



# Fireside Social

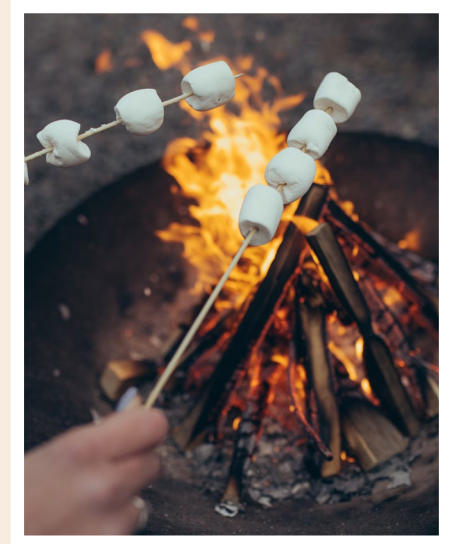
Humans are social beings as well as individuals, and gathering with others around a fire to eat, drink and talk goes back millennia. Stories are heard, knowledge is shared, and comfort is taken in the warmth of the fire. There is even evidence that suggests relaxing in front of a crackling fire lowers blood pressure as your senses take over and you become absorbed in the experience.

Although focussed on fire pits, a BBQ would also work whilst some of the ideas that follow will work without a heat source and are just fun reasons to gather in an outdoor space.



## Outdoor Cooking

Cooking outdoors elevates simple food and drink to a whole new experience, a simple cup of tea or an ember baked potato seems somehow even more comforting than usual. You could heat hearty pre-made foods like soup, stew or chilli on the fire for a simple shared meal or you could be more adventurous and cook from scratch. Damper bread on a stick with honey is quick and a fun sharing experience or you can use some home or group grown ingredients and create something more elaborate. Invest in a Kelly kettle and you can have tea, coffee or hot chocolate on the go all day.



## Whittling food safe utensils

Some basic bushcrafting is a great activity for groups to do together gathered around a firepit or campfire. The simplest form would be to whittle skewers from foraged sticks for marshmallows or Damper bread but if you have some very crafty participants spoons or bowls are also a possibility. Some food safe woods you might find around are Birch, Sycamore, Ash, Holly, Beech and Maple.

# Myths, fairy tales, legends and storytelling

Sharing stories around open fires is a long standing tradition across many cultures and societies and a perfect companion to nature connection. You'll find beautiful nature inspired stories from around the world that can be shared and thought about as you take a break or warm up after an activity. Or you can take a look at the symbolism of certain flowers and plants and encourage the sharing of knowledge or memories between the group. The internet is full of useful sites, google a topic and away you go.



## Fireside chats

Interaction between the group will happen naturally if all you do is facilitate people getting together by starting a fire, placing a few seats and extra fire logs close by and letting things take its natural course. People will be drawn to it and conversations will start whilst others might be happy for a quiet moment alone to reflect on their day whilst having a cuppa or toasting a s'mores.

## Looking for more ideas and inspiration?

- Cocoa Ceremonies – are an ancient ceremony that centres around the preparing and drinking of a pure form of chocolate. Ceremonies are typically led by a trained facilitator but courses are available online relatively cheaply.
- Wassail is a beverage made from hot mulled cider, ale or wine with spices. It is traditionally drunk at Christmastide as a Wassailing ritual to ensure a good harvest the following year but it is also a lovely way to celebrate the humble British apple. Why not combine it with a trip to a local community orchard or at harvest time to celebrate a good allotment crop.
- Why not take pancake day outdoors, they are simple to make, and nature has started to get going again by February so pancakes around a fire after a nature walk is a fun way to warm up. If time or outdoor equipment is a problem pre-make the pancakes and warm them up over the fire instead.

Download more activity ideas at:  
[cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-connection-toolkits](http://cheshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/nature-connection-toolkits)

## Top tip:

See our guide to creating a safe outdoor hub for more information including; portable handwashing ideas, seating options and fire safety kits.