

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

Saratoga

National Historical Park



“Soldier Fare”

— Soldiers’ food in the American Revolution —

Vocabulary words:

ration [pronounced “ray-shun”] –a general term for the amount of food a soldier was given each day

pint [“pynt”] –a unit of liquid measure, equal to 16 ounces (twice the average school milk carton), or a little less than a 20-ounce beverage bottle

salt pork –pork (think of a pork chop or thick piece of ham) preserved by immersion in salt water, or packed in raw salt, for weeks or months at a time

What kinds of food do you like? Pizza? Hamburgers? French fries or chicken wings? We have a lot of variety available to us today.

Soldiers during the American Revolution were not nearly so fortunate.

These soldiers were supposed to receive a certain amount of food each day. This was their daily food ration. A regular soldier’s ration was supposed to be:

- 1 pound of beef –or 2/3 pound of pork or fish, OR about ½ pound of salt pork or dried, salted fish
- 1 pound of bread –or 1 pound of flour to make their own bread
- some salt
- some butter
- 1 pint of peas –or a pint of cornmeal or oatmeal

Baking one’s own bread with that flour took the form of “fire cake”, a mixture of flour, salt, and water. The ingredients were mixed to form a stiff dough, which was shaped into small, flat loaves and baked on hot rocks. Not very tasty, but it’s better than having nothing to eat at all!

Now, imagine:

You are in charge of feeding a number of American soldiers who have just fought in the first day of the Battles of Saratoga, September 19, 1777. They are very hungry. On the next page, calculate how much food you will need to provide them with their daily rations.

Remember:

A regular soldier's ration was supposed to be:

- 1 pound of beef –or $\frac{2}{3}$ pound of pork or fish, OR about $\frac{1}{2}$ pound of salt pork or dried, salted fish
- 1 pound of bread –or 1 pound of flour to make their own bread
- some salt
- some butter
- 1 pint of peas –or a pint of cornmeal or oatmeal

1. Ten soldiers would need how many pounds of beef for one day? _____
2. Those ten soldiers would need how many pounds of bread for one day? _____
3. Twenty soldiers need how many pints of peas for two days? _____
4. Fifty soldiers would need how many pounds of salt pork for one day? _____

Doctors tell us that an average adult should be drinking about one gallon of water per day. Applying that to the soldiers, how many gallons of water would be needed for:

1. Ten soldiers for one day? _____
2. Twenty soldiers for five days? _____
3. One hundred soldiers for 10 days? _____
4. Fifty soldiers for 20 days? _____

But water is heavy, weighing about eight pounds per gallon. So, how much weight would the army need to transport in the four water questions above?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____