"How long will my cooler hold ice?"

DOWN RIVER EQUIPMENT CO.

This is a great question and the answer depends on a myriad of factors.

We have compiled this list of tips to help you get the most out of your cooler.

#1 Cool Your Cooler

First and foremost your cooler should be cool when packing it. A lot of energy / ice is lost during the initial cooling of your ice chest. This is especially true with large coolers. The worst-case scenario is to pack your cooler after it has been sitting out in the sun or in a warm garage for an extended period of time. Try putting ice in your cooler the night before your trip before you pack it full of food. You will be amazed how much longer your cooler will keep ice when you start with it cold. Also, make sure you're starting with cold or frozen food.

#2 No Dead Space

Use as much as ice possible. There should be no dead spaces of air in your cooler. Pack that cooler to the brim with ice. You can also pack insulators such as foam or newspaper to take up some of this dead space.

#3 Access Denied

Open you cooler as little as possible. The more cold air that is allowed to escape, the faster your ice will melt. To help with this cold air loss, you should put a piece of closed cell foam on top of your food so that when the lid is opened less air escapes. Also, consider getting a small soft-sided cooler to keep drinks, snacks, etc. in which will help you limit your access during the day.

#4 Cubes or Blocks?

The type of ice you use will also determine how long it lasts. When picking out ice from your local retailer, select bags that are closer to the bottom of the freezer. The ice in these bags will be cooler than those on top and by the door. Block ice will last longer than cubed ice. You may want to freeze some jugs filled with water to create your own "block" ice. Then use the melted water in these jugs for drinking later in the trip.

#5 Coverage is Key

When on the river or at camp keep you cooler in the shade as much as possible. Consider covering the cooler with a foam pad. Wet burlap on top of the cooler makes a great insulator as well.

#6 Should I Drain?

This debate has been known to dissolve friendships faster than ice in a cheap big box store bought cooler. Maybe there is a right answer, but hey we are just rafters not geothermal scientists. So, we will leave this question alone.