

Cooking Merit Badge Essentials

Now Required for Eagle Scout Rank

Effective Jan. 1, 2014, Boy Scouts, Varsity Scouts, and qualified Venturers and Sea Scouts must earn the Cooking merit badge in order to obtain the Eagle Scout rank. This requirement was communicated on www.scouting.org and is reinforced in the *Boy Scout Requirements* book for 2013 and 2014. The only exception is for those Scouts who have completed all of their Eagle Scout rank requirements, including their Eagle Scout service project and unit leader's conference, by Dec. 31, 2013. These Scouts need only to complete their Eagle Scout board of review in 2014 to be exempt from earning the Cooking merit badge.

Revised Requirements and Pamphlet

During 2013, the Cooking merit badge underwent a major revision that has greatly enhanced the requirements and the merit badge pamphlet. Improvements include:

- Use of the USDA's MyPlate food guide to aid Scouts in learning better nutrition and eating habits, reading food labels, and becoming aware of ideal caloric food intake related to daily activity
- Increased awareness of cross-contamination of food and food-related allergies
- Greater flexibility in the meal preparation requirement—Scouts are no longer required to prepare meals on consecutive days
- A variety of cooking methods and locations
- An awareness of the Outdoor Code

Use of Old or New Requirements in 2014

Whether the Scout chooses to earn the Cooking merit badge in 2014 with the old or new requirements, once he has earned the badge, it counts toward his advancement. The *Guide to Advancement*, topic 7.0.4.2., "What to Do When Requirements Change," allows Scouts these options:

- If a Scout started working on the Cooking merit badge before Jan. 1, 2014, he may switch to the new requirements or continue with the old ones until the badge is completed.*
- If a Scout did not start working on the Cooking merit badge during 2014, he may use the new requirements and new pamphlet or choose to use requirements published in the *2013 Boy Scout Requirements* book and the *2013 Cooking* merit badge pamphlet.
- Beginning Jan. 1, 2015, a Scout who has not started working on the Cooking merit badge must use the new requirements and supporting pamphlet.
- A Scout who earned the Cooking merit badge prior to 2014 does not need to re-earn the badge. Once it's earned, it's earned!

*The *Guide to Advancement*, under the same topic, goes on to say, "There is no time limit between starting and completing a badge, although a counselor may determine so much time has passed since any effort took place that the new requirements must be used." This guideline applies to the Cooking merit badge as well.

Green or Silver Border

Scouts who earned and received a green-bordered Cooking patch may purchase or be presented with the new silver-bordered patch to signify that it fulfills the Eagle requirement. A Cooking merit badge certificate or blue card must be presented to obtain the new patch. The green-bordered patch may then be retained as a keepsake. A Scout is not permitted to wear both merit badge patches on his sash or uniform at the same time. No "trade-in" program for exchanging one for the other is available at Scout shops.