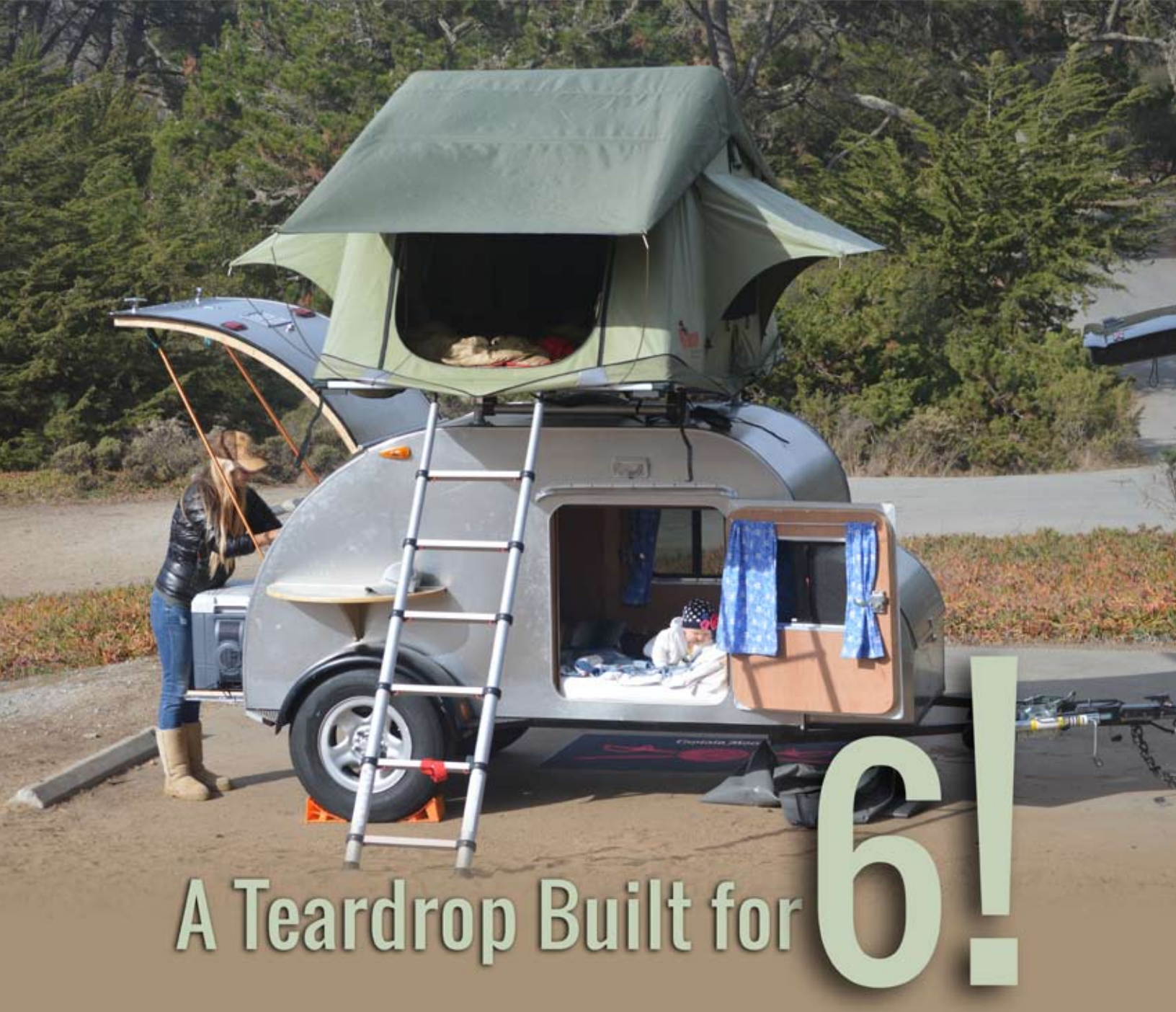
Well it's also time for the gatherings to begin so send us some pictures and let us know how they are going. We can't get them all in but maybe your gathering will get some coverage in the pages of Cool Tears!

I would also like to introduce our newest regular columnist Kim Hollis. She wrote the cover story "Tiny Trailers and Model A's" in our last issue and has agreed to continue to write for us. She is kicking off her regular contributions with some help in planning your next camping trip or gathering. We are looking forward to what she will bring us in upcoming issues!

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Cross". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "K" and a cursive "Cross".

Kevin Cross
Editor
Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Magazine™



A Teardrop Built for

6!

By Chris Amsden

I recently completed my first teardrop build, and wanted to share some of the pictures I took during the build, and of the finished product. I started receiving *Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Magazine* about half-way through my build and found the ideas and information invaluable!

I got the idea of building a “small camper” when my wife became pregnant with our 4th and realized that tent camping simply wouldn’t work with four kids under age 8. After poking around the web a bit, I came across the teardrop camper design and immediately fell in love. I had some previous building experience, and after I saw how much some manufacturers were charging for these, I thought I’d try designing and building one myself.

I considered both the 5’ x 8’ and the 4’ x 8’ trailer and teardrop designs, and decided on going with the smaller 4’ x 8’ for several reasons. First, I liked the idea of a very compact teardrop. The 4’ wide interior seemed like plenty of room for just my wife and I (the kids all sleep upstairs). And the build process was simplified greatly with the standard 4’ wide dimensions for framing, sheeting the birch siding and roof, and covering with the aluminum skins (which came in standard 4’ wide sheets).

I was so excited to get started, I began the teardrop build before I even had the trailer welded

up. I started with the standard 4 x 8 plywood base, and began the walls and roof with standard 2 x 2 framing covered by 1/8” birch paneling. Insulation was done with standard 2” foam insulation throughout. I covered the bottom of the plywood floor (facing the road) with asphalt emulsion for water protection.

The kitchen design was arrived at after comparing several different designs I had seen online. I liked the idea of the fixed stovetop burners, since this would be the main use of the kitchen. And I also liked the design of a slide-out cooler drawer. This tucks away nicely when closing up the hatch, but becomes easily accessible when cooking, and the top of the cooler (when drawer is extended) becomes a handy food-prep area. I purchased the sink/stove combo unit online, and found a 12v water pump and switch for the sink water delivery.



Once I had the basic shell built, I welded up the trailer (using torsion axles rather than leaf springs), and then mounted my teardrop shell onto the 4 x 8 trailer.



After seeing several different tongue-boxes on other teardrops I saw online, I decided to use mine as the battery/wiring housing, as well as for additional accessories (camping equipment, generator, solar panels, tools, etc.). This allowed me to maximize the limited space I had in the 4 x 8 teardrop for sleeping and kitchen design as much as possible.



The interior cabinets were fairly simple, with a “his and hers” done on either side of the center



console for clothes storage, etc. The DVD player and sunroof fan were purchased online, and were easy to install and work great. I chose a DVD player with built in speakers so I wouldn't have the additional wiring and installation of separate speakers.

During the build, I reinforced some of the roof framing to support the racks that would even-



ually go on for the roof-top tent. The trick was marking these supports so that I could find them once the exterior aluminum skin went on. After



researching a bit about how aluminum expands and contracts with heat and cold, I decided to “float” the exterior aluminum skins – only screw in the sides where edging and door trim went, and not use and contact cement, liquid nails, etc. for attaching the aluminum exterior. The roof racks were welded from basic steel pipe, and then Yakima crossbars on top of those. I found the roof-top tent on Craigslist for \$500 bucks. All-in-all, I think I spent around \$3,000 total (accessories and trailer included).

Now, my wife and I can put the kids to bed in the roof-top tent, and can enjoy a warm bed and a movie downstairs in the teardrop without the noise and stirring of the kids at night. For the past 10 years, it’s been a struggle to get my wife to agree to go camping. We have taken the teardrop on two trips with the kids so far, and SHE is now the one who asks me “when can we go camping again?” Needless to say, this was the best time and money I’ve ever spent!



I’m now a teardrop enthusiast for life, and would encourage anyone with some time and the desire to undertake building a teardrop. So happy I found this great new “thing” and love getting my issues of Cool Tears Magazine! Thanks again!



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By Kevin Cross

You may remember that we went to Indiana last year to visit with the folks at the Crossroads of America Gathering. Although we did not have time to visit with everyone there we did see A LOT of trailers. We were able to get the full tour on some campers and others we only saw in passing as we walked through the campground. One trailer that caught our eye turned out to be a custom trailer from RetroRide Teardrops. I recently asked the owners of RetroRide, Randy and business partner Stuart, if they would tell us more about their product and they kindly agreed.

Give us a brief history of RetroRide Teardrops. How did it all start?

Seven years ago Stuart was looking on-line and stumbled upon a website that had a bunch of teardrop trailers. While looking at the trailers in person he liked them a lot but noticed they weren't as cozy as he would like them. So one day Stuart called me up and asked me if I had ever seen a teardrop camper and I had. Stuart then asked me if I would help him build one from the ground up for hunting and fishing.

We then started the build with Stuart doing the welding on the frame, all the electrical, and the design while I offered a helping hand. After we finished the trailer for Stuart, we decided that we had so much fun doing it we decided to build one for me. After we finished mine, my friend saw the trailer and said that he had seen them around and had always wanted one.

He noticed that the one Stuart and I built was different. It had all the features that the typical ones that he saw were missing.

After we finished the one for my friend we decided to build another one and put on Ebay to see if there would be any bidders. It wasn't even a day before the trailer was sold. After building a couple more and selling them on line, we decided to go into business together making custom Teardrop trailers.

Over the past 7 years Stuart and I have learned a lot. We now build teardrops on a full-time basis. Our teardrops are made out of the best materials available and are all hand built from the ground up. RetroRide now has teardrops in over 20 states including Washington, Vermont, Texas, Colorado, Montana, Alabama, South Carolina, Ohio, and the list goes on.

What makes your teardrops stand out from others?

Our teardrops stand out in quality with a ridged frame and axle. We build the frame in house. All of our frames are mig welded and will go anywhere your



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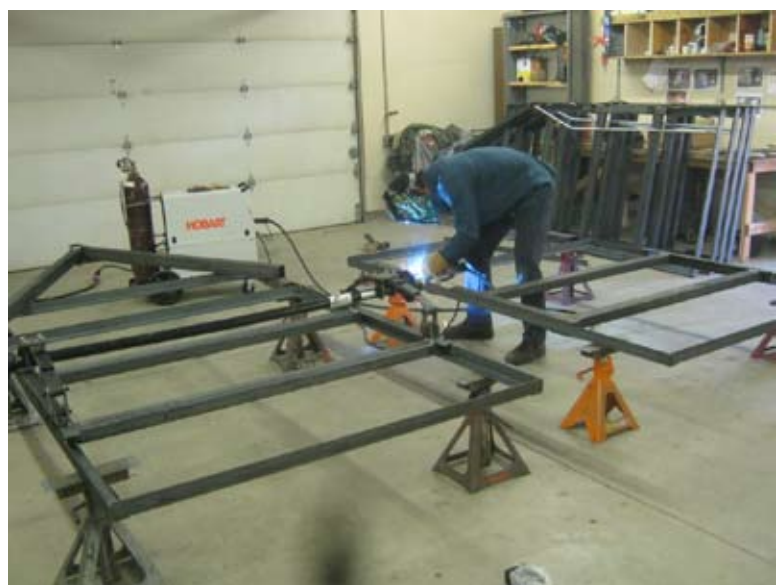
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and 12-volt power, lights, and receptacles as standard equipment. Power is run through an RV power box that changes the 110 to 12 volts and charges the battery while still supplying 110-volt power.



Beyond the standard accessories, you give customers the opportunity to customize the design of their trailers. What options do they have in relation to the construction of their RetroRide?

Your trailers have somewhat of a unique look. What is the thinking behind the design?

Our design was a matter of trial and error. We started with a more vintage look but got away from that to provide more room and still have a decent looking trailer.

Looking at your trailers they appear to be solidly constructed. What is the weight range of your units?

The weight range of a RetroRide starts at 840lbs. empty for a 4' x 8' goes to 960lbs. in a 5' x 8' and our 6' x 10' weighs 1090lbs. The 4' x 8' will pull easily with about any small car and the 5' X 8' and 6' X 10' will pull nice with a mid size auto.

What are the most popular options that you offer?

We don't sell that many options, as most everything is included in the base price. Our best selling item is air conditioning. We use units mounted through the front of the trailer to keep out water. For traveling we have a welded diamond plate cover to keep out the rain.

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Are all of your teardrops made to order or do you keep some in stock?

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be about 50/50 on orders versus stock. We usually have four to six units in stock for customers to look over.

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Is there anything else we have not covered that you would like our readers know about?


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MANUFACTURER FEATURE

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14 Year Old Sets Out to Build His Own Teardrop ...And Then Does It!

By Martha Tissot

Last June, after finishing 8th grade, my son Howie (14 at the time) informed us that he wanted to design and build a teardrop trailer. Hmmmm. I had no idea what a teardrop trailer was. He learned about them from the internet and began to build.

He truly did this project on his own. My husband and I helped when he asked for help. He obtained information from the internet, local hardware store technicians, teardrop trailer parts suppliers, and other various people along the way. It is done and went on its inaugural journey out of the garage last Saturday. It just passed state police inspection and was registered today.



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In a nut shell, it is on a 4X8 trailer bed, has AC/DC circuits, can be plugged into AC to charge or run on deep cycle marine batteries. It has running cold water, a propane/electric refrigerator, a 3 burner propane stove, a large (and loud) stereo, a pull out to allow sleeping horizontally, screening over a section, which is covered with a vinyl-convertible-like cover and is sided in aluminum sheeting in bright clear and red.


I decided to help him tell his story by providing him with some interview questions and this is what he had to say:



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How did you come up with your design?

I started the process by following online advice to begin with a 4' X 8' trailer kit. Then, I decided what sort of things I would like to have in my trailer; a stereo with a big subwoofer, running water, a propane stove and a refrigerator. I selected the appliances that would work best with the space restrictions and used a Google application to draw the 3D design. The design of the trailer grew from the kitchen outward. At one point I realized that there wasn't much sleeping room, so I designed a pull out section to expand the sleeping area. This was based on finding industrial heavy-duty drawer slides.

How did you design the electrical system?

I found a lot of information on the internet and made the first plan according to that information. I decided to have two, 6 volt deep-cycle marine batteries in series, and the ability to have 'shore power'. I included an inverter that could charge the battery and provide power at the same time. Also, the car will charge the batteries when driving.

Why did you decide to build a teardrop trailer?

I was looking around on the internet and found some sites showing teardrop trailers and how to design and build teardrop trailers. I was 14 and at the end of 8th grade. I really wanted to go camping during the upcoming summer, so I thought it would be fun to build a teardrop camper to go camping. I talked to my parents and they said sure, show us what you're planning. I never did end up going camping that summer, as I was too busy building the trailer.





I learned a lot about AC and DC power. I investigated installing a solar power system and decided that it was too much at this point. However, I can add it to the system later. When I went to buy the electrical

supplies, I received a lot of advice from local merchants and adjusted the plan accordingly.

What are your plans with the teardrop?

The first camping trip will be to the Rocky Mountain Blue Grass Festival in Lyons, Colorado. When I was younger, we used to take our Westfalia and camp for the whole festival. I have great memories of that time and now I will have my teardrop and my parents will have their Westfalia for the next festival.

Next summer, after I have my driver's license, I plan to drive around the country to climb and mountain bike. Hopefully, some friends will be able to join me for different parts of the trip.

How much help were your parents in this process?

Well, they paid for the supplies and equipment. My Dad was great for bouncing around ideas

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about the construction aspects. He never tried to make me do things his way and when my idea didn't work, we just started brainstorming again. When heavy lifting was required, he was there to help, as well. My mom did the majority of fetching supplies, so that I could be working. Also, she worked with me to design the electrical system. They were helpful, but let me do what I wanted and then supported me when things didn't work and I had to change my plans.



Do you think you will build more teardrop trailers?

Not in the immediate future. I really enjoyed the project and learned a lot. Now, I am interested in a small speedboat. Just like this project, I have found a lot of information on the web.



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HELPFUL BOOKS AND WEBSITES FOR PLANNING YOUR NEXT TRIP

By Kim Hollis

For those of us who were travel agents in a previous life, planning a trip is almost as much fun as the actual camping experience. Our Delorme Kentucky Atlas & Gazetteer and 2004 Rand McNally “the road atlas” are perfect examples of well loved books.

Filled with freebie maps and tourist information, our atlases double as file folders and have inspired bucket list road trips. There is something satisfying about flipping to the back of the atlas, searching the grid, finding the point of origin and thumbing through the pages. This tactical experience can't be experienced online. We have a navigation system, maps on our phone and tablet, but I still love the security of a map on my lap during a road trip.

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The inner travel agent is channeled again when searching campgrounds. Worth their weight in smores, our collection of "The Best In Tent Camping" guidebooks (for "quiet, scenic and serene camp-

sites") is growing. Each book is either filled with a single state's campgrounds or a specific region. They are easy to follow and very informative. An index, detailed map and table of contents make finding campgrounds a breeze. Key information and a campground map are listed for each entry. GPS coordinates and directions are also posted. A rating system is given to each campground and suggestion of campsites depending on one's idea of privacy and activity level. We have followed the recommendations and they have all been spot on. Unfortunately not all 50 states have their own book or share a book.

"The Best In Tent Camping"

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ReserveAmerica.com is a one stop shop for reserving campgrounds. Federal, state and private campgrounds are all available for viewing and reserving. An account and credit card are required to reserve campsites, but all are welcome just to browse. The "map" option for viewing possible campgrounds in a particular state is a great feature. Campground details and map lay outs are available on all campgrounds. Individual campsites list descriptions (hook ups, length, shade, slope, paved or gravel surface, etc.) and in many cases a photo. There is a onetime fee of \$7.50 for each site when reserving online.

Whether countless hours of preparations are needed to plan the perfect route or jumping in the car and figuring it out as you go, we hope you take more time to enjoy our amazing country and meet new friends along the way.



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Campfire Cookin'

Spring is almost here!

By Rhonda Gentry

Spring is almost here! Really. This issue, we're focusing on hearty, main dish pies. These pies are quick to assemble and easy to alter according to your family's tastes. They're just the thing for cool spring evenings when the weather is perfect for sitting around the fire.

Cheeseburger Pie



- 2 lbs ground beef
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 can chopped tomatoes
- ¼ c ketchup
- ¼ c mustard
- 7-10 slices American cheese
- One recipe biscuits (below)

Brown ground beef and onion in a Dutch oven, stirring frequently. Add tomatoes, ketchup and mustard. Remove from fire and arrange cheese slices on top, then cover with biscuits.

Biscuits:

- 2 c flour
- 3 t baking powder
- 1 t salt
- 1/3 c vegetable oil
- 2/3 c milk



Mix all ingredients, then pat or roll ½ inch thick. Cut into circles and place on top of cheese slices. Place over hot coals, cover with lid, then place 10-12 coals on the lid. Bake 10-15 minutes, until biscuits are brown.

Variations:

- Add dill pickle slices
- Make a bacon cheeseburger pie by adding a few crumbled, cooked bacon slices

- Make a mushroom cheeseburger pie by adding 8-10 sliced mushrooms while cooking the beef

Chicken Tamale Pie



- 4-6 chicken thighs
- 2 cans chili beans
- 1 can chopped tomatoes or Rotel
- 1 small can sliced black olives
- ½ chopped onion
- 2 c grated Mexican cheese
- One recipe cornbread (below)

Cook the chicken in enough water to cover until meat is tender. Cool and remove meat from the bones and cut into small pieces. Place chicken, beans, tomatoes, olives and onions in Dutch oven. Add enough broth from cooking the chicken to make a moist mixture. Mix together then cover with cheese.

Top with cornbread:

- 1 c. cornmeal
- 1 c. flour
- 2 T sugar
- 4 t baking powder
- ½ t. salt
- 1 c. milk
- ¼ c oil
- 1 egg



Mix all ingredients together and pour on top of the grated cheese. Place over hot coals and place 10-12 hot coals on the lid. Bake for 20-25 min. until cornbread is done.

Variations:

- Add salsa or jalapenos for more kick
- Add enchilada sauce to make it creamier
- Add corn or other vegetables

Turkey Shepherd's Pie



- 1 large turkey breast or two pounds ground turkey
- 3-4 T vegetable oil
- 1 can cream of mushroom or chicken soup (or make your own turkey gravy after sautéing the meat)
- One onion, chopped
- 2-3 stalks celery, chopped
- 2 large carrots, chopped
- 2-3 T poultry seasoning
- 4 large potatoes

Peel the potatoes and cut into large chunks. Boil in enough water to cover. When soft, drain most of the water and add 2-3 T butter. Mash and set aside on warm coals. Sauté the turkey, onion, celery and carrots in the vegetable oil until the turkey is almost done, adding more oil if necessary to keep everything from sticking. Add canned soup and about ½ can of water

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or create your own gravy by adding 2-3 T flour, 1 cup milk and salt and pepper to taste. Mix in poultry seasoning. Top with mashed potatoes. Place over medium hot coals for 15-20 minutes to finish cooking the turkey and allow the flavors to blend.

Variations:

- Use any other kind of creamed soup
- Use frozen mixed peas and carrots in place of the carrots and celery
- Top with mashed sweet potatoes

Soon camping season will be in full swing, so have fun making some main dish pies and don't be afraid to experiment!



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