



More details on the soon-to-be Eagle-required Cooking merit badge

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Updated 1:08 p.m. Oct. 24 | Added more info from Chris Hunt, BSA Advancement Team, to clarify that the merit badge still will become Eagle-required on Jan. 1, 2014 though the revisions won't take effect until Jan. 1, 2015. These are two separate changes and should be thought of as such, Chris says.

It's a secret recipe no longer. I've got new details to share on Cooking merit badge, set to join the list of Eagle-required merit badges on New Year's Day 2014. While the requirements are still being finalized, the questions and answers provided here should tide you over until the full course arrives.

I'll share whether Scouts must switch to the new requirements if they're already working on Cooking merit badge, whether Scouts who already have the badge may swap theirs for the silver-bordered version, and what will and won't change in the requirements.

What's changing? There are two major revisions that should be considered separately. The first is that Cooking merit badge will become Eagle-required beginning Jan. 1, **2014**. The second is a major overhaul to the requirements, which will take effect Jan. 1, **2015**.

When will Cooking merit badge become required to earn the Eagle Scout Award? Beginning Jan. 1, 2014. Regardless of when a Scout earned the Life rank or began working on Eagle, unless he fulfills all the requirements — with the exception of his board of review — before Jan. 1, 2014, he must earn the Cooking merit badge to become an Eagle Scout.

What about the new requirements? The process for implementing changes to merit badges is covered in the *Guide to Advancement*, topic 7.0.4.2, "What to Do When Requirements Change." The changes to Cooking will first appear in a revised merit badge pamphlet that will be released during 2013. The new requirements then become effective Jan. 1, 2015, with the release of *Boy Scout Requirements*, No. 34765.

What if a Scout has already started earning Cooking with the old requirements? The *Guide* then allows the following options for the period of time between the release of the revised pamphlet and the Jan. 1, 2015, effective date:

- If Scouts have already started on the merit badge, they may switch to the new requirements or continue with the old ones until the badge is completed.
- If Scouts have not already started on the merit badge, they may opt to use the new requirements and the new pamphlet.
- If work on the merit badge begins before Jan. 1, 2015, they may use the old requirements and old pamphlet until the badge is completed.

Is there a time limit involved? 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 will apply to Cooking merit badge as well.

My Scout earned Cooking merit badge before it became Eagle-required. Does he have to earn it again? No. Scouts who already earned Cooking merit badge *are not required* to re-earn the badge under the new requirements in order to qualify for Eagle.

The Eagle-required Cooking merit badge will have a silver border. Can a Scout who already earned Cooking switch his badge from the green-bordered version to one with the silver border? Yes. Once the Supply Group has released a new Cooking merit badge patch with a silver border — signifying it is Eagle-required — then any Scout who earned and received a green-bordered Cooking patch (regardless which requirements were involved) may purchase or be presented with one that has a silver border. A Cooking merit badge certificate or blue card must be presented to buy the new patch. The green-bordered patch may then be retained as a keepsake.

Can this Scout wear both versions on his sash? No. Scouts are not permitted to wear both merit badge patches at the same time.

Will there be a trade-in program for exchanging for the silver version? No.

What happened to the 2014 revisions we were told about? They have been moved to 2015 because the new requirements and the new pamphlet are coming out so close to the end of the year. This is an extension to the transition time during which Scouts can use either set of requirements as indicated above. The process will be the same as described in the *Guide to Advancement*—just extended through 2014.

Once the new pamphlet and requirements are released in a few months, a Scout will have until Jan. 1, 2015, “to decide what to do. He may continue—or begin work—using the old [Cooking] merit badge requirements and the old pamphlet; or he may switch to—or begin work—using the new requirements and the new pamphlet. ...if a Scout chooses to use the old merit badge requirements and pamphlet, he may continue using them until he has completed the badge.” On January 1, 2015, any Scout who begins working on Cooking must use the new requirements and the new pamphlet.

Can you tell me what’s changing in the requirements? In compliance with national healthy eating standards, the requirements will move from My Pyramid to My Plate. Also to be **added** are sections on:

- Food allergies, cross-contamination awareness
- Reading Food Labels
- Daily level of activity and caloric need
- Better nutrition—Improving eating habits
- Variety of cooking methods
- Outdoor Code
- Home Cooking

To be **deleted** are the requirements of consecutive days for cooking, giving troops and Scouts more flexibility.

Can you tell me what isn’t changing? The requirements for total number of meals will be similar. The breakdown of location will change, however, to include at home, at camp and on the trail. The focus on menu planning over actual cooking will remain. Still Plan more Menus than Cook. Requirements 1, 2 and 8 will be very similar.

Who was behind the change? The BSA’s Innovation Team consulted representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Drug Administration, Cleveland Clinic, Food Allergy Research & Education, and Scouters and Cooking merit badge counselors.