



By Colonel Michael D. Schoenfeldt and CW2 Edmund M. Perez Jr.

Salad is not only an important staple of a well-rounded diet, it can serve as a mechanism in field training exercises to stress a multifaceted supply chain. Every time salad is added to the training plan, it validates almost all the organization's logistic systems. For instance, the Multi-Temperature Refrigeration Container System (MTRCS) is typically used to carry all perishable products to the training area. Army-wide, very few of these pieces of equipment are fully mission capable. Often working against long maintenance hours, long lead time for parts, and/or not having experienced, specific personnel working on these particular pieces of equipment either hinders units from providing perishable foods to Troopers or results in spoiled food. Nevertheless, when salad is prioritized, refrigeration becomes practiced. This ensures that perishable goods are properly handled and Disease Non Battle Injuries (DNBI)

mitigated. By simply integrating salad into the food service support, Troopers receive needed practice with the Multi Temperature Refrigerated Container System (MTRCS).

A third implication of salad occurs post consumption. When Troopers eat fibrous meals, the frequency they use latrines [becomes regular and free of diarrhea \(DNBI\)](#). This in turn, allows units to more easily plan a sanitary location and practice good hygiene. Providing hard stand areas to use as latrines arguably augments morale. More importantly, when Troopers are using the latrine, they are not only afforded the opportunity to keep their fighting positions clean and distant from where they defecate, they are given the means to wash their hands. Without soap and water, DNBI may increase but when properly applied, salad may help keep Troopers in the fight. Subsequently, salad becomes more than just a part of a balanced meal, it also becomes a forcing mechanism for commanders to exercise their supply chain in a tactical environment.

Though easier to execute, reliance on MREs and packaged foods degrades soldier health and morale in the long-term as well as undermines needed training in logistical planning and practices that ensure unit leaders become familiar with all the components necessary to sustain the Trooper on the battlefield. The inability of a unit to sustain the necessary requirements to provide salad to the Trooper in training becomes then a “canary in a mine” early warning of a logistical system insufficiently robust to cope with the difficulties inherent in the battlefield to sustain the soldier.

Salad is Healthy

Nutrition has a direct correlation to health, and health directly influences the effectiveness of military personnel. Lack of proper nutrition can decrease the effectiveness of vaccines and increase the possibility of disease, especially in high stress situations. Many nutrients have direct effects on the immune system. When the body is subjected to illnesses such as injuries or burns increased amounts of the amino acid [Glutamine](#) are required. Vitamins C

and E are [antioxidants](#) and have been associated with increased immune response. Nutrition plays an important role in the body's ability to repair itself. Inadequate nutrition can result in poor physical and cognitive performance (e.g. inability to carry out physical tasks, poor concentration and decreased vigilance). The long-term effects of both macro- and micro-nutrient imbalances include increased risk of vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

The goal of this article is to develop leaders' understanding that by adding salad to training requirements—when properly placed—a unit can enhance its logistical chain readiness and produce multi-pronged benefits. Ultimately, this allows leaders to train a fitter force and keep the enemy at bay, seen or unseen.

Food can help enhance an Armored Brigade's readiness because of the many systems put into place simply by requesting salad. [According to the Office of the Surgeon General](#), the Unitized Group Ration Heat & Serve (UGRH&S) or the Unitized Group Ration-A (UGRA) menus are certified to meet nutritional standards. These meals are complete when supported by milk and meal enhancements such as bread, salad, fruit, and cereal with an average of 1450 kilocalories. The Surgeon General's current policy allows units to consume Meals Ready to Eat (MRE) as the sole source of subsistence for up to 21 days. When available, bread and fruit, as enhancements, and milk as a supplement to the MRE are recommended. Supplementation and enhancement of the MRE is required if the MRE is the only meal used to support Soldier feeding in excess of 21 days. Each meal provides an average of 1,300 kilocalories (13 percent protein, 34 percent fat, and 53 percent carbohydrate). When enhanced with bread, an additional 200 kilocalories are provided (12 percent protein, 33 percent fat, and 55 percent carbohydrate). In total, these meals provide the warfighter with approximately 4050 kilocalories per day in a ration cycle of MRE-MRE-UGR (M-M-U). Ensuring Troopers eat a hot meal with salad each day, units can increase morale, inherently promoting many other operational functions, as well.

I want salad, now what?

Developing a challenging training plan can be a complicated process. Introducing salad as a requirement comes with its own various intricacies and additional requirements. However, the logistical process of salad streamlines more than food service to our Troopers. Salad streamlines the entire tactical support/logistic supply chain by creating a perishable food timeline onto the back of a vehicle.

A myriad of planning factors must be considered when salad is included with a hot meal each day. Below is a simple graph showing the additional factors needed when adding salad. This graph can be used as a checklist to ensure all of the tasks have been completed in order to bring perishable food to the next exercise. The aim of adding salad to the training requirements is that entire unit assets will begin buzzing with work; it truly takes all sustainment sections to make it work.

The Commander should always lean toward using green assets when available. However, the MTRCS is renowned for mechanical issues, so civilian (white) assets may be required as a secondary source of refrigeration space on the battlefield. As stewards of taxpayer money, we should avoid heavy reliance on white assets. Ensuring our issued equipment is in proper working function may allow us to retain those funds and prove our capability of execution. If the MTRCS proves incapable of sustained operations, its failures and shortfalls should be documented and forwarded to the appropriate headquarters for consideration in finding a replacement. When these assets are available, a unit's menu selection dramatically increases. Furthermore, additional quality of life issues such as morale, welfare, and mental well-being of the Trooper in an extensive deployment should be considered. What seems like such a simple concept is actually a forcing function to help all shops work together to carry out the LOGPAC and deliver salad to the point of need.

Conclusion

Solving the complex challenges around providing Troopers with quality meals in a training or battlefield scenario is nothing new. Using salad as a weapon directly correlates to the

effectiveness and lethality of the entire unit. “Salad” is not difficult to do, but it does require more attention in planning. The challenge then becomes ensuring all the other supporting elements to the Food Service section are met. Each unit should objectively take a look at their planning methods and truly ask themselves if all facets of CL I are planned. Personally, I believe that 90% would say no. There are weekly maintenance meetings, there are reports sent up daily to Command teams, yet none of the food service equipment is discussed. While Food Service personnel have both a Garrison and Field Mission, it should be discussed with the Brigade Food Advisory team and the Dining Facility Manager to ensure the NCOICs are able to attend the planning and training meetings in order to facilitate the earliest planning possible. By adding a few pieces of lettuce commanders can extend their operational reach by exercising their entire sustainment warfighting function.

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