

## **15 Things Ms. Dyno Learned at Toast 2008:**

### **-- 1) Check your gear before you leave, particularly tents. Really.**

Yep. No matter how many times you've used it. No matter how positive you are that all the pieces are there. Open that puppy up and check it.

We have a shade tent (screen sides, vinyl top) we've used in the past and just set up last year, all parts there when we last used it. Opened it up a few days before Toast to find out 2 \*very\* key pieces were missing. How is a mystery, but anyway. It would've sucked to haul that out to Toast and then find out we had no shade or place to store gear. Fortunately we were able to resolve it beforehand, which is the next item...

### **-- 2) You can get free replacement pieces from the manufacturer. No receipt needed.**

Cool! I called the customer service number on the tag and got a very helpful person who is sending us the 2 missing pieces for free -- no questions asked, no proof of purchase, no forms, no warranty issues. I'm so used to bad sucks-to-be-you service I just assumed we'd have to scrap the tent when we lost the pieces.

A SNEAKY TIP: While we're waiting for the replacement pieces we bought another shade tent, same model. Then swiped the 2 missing pieces from there to use with our tent at Toast. We'll wash off the borrowed pieces, replace them in the original bag and return the new tent. Free loaner pieces. ;)

### **-- 3) Those 7 gal. water containers rock!**

We got one of those Reliance Aqua-Tainer blue plastic jugs with the water spout. (<http://tinyurl.com/4k3k7z> Cheap at WalMart. Safety Central even has a water filter for them <http://tinyurl.com/4xswjl> ) awesome! No more of those flimsy gallon containers from the grocery store that invariably break and leak. This cube-like container takes up much less room than half a dozen individual containers. And you can easily fill the camelbak bladder or cleaning bowl hands-free thanks to the spigot. We also brought a 2 gallon reusable bottle that we could fill from the 7 gal.

This thing is such a little engineering marvel to me. :) The spout comes off and rescrews into the inside of the lid (making a solid cap) to prevent the spigot from being knocked open when transporting. Since it's square you can store it opening/spout end up, to reduce the chance of spillage. The handle on the front makes it easy to tip the container when the water is getting low. And the top air vent has been improved to be screw-on instead of a small pull-out tab. You can fill it at home and not only save on money, but also avoid creating more garbage with those grocery store 1 gal. jugs.

Only downsides: Once you get down to 1-2 gallons the water level drops below the spigot level and you have to keep tipping the container to get the water. And the container takes up just as much room empty as full (can't crush it like the disposable grocery bottles).

### **-- 4) Build storage up, not out.**

Having just a collapsable picnic table and a 3x2 storage bin under our 13x9 shade tent took up most of the room. Using something narrow and tall rather than wide and flat would've been more space efficient. I'm considering bringing some adjustable wire shelving next time, which can be

disassembled for transport and re-assembled on site easily (we have several lying around). They're strong enough for heavy items like water, sturdy enough to safely hold the stove, and can hold plastic drawers as well. Which brings me to the next item...

#### **-- 5) Drawers or shelves are better than a box with a top lid.**

In other words, if you're going to use your storage box as a table surface too (water jug, stove, sitting, etc.) either keep it empty, or use a box with drawers or a front-opening lid instead. We had all our kitchen stuff and food stored in this handy big black bin. Which kept it clean and organized and gave us another surface to put things on. It also was a total pain in the ass to have the heavy water jug and lit stove on top of the bin, only to remember that I needed something else from inside it while cooking. Stackable plastic drawers or a front-opening would've been easier, allowing us to keep things on top while still getting inside.

#### **-- 6) Windscreen!!!!!!**

I went looking all over for a windscreen for our stove, but couldn't find anything and didn't have time to make one. I really saw the difference it would've made when we were at Toast. The high winds on Friday and on Sat. morning meant that instant 1-minute oatmeal wasn't anywhere near done after 10 minutes (at which point I gave up and used the trailer stove, which was blocked from wind). Even trying to block wind around the stove with other items still allowed so much wind through that it blew much of the flame away from the pot, cutting the efficiency in half.

#### **-- 7) Clamps, clothes pins & binder clips, carabiner clips.**

Dump a bunch of these in your gear bag. At some point you'll be glad. :)

CLAMPS: Those rubber-tipped spring clamps have saved us 2 years in a row now (<http://tinyurl.com/6ljooy>). If you have a tent with an internal frame or a fly that fits over the frame these things are awesome. You can clip them over the fabric onto the poles to hold the fly in place without risking ripping the fabric from stress. Or use them to anchor extra guy lines (in lieu of grommets or D-rings on your tent). They don't budge and they make a cheap tent more weather worthy. We attached them over our fly on the front roof poles, then ran rope from the clamps over our fly in a V shape and tied it to a ground pole, secured with another clamp. Kept our wimpy fly down during the high winds on Friday.

CLOTHES PINS & BINDER CLIPS: Great if you want to hang decorative fabric in your tent (won't damage the tent fabric like pins). Also great if you need to hang wet items to dry, like clothing or towels or sponges. Our tent has extra flaps of fabric at the corners (reinforcement) that make the perfect place to attach a clothes pin or binder clip (those office supply clips) without damaging the tent.

CARABINERS: Attach it to the loop at the top of your tent or to the roof pole and you can easily hang your lantern for overhead light at night. Hands-free and also makes more efficient use of a single light, eliminating the need for multiple table lanterns. Also allows you to slide the light along the pole, moving it wherever you need it. Unclip during the day so you don't keep banging your head into it. ;)

#### **-- 8) Hang the damp sponge, washcloth, scrub brush to dry BEFORE putting it in the ziplock bag. Really dry. No, really.**

I thought things were dry enough when I put them in the bag after washing. Apparently I was

wrong because I got home, opened the ziploc and ewwww. As Sudden said "it smells like ass". And not the good kind of ass. This left me standing there incredulously shouting "but it's SOAP! how does SOAP get to smell like ass!" ;) Something must've been damp enough to start to mildew in just a day because everything in the bag was tainted by ass-smell -- the comb, the soap container, the nail scrubber, the sponge, the nylon bath puff thing. \*sigh\* I had to buy all new stuff. Nothing would get rid of the smell. Next time, hang to dry in one of the zillion mesh bags I own. Duh.

**-- 9) People gather by shade at day, by fire at night.**

Seems pretty obvious, right? Hee. We realized that if you'd like to be able to chill at your own space sometimes and have folks come to you, you need one of those. We thought about this when we noticed we have a plethora of folding chairs, which ended up arranged in a circle around a table. Handy for eating and chatting, but we also realized it'd be a great arrangement for a firepit. So we'd like to have a pit or barrel next year to give a warm space to retreat to and for friends to gather when we're winding down.

**-- 10) For the love of Maud, just turn the light on when you use the nighttime pee bottle.**

Just trust me on this one. Really. ;) Because nothing creates a panic like shivering in the freezing cold, in the dark, trying not to wake your tent mate, having a full pee bottle... and not being able to find the cap. Because after you put the cap on the floor you somehow magically hit the 1 in a million odds and managed to place the bottle \*directly\* over of the cap, hiding it from view. Sleepy brain + freezing cold does not go well with total darkness. ;)

**-- 11) Label your stuff. Again.**

I said this last year too. And was reminded this year why it's necessary. We were super-rushed to prepare for Toast this year, so I didn't have time to mark the new gear. Figured it wouldn't be needed because I wasn't planning on those things wandering around. ;) Turned out one of our travel buddies sharing the truck space had the \*exact\* same table and water container we bought. Hee. I Sharpie-d our names on the items before we headed back, to make it easier to keep track of the identical items. Which reminds me...

**-- 13) Stash a Sharpie marker in your bag.**

There will always be a reason to use it. It's handy. Again, I love my Bag of Useful Things. It's, um, useful.

**-- 14) @\$#^% high elevation and sunburn!**

Stayed in the shade. Used sunscreen. Wore a hat. But for about an hour after I woke up and pattered around on Saturday my wrists and hands were unprotected... I got such severe sunburn during that pre-sunscreen time that my wrists and hands blistered (ew). Fortunately it wasn't painful unless I rubbed it and I had brought shea butter with me. And fortunately that was the only thing that got burnt.

To quote Tim Anderson's Instructables page:

*"People who can be exposed to sunlight without getting sick don't have to make up stories about being the master race."* ;) ( <http://tinyurl.com/5fvuda> )

**-- 15) That talk of "community" ain't lip service.**

It seems that no matter how much you prepare, there will always be something you forget or something that runs out. And surprisingly, there always seems to be someone else who jumps in with the resource. We had offers of water and battery charging (both very generous). Another person was offered a pump after attempting to inflate an entire air mattress by mouth. While sitting in Happy Camp I mentioned I had forgotten about the oranges left in my cooler and instantly I was handed an orange. Crazy. :) And that's not even touching on all the food constantly offered to us, or the various gifts, or the great camps people made, or the dinners they hosted.

-- the end --

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**Addendum...**

The biggest thing I found about Toast this year: Unpredictable.

Last year we brought 6 gallons of water and went home with about half. This year I brought 8 gallons so I'd have plenty extra to share hot cocoa... and we ran out of water after the first day. Last year we hardly needed shade, this year I would've been hurting without it. Last year we had people coming by our camp pretty often, this year very few passed by. Last year we were sharing hot drinks and snacks all the time, this year I hardly made any.

I don't recall ever getting banged up at past Toasts, but this year I was covered with bruises and blisters and got some nasty splinters from plants and wood.

I don't recall the dust bothering me in past years, even windy ones, but this year I felt like I was constantly coated and no amount of washing would remove it. My sinuses were totally dried out and I was putting lotion on several times a day.

Past years seemed a bit more raucous and full with some drama, this year was more mellow and easy going.

I had looked all over for one Tribe friend that said she was coming, but never found her... yet ran into another Tribe friend that I didn't know was attending.

You never know if it's going to be hot and sunny or windy and overcast. If you're going to be running around all the time or napping at camp. If you're going to spend the time catching up with people you already know, or hanging with entirely new folks. If you're going to want to dress up to the hilt or forgo costuming. If you're going to want 5 meals a day or just 1 snack.

Unpredictable. ;)