

MONGOLIA

Country briefs
 Travel routes
 Mongolia map
 Ulaanbaatar map
 Weather

SERVICES

USEFUL INFORMATION

Visa
 Embassies abroad
 Foreign missions

TRAVEL TIPS

Accommodation
 Basic Mongolian
 Getting around
 Museums
 Dining out
 Handy tips

CURRENT ISSUE

ARCHIVE

Issue no.1
 Issue no.2
 Issue no.3
 Issue no.4
 Issue no.5
 Issue no.6
 Issue no.7

BOOKS ON MONGOLIA

ABOUT US

LIFE'S LIKE THAT!

Dried Meat, Food to Last

Mongolian food is rather simple and nourishing. Encounters with different cultures in the course of centuries long wandering across Europe and Asia did not affect the basic diet of nomads, comprising mainly of various combinations of meat and flour. Life in a saddle, frequent moves in search of better pastures tending their herds prevented Mongols from developing a sophisticated cuisine.

But while Mongols failed to come up with a wide variety of dishes, they mastered what was available to perfection, especially when it comes to meat. There are dozens ways of cooking it: boiling, frying, drying, steaming or smoking.

Here we give a description of how borts (bour- tsi), or dried meat is made-- an ancient way of preserving meat through long harsh winters or marches across continents

As soon as the first cold winter days settle in early December, most Mongolian families set out to store meat reserve.

As a rule, one cow and up to seven to eight sheep are sufficient for a family of five to last through long and harsh winter, until dairy products become more available during spring livestock breeding season.

Beef is the meat of choice, but each region has its own specifics. Herders in the Gobi Desert store mostly camel meat, while mountain tribes prefer to slaughter a yak or goats.

First, fresh meat is cut into long, 2- 3 cm thick and 5-7 cm wide strips, then hanged on a rope inside a gher, just under the ceiling where air circulates freely.

Within a month, the meat dries up. Once all the moisture evaporates, meat strips turn into hard, wood-like sticks of a slightly brownish color. The stripped and dried meat of one cow shrinks enough to be easily fit into the animal's stomach.

When the borts is ready, it is taken down and either broken into small pieces, 5-7cm long or minced. The borts is put into a bag made of canvas that allows airflow in and out. Borts can be kept in such bags for months and even years without losing the qualities of meat.

Dried meat is an ideal food for travelers. On long marches, Mongols simply take out a stick of dried meat, powder it and add to boiling water to make a cup of fresh and nourishing bouillon. Even nowadays, many Mongols take a small bag of borts when traveling to faraway places for study or to live.

"I survived the wet and cold winter only by making a cup of borts soup once in a while," says a Mongolian journalist, after spending six months on the Atlantic shore of England.