

# Our Trip Takes Us

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By Becky Hirn

The kids had SPAM for the first time this week. You might be thinking we're having a hard time with our grocery budget opting for America's first canned meat. That's not the case though. After a trip to the SPAM museum in Austin, Minn., Abby and Carter were begging for a can of meat in the gift shop. For \$2.75 each, we indulged them. It was an easy and practical souvenir of our visit. And we ended up using a recipe from the back of the can for dinner. SPAM and egg muffins.

A lot of people have asked us along our trip how we eat on the road. Do we eat out a lot? Do we cook every meal? Do we at least sample the local specialties? The answer is pretty simple. Our menu is a lot like when we were living at home. We do eat out much less to save money. And we still get low on food in the fridge and just grab some fast food. But mainly we eat what every family eats – tacos, spaghetti, chicken, burgers and frozen pizza. We also struggle with trying to mix it up. So the introduction of SPAM was pretty big this week. It was for Dan and the kids anyway, I'm still apprehensive about the pink meat in a can.

I did learn quite a bit at the museum though, including what's in SPAM, how it's made and packaged. I stood inside a 20-foot tall structure shaped like a SPAM can and learned how the meat got its name back in 1936. (It was a contest at a dinner party of the meat mogul, Jay C. Hormel.) We also left the museum with the knowledge that there are nine varieties of SPAM, who knew? Dan picked up a can of Hot and Spicy.

As for trying out the local specialties, sometimes we do get that luxury. Two weeks ago in Wisconsin, we were introduced a wonderful local food custom – the fish boil. I'd read about it online while researching what to do in Wisconsin. The fish boil experience was a must, according to the article. So while in Door County, Wisc., we found a restaurant serving just that. We weren't exactly sure what we were in for to start. We made reservations, showed up and were directed to the patio with our hors d'vours of pickled whitefish and crackers. It was there we saw a huge pot bubbling over in the back yard. The whole experience was even more impressive because just beyond the patio and pot of boiling food was a wonderful evening view of Lake Michigan. Back to the meal: the "boiler" first dropped in the potatoes. Several minutes later he added onions. Then came the fish, more whitefish. He kept the water boiling the entire time, stacking wood in the fire. He finally announced it was time to get our cameras out. He gave us a brief history of fish boils, including their origins in feeding large numbers of lumberjacks and sailors. He also explained that the boil-over eliminates the fish oils. Then we all watched in awe as he threw about a half gallon of gas on the fire. The fire exploded about 15 feet the air. The pot boiled over and just minutes later, dinner was served. It was \$17 a plate, a big hit to our food budget. But totally worth it. And it just doesn't compare to spaghetti, frozen pizza, tacos or even SPAM and egg muffins in the RV.

That's the thing about our trip. Maybe we don't eat out as much and still struggle with "What's for dinner?" but we get excited about things like SPAM and a big explosion in the back yard of a restaurant. I don't think we would have done that at home.

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