

Polystyrene foam boxes with fitted lids that are used to transport broccoli and similar vegetables can be used as coolers.

You will find things much easier if you have a number of boxes set aside for specific items. We have a smoko box which is kept in an easy to reach position so we don't have to unpack the vehicle when we stop for a break or for lunch. This box contains plates, bowls, cutlery, cups, basic cooking utensils, cutting board, tea, coffee, sugar and our favourite spreads such as honey, vegemite, peanut butter and mustard.

You might also consider separate boxes for cooking utensils, tinned food, fruit and vegies, packet foods and condiments. Your style and length of travel will dictate the number of food boxes you will require.

Where possible we usually purchase our sauces and condiments in plastic containers, otherwise we transfer the contents from the glass container to spare plastic containers. Plastic film canisters (ask at photo processing shop – yes, some people still use film cameras) are ideal for herbs and spices. We then place the labelled canisters inside an empty ice cream container or similar for easy packing.

If planning to travel on outback roads, which are often rough and corrugated, tinned foods will inevitably rub together, causing the labels to come off. In this situation it's a good idea to write the contents on the top of the can with a permanent marker pen. This saves the hassle of opening four tins of baked beans before you finally find the tin of peeled tomatoes you need for a recipe.

portable fridge or ice box cooler?

For the serious camper and traveller these are a great convenience. Portable fridges are either 'two-way' — those that run on both 12 volt DC, such as from your vehicle's battery, and 240 volt AC from a standard power point (some models require a power adapter); or 'three-way' which operate on the previous two power sources as well as bottled gas or LPG. Some two-way fridges may require an additional transformer to operate on 240 volt DC. The most popular type are the two-way units.

The drawback with portable fridges are their price, with quality units ranging in price from between \$500 to \$2000 or more, depending on size. In addition, if you are using your vehicle's battery as the fridge's sole power source it is wise to fit a second battery so you won't accidentally be left stranded with a flat battery.

If you only take a few camping holidays each year then hiring a portable fridge may prove to be more economical. Fridges can usually be hired for weekends, per week or longer.

Over the years we have used a number of different 12 volt fridges including the Australian made Autofridge and EvaKool as well as a Waeco, all of which have been both reliable and efficient during our travels.

The humble ice box cooler or 'Esky' has been keeping the beer cold on camping trips for years. Advantages of ice boxes are their cheap purchase price, compared to portable fridges, and their

portability, as they don't have to be plugged into a power source they can be placed practically anywhere that is convenient. However, for ice boxes to be effective they need a supply of ice, which may or may not be readily available depending on your type of travel and style of camping. Block ice will keep longer than crushed ice. 'Dry ice' which is solid carbon dioxide, is an alternative to block and crushed ice, however, it is generally only available in cities and some larger centres.

cryovac® meat

A real boon for campers is Cryovac, a process of packing meat products in heavy duty plastic packaging and then removing all oxygen by a vacuum process (the removal of oxygen helps stop dehydration and degradation). Under specific temperature controls, the shelf life of meat can be extended to anything up to four or more weeks, depending on the type of meat. Cryovac or vacuum sealing not only prolongs the shelf life of your meat whilst travelling, it will stop any blood leaking into your fridge or esky from your meat packaging.

Time variations also occur depending on the type of meat. Beef will have the longest storage period – approximately 3 to 4 weeks when meat is kept at a constant 1° Celsius; lamb is next – around 2 to 3 weeks; then meat such as pork, chicken and processed meats, ie: sausages are best used within the first week.

