



Male Call

Advice from a guy

Camping? Layer on those quilts

Q I'm a longtime reader, and I seem to remember a column about a girl who's reluctant to go camping with her boyfriend. I have a similar problem. I'd like to take my girl camping, but I know she's not very outdoorsy. She says she's willing to give it a try, but I don't want to force her into anything. My friends say she's just humoring me and will hate every second of it. Your thoughts?

A Well, there's camping, and then there's "camping." The first involves a backpack, freeze-dried beef stroganoff, topo maps and blisters. The second involves cramming as many of the small comforts of life — fresh

food, real wine glasses, deluxe Scrabble — into your SUV and driving to a campground with electricity, showers and maybe a swimming pool and setting up "camp."

For you, we recommend the latter. You'd be well-advised to ease her into the prospect of appreciating the great outdoors. For the newbie, that becomes easier if she's watching the alpenglow from a comfy lounge chair with a robust cabernet in her hand and a cheese plate on the table-clothed picnic table. With candles.

The column to which you refer was from a self-described four-star hotel kind of girl. We suggested that she give it a go and honestly try to appreciate the wonderment of nature, not to mention the aroma of fried Spam and eggs in the morning. And then it would be her turn to select the vacation spot, and he'll have to suck it up and enjoy a week at the Ritz on Maui.

We suggest you offer the same deal, taking turns with the vacation selection. Eventually, you'll each have compromised enough so that you'll be car-camping on Maui!

Here are a few tips to enhance your (her) wilderness experience:

■ **Sleeping arrangements.** A twig under a sleeping pad can be almost as uncomfortable as a pea under a stack of mattresses. Invest

in an **Aero Bed**, a heavy-duty air mattress that can be inflated with a battery-operated pump. Then, because it can get quite chilly outdoors at night — safety first! — layer it with blankets and quilts and down comforters, rather than using individual sleeping bags. Your bodies' heat will keep you toasty all night. (Guys, you can thank us later.)

■ **Electricity.** If the place has hot showers, it probably has power outlets in the bathrooms. Encourage your girl to bring along her accouterments — blow dryer, curling iron, etc. — if she uses that sort of thing. It might make her feel more at home lounging around the clothing-optional hot tubs.

■ **Food.** You'll need to revamp, or at least augment, your normal camping shopping list. Besides the beer, peppered beef jerky, Spam, beer, two-pound bag of peanut M&M's and beer on your list, buy lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, meat, bread, cheese, salsa, etc., and pack it all in coolers. Make a batch of chili ahead of time and freeze it. Thrifty bonus tip: As the block of chili slowly thaws in the cooler, it will also keep the beer cold.

Male Call answers questions from men and women on etiquette, relationships, men's style and more, at malecall@mercurynews.com.