

Breakfast Recipe: Quickstart Cereal

[Food & nutrition](#) / [Andrew Skurka](#)

To get out of camp as early as possible, the most ideal breakfast item is an individually wrapped bar (or several): granola bars, energy bars, protein bars, breakfast bars, etc. They require no prep and can be eaten on-the-go.

But there are downsides to this approach. First, they're not very satisfying. Second, they probably constitute a large share of your daytime calories as well, possibly leading to culinary boredom.

A hot breakfast like [Cheesy Potatoes](#) is at the opposite end of the spectrum. They're more enjoyable, but also more time-consuming, and thus inconsistent with ambitious morning plans.

My happy-medium option is this Quickstart Cereal, which balances efficiency and palatability. It's my go-to breakfast on personal trips, and one of the top-rated meals on my guided trips. We normally reserve it for the last morning of the trip or for summit days.



Granola plus protein powder, before adding water

Stats per serving

- 4.5 ounces
- 617 calories (depends mostly on cereal type)
- 137 calories per ounce

Ingredients

This meal can be very simple, with as few as two ingredients: cereal plus powdered milk or powdered protein. The recipe included below goes 50/50, which is how we do it on the guided trips.

Backpacking Recipes & Ingredients : Quickstart Cereal						
Ingredient	Ounces	Calories per oz	Comments	Allergy info	Where to buy	Buy online now
Cereal	3.5	140	Avoid flakes & puffs	Depends on cereal	Grocery, bulk bins, Costco	Nature's Path Love Crunch
Powdered whole milk	0.5	149	In baking or Hispanic aisle	Dairy	Grocery, online	Nestle Nido
Protein powder	0.5	104	Whey, 22g protein per 1 oz	Eggs	Grocery, Costco	Muscle Milk, 5-lb
Totals	4.5	137	-	-	-	-

Quickstart Cereal ><

For cereal, personally I rotate between granola and grape nuts. They taste good, pack well, and are spatially dense. Many granola varieties are carb-heavy, and I prefer the more calorically dense versions available in bulk at my local natural grocer.

For more variety in your cereal, add crushed walnuts, almond pieces, freeze-dried berries, raisins, Craisins or similar. To keep the portion size in check, subtract an equal amount of cereal. I have served this meal to hundreds of clients, and the 4.5-ounce portion is about right for most.

Powdered milk is the more conventional choice to pair with cereal. I recommend [Nestle Nido](#), which is powdered whole milk and thus more calorically dense than powdered skim milk.

Protein powder is a convenient form of this difficult-to-get-enough-of nutrient. On my personal trips, I skip the milk and add only protein powder. Costco has the best prices on protein powder (if you are prepared to buy 5 pounds of it); at Amazon, [Muscle Milk](#) is about \$1 more per pound for similar sizes (and you don't have to leave your house!).



The two required ingredients are cereal and protein powder (or milk). The other ingredients are optional.

Portion sizes and ratios

If this meal is too much or too little, change the amounts. Personally, I use 1.5 ounces of protein powder and 3.5 ounces of cereal, because I want the extra protein and because I often need a slightly bigger breakfast.

Hot or cold?

Almost always I consume this meal cold. However, it can be eaten hot. Some cereals — notably grape nuts — will soften and absorb water when cooked. Some protein powders may congeal when heated, which may be unappetizing to some. I'm less bothered by it, and find that stirring well and using a minimal amount of water helps.

Preparation

This meal is very simple to prepare, and is the same for soloists and groups. At home, pre-mix the cereal (with optional fixings) and the protein powder (or powdered milk) in a sandwich-sized storage bag. Each bag is one breakfast for one person.

In the field, simply add water and eat. I'm not going to recommend a specific volume of water — presumably, you have a preference for this ratio already.

Have questions or an experience with this meal?

Leave a comment.

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