

# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO STORING FOOD FOR A CRISIS

— ❄️ —  
SIMPLE TIPS AND TRICKS EVERY  
SURVIVOR NEEDS TO KNOW



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## Introduction

Knowing you need to store food and water in case of an emergency is one thing, but knowing how to store it is an entirely new ballgame. It isn't quite as simple as buying a couple cans of canned food and a case of bottled water and throwing it on the shelf in the basement. There is actually a right way and a wrong way to store food and water. In this book, you will discover some key rules to food and water storage as well as learn some tricks other preppers have come up with to help maximize space, money and most importantly, energy. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. Learn from other people's mistakes and make your food and water storage the best it can be.



The reasons for building up an adequate food storage vary from person to person. You don't have to be a "prepper" to want to create a backup plan for your family. In fact, the government has asked each person to have a 3-day supply of food on hand in the event of an emergency. While we know there is aid available and help is usually just a phone call away, there are times when emergency services are

overwhelmed. If there has been a hurricane, tornado or earthquake, roads may be impassable and help will be delayed. We have seen what happens when emergency services are delayed and people haven't prepared. One of the prime examples of what can happen when we don't prepare is Hurricane Katrina. That one episode in history was a wakeup call not only for regular folks, but for the government as well.

When disaster strikes, you may have to hunker down in your home for days. That isn't so bad when you have food and water. If you don't have food and water, your life is in jeopardy. Don't feel like you are being paranoid (even if you are) because you want to build up a supply of food that will keep your family alive. Quite frankly, it is pretty crazy NOT to have a backup plan.



## Budget

One of the biggest hesitations many people have about creating an emergency food storage is the cost. If you have traveled down the aisle in your grocery store where all those freeze-dried cans of food are, you may have been put off by the idea of building up a food supply that would last you several months or even a year. You may have decided you will take your chances or give up.



You don't have to take out a second mortgage. Unless you have thousands of dollars sitting around just waiting to be spent, you don't want to buy everything you need in a single day or even a single week or month. It is all about taking baby steps. Rome wasn't built in a day and your food storage isn't going to be either.

You would be doing yourself a major disservice if you tried to buy a 30-day supply of food in one grocery shopping trip. You can build up your storage by spending \$20 to \$50 a month on extra food. When you go to the store, buy 4 cans of soup instead of the 2 you normally buy. You would put 2 in your daily use pantry and 2 in storage. When you need to make a big purchase, like a 50-pound bag of flour or rice, then that is your budget for the month.

Beware of buying those 365-day packages of emergency food for a couple thousand dollars. These are all over the internet and while it may seem like a really great deal in theory, it isn't going to be tailored to your family's specific preferences. 700 packs of freeze-dried meals isn't really an ideal food storage. You are going to be forced to eat what somebody else has chosen for you. Wouldn't you rather pick your own food?

Always be on the lookout for really good deals. Buying in bulk is almost always cheaper.

However, do not buy commercial use cans and other products. Can your family really eat a 10-pound can of chili in a single setting? You will not have refrigeration and it isn't a good idea to eat food that hasn't been stored properly. Those giant jars of peanut butter may seem like a good idea in theory, but if you can't eat the entire jar within a 30-day period, it will be wasted. Buying bulk dried foods is different. You can open the bag and store it in a bucket to use as needed.

Look for case sales. This is an excellent way to get canned foods at really steep discounts. Your grocery store may hold one of these sales every couple of months. Save your money for a few months to put towards one of these case sales. Do the math before you start buying cases of food. Often times, places like Costco and Sam's Club sell cases of product that are actually more expensive than buying individual items. Don't get fooled by the idea of buying bulk is always cheaper. It isn't.

Coupons are another way to build up your food supply without spending a lot of cash. When you find those buy one get one free offers, take advantage of it. You may not want to go as far as some of the extreme coupon folks, but hey, they get some pretty awesome deals and are on the right track. Don't be afraid to take advantage of price match guarantees. If you can save the money—do it. You can put it towards buying more food or survival gear.

If you are simply not seeing room in your existing food budget to start putting a few things aside for your emergency food supply, then you need to take a good hard look at your budget. Try cutting out meals out and put the money saved towards your food supply budget. You only need to save about \$5 to \$10 a week to start building up those emergency stores. Don't get caught up in the big picture. Slow and steady wins the race!

## How Much Food and Water Do You Need?

### Food Rule—You can NEVER have too much food!

There is a formula you will want to use to calculate how much food and water you need to store for your family. The amount of food and water is going to vary from family to family based on the number of people in the family as well as the ages



and other special needs. There is often a misconception about eating during a survival situation. Many assume that because things are dire, you must live in a state of near starvation. This is a dangerous assumption! Quite frankly it is an unpleasant situation that if you don't have to put yourself in, why would you.

Sure you can technically live weeks without eating, but that doesn't mean you will be healthy or very happy.

Survival is hard work. You are going to need more calories than normal just to keep your muscles in good shape as well as give your body the energy it needs to keep going. You cannot afford to get sick in a survival situation. A body that has gone days or weeks without food is going to be frail and prone to injury and illness.

Let's talk food first. Now, this number is going to depend on the number of days you are attempting to store for. For the purpose of this exercise, we are going to go with 30 days. Assume each person in your family needs 2,000 calories to survive. Men, who are out there chopping wood and walking miles back and forth to retrieve water or hunt, are going to need more to really keep their body going. Women can usually get away with fewer calories, but storing a little extra food isn't going to hurt you. Children are okay around the 1,500 calorie mark, but kids appreciate snacks and several small meals throughout the day. For the sake of



argument and ease, let's say 2,000 calories per day.

A family of 4 will need 8,000 calories a day. One of the cans of freeze-dried food meals has a label that indicates each serving has 500 calories. Your family of four needs 8000 calories. In this particular can, there are 16 servings.  $16 \times 500 = 8000$ . If your family was to only eat that one particular food on a given day, you would need the entire can to provide the necessary calories for your family. Pretend you are only going to eat freeze-dried food for 30 days and you can deduce you would need at least 30 cans.

That is one way to figure your food needs. You could also use the old-fashioned, non-technical method of calculating 3 meals a day for 30 days for each member of the family. Sometimes, that is easier than trying to count calories. However, you want to make sure you are storing foods that are high in calories. Although most of us are always worried about counting calories to make sure we don't eat too many, in a survival situation the rules change. You want every calorie you can get.

Water--the all important water. You have to have it to survive. The bare minimum you want to store is 1 gallon of water for each family member per day. That is only enough water to keep the person hydrated, rehydrate food and maybe use a bit to brush their teeth. That is not enough water to bathe, wash dishes or wash clothes. Water is bulky and takes up a lot of space, but you have to find a way to store it or at least have access to a steady supply of water.

Now that you have an idea of how much food and water you need, you can start planning where you will store your food supply and how much you will store depending on the length of time you plan on surviving off your emergency stores. Don't set out with a goal of storing enough food to last your family a year. Start out with a goal of 30 days. Once you reach that, aim for 3 months and stair step it up. There isn't a cap. Once you reach a year's worth of food, just keep going.

## Food Storage Basics

There are some basic rules to food storage that you need to know. These are rules that will ensure your food is stored safely and will not rot before you ever get the chance to eat it. Although you may see freeze-dried foods with labels that indicate the food is good for a whopping 20 years; that is not always the case. The food is only good for that long when it is stored in optimal conditions. So what are optimal conditions and can you create those conditions in your home?

Ideally your food storage area should meet the following guidelines;

- No exposure to direct sunlight
- Not damp
- Ventilated properly to control humidity
- Temperature does not get above 80 degrees
- Temperature does not get below 50 degrees
- Food should not be stored near heat source i.e. heater vent, lights, windows
- Food should not be stored on the floor—blocks air circulation

Do you have a room in your house that meets all these requirements? You probably have a pretty good idea of where you want to store your food. If not, no worries, we will discuss some of the areas in your home that will make good food storage places.

Before we talk about where you are going to store your food, you need to pick a place that is easily accessible by you. If you can't get to your food storage easily, you are probably going to ignore or skip this next bit. A major part of your food storage is proper rotation.

The golden rule is FIFO. First In, First, Out. When you are stocking your food

storage, you do not want to pack the new items in the front. Take the time to pull the older items forward and place the newer items in the back. Each time you add new food to your storage, spend a few minutes checking labels. Now, some will tell you a “use by” date is just a guideline. That isn’t entirely accurate. The words “best by” tell you the food will taste best by a certain date, but it is still edible beyond that date. A “use by” date is telling you the food has expired and it should not be eaten. Some hardcore preppers will ignore all dates. It is personal preference, but if you notice any signs of spoilage, it is not worth the risk of developing food poisoning.

If you are storing canned food, it is absolutely crucial you check for signs the food has gone bad. Canned food can develop botulism. The following warning signs are indicators you should throw out a can of food.

- Swollen lid. It is pushed out rather than sucked in.
- Dented cans are risky. The dent creates rust, which can leech into the food inside the can.
- Any liquid seeping from the can is a warning sign.
- Upon opening the can a foul odor emits.
- Liquid is abnormally cloudy.
- Food is mushy and looks bad in general.

Many people like to can their own food from the garden to save some money. This is a great idea. However, home-canned food holds its own set of risks. Only use food that you yourself prepared or from somebody you trust. There are too many variables when it comes to eating home-canned foods from somebody you don’t know. You don’t know if they followed the proper procedures, if they washed the food beforehand and if they processed it correctly.

Additional warning signs that indicate food has spoiled are as follows.

- Lid doesn't "pop" when opened
- Lid bounces when pushed on the top
- Air bubbles can be seen rising to the top of the jar
- Mold can be seen on the food
- Discolored liquid

Typically, dried food will not spoil and become unsafe to eat. It may taste stale, but it doesn't pose any risks. However, if the food has somehow been exposed to moisture, there is the chance it will grow mold. If you open a package of anything and see mold, don't eat it. The rule of thumb is this; When in doubt, throw it out!

### **Securing the Shelves**

You are going to need shelves for your food and water storage. That is a fact you cannot get away from. Your shelves are going to be loaded with items that will keep your family alive in the event of some catastrophic event. You need to do whatever you can to ensure those shelves are secure and are not going to topple over potentially hurting you or a family member and destroying your food and water.

You have a couple of different options to securing your shelves to ensure they don't tip forward in the event of a natural disaster like an earthquake or from the blast of a bomb going off nearby.

### **Anchors**

Even if you don't think either one of the above scenarios will ever happen, if you have kids, you need to anchor your shelves to a wall. There are specially designed screws you can buy at your local hardware store to drill through the wall and into a beam that will hold a shelf in place. It absolutely must be anchored to a beam. If you have cement walls, there are screws for that as well.

## Shelf Guards

Once you have anchored your shelf to the wall, you want to make sure your food isn't going to topple off of the shelves. There are a number of different ways you can go about doing this. You can use a thin piece of wood, like a 1x6 or whatever the width of your shelving. Place the wood about one to two inches high across the shelf. This acts as a guard rail of sorts and will keep cans and bottles from rolling off the shelf if it does happen to move.



You can also use rope, thick wire or netting in front of the shelves. A falling can of chili can be fatal if you are crouched below. It doesn't take much to cause a can to fall from a shelf. A minor earthquake is all it takes to shake things up. You can buy netting at your local hardware store for a few dollars a roll. Hook the netting to the top of the shelf and roll it out to the bottom. Secure it in a way that you can remove it as needed to add more food or remove food.

Some metal shelves are designed with a small lip on the underside of the shelf. Technically, when you assemble the shelves, the edge is supposed to be facing the bottom, but if you assemble the shelves upside down, you have a nice little lip to help keep your items from sliding forward.

## Keeping Out Pests

Your food storage is going to be very enticing for some pests. Mice love food and their sharp little teeth allow them to get through cardboard and plastic very easily. They are a nuisance and can destroy a food storage in a matter of weeks. You

need to take some precautions to keep mice and other pests out of your food. Although some people don't mind picking around the part that was munched on, it isn't sanitary and can actually cause you to get sick.

Obviously mice can't get through cans and jars. They also cannot get through sealed 5-gallon containers. If you are storing boxes of noodles, bags of beans and other items that are at risk of being chewed on by mice, you will want to invest in some food-grade buckets with lids that seal. Store the items in the buckets and make sure the lid is on tight!

You can also help deter mice and other things like spiders and ants by adding some bay leaves to the bottom of your bucket. They don't like the smell and will avoid the food. You are probably going to be storing flour and flour-based products like pasta noodles. Flour is prone to weevils. The eggs are laid in the flour and with a little warmth and time, they hatch. The clear little carcasses and bugs can be seen in flour products. Again, some people are okay picking them out and if you were desperate, so be it, but if you could keep the eggs from hatching, wouldn't you rather do that?

Before adding any flour-based product, including flour, to your food storage, put it in the freezer for a couple of weeks. This will kill off those eggs and you can store your flour products without worrying about icky little bugs making it their home.

Another trick that has been proven to work is to use essential oils as pest deterrents. The strong scent of peppermint or orange oil is too much for mice and other pests. They will avoid the area. Buy a bottle of the essential oil of your choice and put a couple of drops on an old t-shirt that has been torn into shreds. Tie the material on the shelves to keep pests away. You will want to refresh the oil every week or two. It works and it makes your food storage smell fantastic!



You can also set out traps to reduce the pests. Ant-bait, mouse traps and some chemicals around the perimeter are all viable options. Do regular inspections of your food storage to look for signs of an infestation. It only takes a day or two for bugs to get in there and wreak havoc. If the infestation has become a serious problem, it is worth the cost of a professional pest control company to come in and help you take care of the problem. You are going to be investing hundreds of dollars into your food storage and it is unthinkable to let it all be destroyed by some pesky critters. Once a single mouse or ant finds your food, it becomes a problem.

## Where to Store Your Survival Cache

We have talked about a few places you can store your food around the house, but let's talk about keeping it all in one place. If you have the room, this is the ideal option. This makes it easy for you to inventory, add stock and rotate. You already know where you *don't* want to store your food, so let's discuss some places that will help you extend those shelf lives.

### Hiding Your Stores

Okay, you know you have seen the shows and read the blogs about preppers going to great lengths to hide their food stores. Do you really need to do that? The short answer is yes. You don't want to advertise the fact you have a mini grocery store in your basement or pantry. When it hits the fan, your house is going to be the first place people flock to, to ask for hand outs or attempt to take it. If you live in a crowded neighborhood, you should probably take the time to conceal your food storage. This isn't to say you need to build a bunker, but you will want to keep the majority of your food hidden from view if your home does happen to get raided. You probably don't want to tell every person you pass on the street what you have in your home. While it is important to talk about creating an emergency supply of food and water, you don't want to tell the world what you personally have.

### Hiding in Plain Sight

You can hide your food in plain sight, which is one of the easiest ways for those who don't have the time, inclination or funds to dig a fancy bunker. Stroll out to your garage. Do you have a bunch of boxes labeled "baby clothes" or maybe "Christmas decorations?" Would anybody really notice if you added a few more rubber totes with the same labels? No! You can put food in the totes, throw a strand of lights and garland on the top and put it on the shelf. Thieves and would-be looters are not going to waste their time digging through your old decorations and clothes. They are there to find food and useful gear for survival. They likely won't spend a lot of time going through every single box. Leave a few things in the pantry and cupboards. This will tell them they found all they were going to and they will move on.

You could also use this method in the basement, attic or in your closets. Just don't forget where you have the goods stored. You will still need to check them for spoilage and ensure they are properly rotated from time to time. Don't hide your food so well that you forget where you have put it!

### **Under the Bed**

While thieves do tend to look under the beds, they may not do so if their intent is to find food. There are plenty of rubber totes that are flat and designed to slide under the bed. Get dark-colored totes or tape white paper along the sides if you can only find the clear kind. If somebody happens to peer under the bed, all they will see is last year's winter clothes. You could also skip the cloaking methods and simply use the space under the bed as a canned food storage. You can get a hundred or more cans under the bed. Organize them so that the oldest cans are all facing one side and the new cans are placed on the opposite. This gives you rotation and hiding all in one. Don't forget to put a bed skirt on the bed to at least block your canned food from immediate view.

### **False Bottoms**

You can create false bottoms in your closets with buckets of food or a layer of canned food. You could even use rubber totes here as well. Fill the bucket or tub with food, seal the lid and place a piece of particle board over the top. Cover the board with your shoes, suitcases, purses or whatever. This gives you storage space as well as a secret hiding place. You can do this in each of your closets to truly maximize the space in your home.

**Real Prepper Stories:**

***“Installing a 6” wide shelf ABOVE the door inside the closet/s is often overlooked and valuable storage space is missed.”***

***R Carpe, (8/2013)***

### **Furniture**

Make an end table or coffee table out of a bucket and a piece of wood draped with

a pretty cloth. Fill the bucket with some of your food supply. If you are handy with wood, you could make a couple pieces of furniture that are hollow for you to store some of your food. Don't forget to maximize the space under the couch!

These ideas may seem a little extreme or ridiculous, but they work. There are plenty of preppers who simply don't have the room to devote to one beautiful food and water storage area. They have to get creative. If you take a look around your house, you are sure to find more places that can hold a few cans of freeze-dried food without being too obvious. It isn't only about concealing the food, but taking advantage of every nook and cranny you have. If you are going to distribute your food throughout the home, it helps if you devote each room to something specific. Your son's room may hold all the pasta, while your daughter's room holds the fruit and your room holds the bulk rice and beans. This makes it easier for you to remember what goes where without wasting time and energy trying to shove a can into your box of pasta.

### **Mylar Bags**

If you have read any blogs or talked with others who are storing food for emergency, the term Mylar bags has probably come up a time or two. Mylar bags vary in thickness and size. You can expect to pay anywhere from \$1 to \$4 per bag. Yes, they are a bit costly, but you can reuse them time and again. Buying by the case is always more cost effective. If you don't need 100 bags, consider selling the remaining to recoup some of your investment. They are very useful to food storage because they keep out oxygen when sealed. Oxygen is one of the enemies of food that will cause it to spoil. By eliminating oxygen, you are reducing the moisture exposure. The bags also keep out sunlight.

Some folks will try and convince you these bags are rodent proof. They are not! Mice are determined and a foil bag isn't going to keep them from getting the goods. Mylar bags are definitely a good idea for long term food storage, but they just need to be used properly. The best way to take advantage of the bags is by

placing them inside sealed 5-gallon buckets. You can add some of those little oxygen-absorber packets to soak up any moisture that may be trapped in the bag. This is the one way you can really stretch the shelf life on your food storage.

The bags are heat sealed. You can use a special tool that is similar to a foodsaver to do this or a standard clothes iron. Once you have packed the food in the bag, flatten it and then seal. Put the bags inside a bucket and you can easily store grains for 20 years this way.

## Basements



If everybody had a nice, roomy basement free of leaks and mold, the world would be a better place.

Storing food would be a breeze and we wouldn't have to worry about people coming to take what we have. But, this is the real world and not everybody has a basement. If you do, you are in luck. Basements are excellent food storage places. They are simply one of the best options for

storing food and water. The cool temperatures and lack of windows eliminate two of the biggest enemies of food. Install a fan to keep the ventilation optimal and make sure you do your part to control pests and you have an ideal food storage space. For a little added security, you could build a room in your basement specifically for storing your food. Adding a few 2x4s and sheetrock is really very simple. You could install a door with a lock to keep out prying eyes.

### Real Prepper Stories:

*"In the back of the basement pantry, I noticed several jars of tomatoes and meat that were canned in 1984 by my mother who passed away in 1999. I opened them, smelled, and tasted. All was good."*

Mark B. (5-28-13)

## **Root Cellars**

Root cellars have kind of gone away in the last few decades as people lean more on processed food rather than trying to store fresh fruits and vegetables from their gardens. However, if you happen to have one in the backyard, take advantage of it. You could also have one built. The root cellar is a lot like a basement. You don't have to worry about temperature control or the sun's rays speeding up the decay of your food. You can store fresh fruits and vegetables for several months in a root cellar. Build some shelves and add your other food. As with a basement, you will want to make sure the cellar is ventilated, especially during the wet season. A root cellar does not need a floor. Ideally, a dirt floor will ensure the food stays cool. Root crops like onions, carrots and potatoes should be left unwashed and placed in the cellar. Apples should be stored so that air can circulate between the fruit. Avoid piling a bunch of food in a gunnysack. This will cause decay because of the lack of air flow between the fruits and vegetables.

## **Bunkers**

Another prepper dream is an underground bunker that will hide them and their food storage from the world. While these are ideal for some, they are not feasible for those who don't own their own property. Bunkers will have to have some kind of ventilation system, which makes them a pretty good place to store food and water. You won't have to worry about sunlight and extreme heat either. Space could be an issue if you have a small bunker. One of the latest trends is to purchase old railroad cars and bury them in the ground. This will work as long as you seal the car. You will need to store the food as if it were in the basement. Use oxygen-absorbers to extend your shelf lives.

## **Pantry**

The good old pantry. Everybody has a pantry. If you don't have one, they are fairly easy to construct. You could even transform a spare bedroom into your food storage pantry. You will need to pay attention to things like sunlight and the temperature of a room. Ventilation is typically already taken care of with the



construction of the home. Put some blackout curtains on the window if you are using a spare room and you can cut down on the heat and sunlight streaming through the window and threatening to destroy your food storage. If you are using a pantry space, do your best to keep your emergency food stores separated from your daily food use. While you can always “borrow” from your emergency supplies, you don’t want to make it a habit. When things go sideways, you don’t want to be left with a depleted food storage because of excessive borrowing and a “I’ll replace it later” mindset.

**Real Prepper Stories:**

*“The oldest canned food I have eaten was in 1982 in basic training, WE got 1 case of 1945 C-rations. We all had to try it ,it was just fine no1 could tell the difference.”*

*Cryptkeeper, 3-28-14*

## What Food Should You Store

One of the toughest questions preppers face, is what food should you store? The answer is pretty simple. **Store what you eat today.** If your family loves peanut butter and jelly, load up on the stuff. Of course in order to enjoy peanut butter and jelly, you are going to have to find a way to make bread. That means you are going to need the ingredients for that. This is how you build up a food supply that your family will actually enjoy eating. Take a look at what your typical menu is for a given week. If you are ambitious, look at 2 weeks' worth of meals. Write down what meals you typically serve. Write down the snacks the kids eat as well. This is where you start to build up your food storage from.

Once you have made a list of the meals, you need to start looking at each of the ingredients necessary to make those meals. Remember, there isn't going to be a store for you to run to and grab a gallon of milk or a loaf of bread. In a survival situation, you are thrown back a hundred years and will be forced to do things the old-fashioned way. This is why those freeze-dried meals are so handy! Add a bit of water and voila! You have an entire meal ready to go without a lot of mixing and attempting to cook over an open fire.

The following lists are some of the standard fare you will find in most food storages. With these items, you can prepare a variety of meals for your family that will keep them full and essentially happy with what is on the table. Keep in mind; cooking from scratch is something that takes a little training. You will want to read through recipes before it hits the fan and familiarize yourself with how to cook from scratch. It would be a good idea to print out recipes that use the items in your food storage. If you have never made bread without yeast, hunt down a recipe and add it to a binder with other recipes that will use your dehydrated dairy products and dried grains.

## Grains

Grains are going to be a staple in the survival food diet. Think back to the pioneer days or how the Native Americans survived. Flat breads give the body food and require very little preparation. You can make all kinds of meals with grains. You absolutely must focus a great deal of your time and money into creating a healthy supply of grains in your food storage. Your best bet would be to store a variety of grains. It can get pretty tiresome eating wheat day and day out. Not to mention, most people's digestive systems would revolt to eating freshly ground wheat several times a day, every single day.

- Hard winter wheat—best for making breads, lasts for 30+ years, high in protein
- Soft wheat-better for pastas
- Rolled oats-Desserts, breakfast, granola bars, thickener for stews and soups
- Cornmeal-Breading for fried items, hushpuppies, bread
- Brown and White rice-meals, pudding and thickening agent
- White flour-breads, cakes, gravies



## Dairy

Children need calcium as do adults. While dairy products are next to impossible to actually include in a long-term food storage pantry, these powdered varieties can replace the daily dairy needs in the diet. Plus, they make food taste a little better!

- Powdered butter—additional flavor
- Powdered cheese—pastas, potatoes
- Instant milk-tastes most like “real” milk, great for drinking
- Powdered milk-best for cooking

- Powdered eggs-eating for breakfast or used in recipes

\*\*\*\*Beware of storing canned milk. The shelf life is limited. You can expect 6 months at the very most for canned milk.\*\*\*\*\*

## Vegetables

Veggies may not be at the top of you or your kids' list of favorite foods, but we need them. They give us valuable vitamins and minerals our bodies need to stay healthy. Without veggies, our muscles get weak and you will experience cramps. Cramps are ten times worse when you HAVE to walk to get water or to find wood for your fire. They are essential to promoting a healthy immune system as well.

- Canned veggies are great for eating alone
- Freeze-dried vegetables are great for cooking
- Dehydrated vegetables best used in soups and stews

### Real Prepper Stories:

*“Actually, I have dried fruits and vegetables and then charged them with a vacuum sealer. It has lasted up to 18 years for me. Possibly longer I just had to open them to find out how they tasted. My life experience.”*

*Terry B., Ohio (9/01/2013)*

## Fruits

Choose fruits that your family eats today. Fresh fruit will likely be in short supply after a major disaster. Our bodies need fruit and children will appreciate the burst of natural sugars. Fruits like blueberries and raspberries can also help keep your immune system strong, which is extremely important in a survival situation. The natural fiber in fruit is also important.

- Canned fruits are high in sugar
- Freeze dried fruits are best reconstituted in a salad

- Dehydrated fruits can be eaten as is for a quick snack

## **Meats**

You may think you are some great hunter, but hunting takes a lot of work and you probably won't have a freezer to store all the meat in. Having a nice supply of canned meats on hand will satisfy that carnivorous craving while giving you something to add substance to your daily meals.



- Tuna—sandwiches or casseroles
- Sardines, salmon and other fish
- Chicken—plain, in sandwiches, in casseroles
- Beef—used to make hash, sandwiches

## **Legumes**

Meat will likely be in short supply in a survival situation. Hunting requires a great deal of energy and there is no guarantee you will be successful. You need a backup plan. Our bodies need protein and beans are one of the best ways to get it. Dried beans can store for 20+ years and are extremely affordable. They are filling and pack a lot of nutrients.

- Red beans-excellent addition to soups and stews
- Pinto beans—eaten with biscuits, baked or refried and rolled into tortillas
- Navy beans-soups

## Spices

You may not think a little salt is all that important when you are really hungry, but some of the freeze-dried foods are extremely bland. Salt is extremely cheap so why not store it if you can make your life a little easier when everything else is falling apart? The other spices can help add flavor to a plain bean soup or stew.

- Salt
- Pepper
- Italian seasoning or individual; oregano, cilantro, parsley
- Garlic
- Steak seasoning
- Bay leaves
- Paprika



## Baking

Baking is going to be a pretty common practice when you have to make everything from the ingredients in your pantry. You probably won't have an oven, but if you have planned ahead and have a solar oven or a gas stove, you can make some pretty tasty dishes—if you have the right ingredients.

- Baking soda
- Baking powder
- Yeast—will only store for a year in prime conditions
- Cooking oil
- Lard/shortening



## Ready-To-Eat

The next list includes foods that are ready-to-eat and can be stored for a year or two in your food storage. While they may not have the extensive shelf life of the above raw ingredients, they are just as important to any food storage.

- Peanut butter
- Sugar
- Energy bars
- Granola bars
- Nuts
- Cereal
- Crackers
- Canned soups
- Canned chili
- Pastas

## Luxuries

The next list covers the little luxuries in life that we take for granted every day. It is almost incomprehensible to imagine life without stores and readily available food products that we depend on. There are plenty of us out there with some addictions



to let's say coffee or chocolate. That will send a shiver of fear down anybody's spine. A life without caffeine?! When you look at this list, you will discover the items are actually fairly inexpensive. Stock up on these items! They will become very valuable when stores are no

longer an option. You can use a bottle of alcohol or a can of coffee to barter for something else you need. Bartering will be the new tender. Those who have plenty

of items to barter will be elevated to the richest members of the new society.

- Chocolate; powder, bars and syrup, it stores for years
- Coffee
- Tea
- Hard candy
- Alcohol
- Powdered juice mixes
- Honey
- Pudding mixes
- Popcorn

#### **Real Prepper Stories:**

*"Last night I dug out one - not sure when it was made, but from the design of the MH printing on the pouch and the price (still on the label), I would say it is at least 20 years old, maybe 30.*

*It was a pouch of beef stroganoff. I opened it up, put some really hot water in it, and ten minutes later I ate for my dinner. It was just fine."*

*Cryptkeeper, 3-28-14*

#### **Special Items**

There are some other items you may use today because of a family member has an allergy or has a restricted diet. You will need to consider these needs in a survival situation. If you are planning on harboring your aging parents or your sister and her young family, it is best to take steps today to prepare for their needs. You will also need to consider your pet if you plan on keeping him around.

- Baby formula
- Baby food
- Dog food

- Cat food
- Sugar substitute

### **Personal Items**

Your food storage will also include some of those other vitally important details that we really love. Things like toilet paper will be some of the first to fly off the shelves after a disaster. While it isn't necessarily a requirement to survive, it is certainly something we have really come to appreciate. While you are building up your food storage, do your best to build up a nice supply of the following as well.

- Toilet paper
- Toothpaste
- Toothbrushes—with no dentists, dental hygiene will be very important
- Feminine hygiene products
- Soap
- Shampoo
- Laundry soap—you can also learn to make your own for a huge cost savings
- Dishsoap—sanitation is important
- Razors
- Hand sanitizer

Don't forget to create a well-stocked first aid kit as well. If you have the space, keep it with your emergency food stores. This makes sure everything is kept together. If you

have to bug out, you can do so quickly without ransacking the house trying to grab this and that from your food stores.



## **The Little Things of Food Storage**

Having a plentiful stock of canned foods or hard grains means nothing if you can't use them. There are a lot of little things in the kitchen right now that you don't even think twice about. When you are creating a food storage, you have to analyze every little detail. This list will help you stock the tools you need to make your food stores usable.

- Hand grain mill—grinding wheat to turn into flour.
- Manual can opener
- Sharpening stone to keep knives sharp
- Campstove and fuel
- Hand crank blender
- Hand beater
- Plastic bucket opener—some of the buckets are extremely difficult to open
- Solar stove

# Freeze-Dried, Canned or Dehydrated?

Should you store freeze-dried, canned or dehydrated foods? Is one better than the rest? You are going to discover everybody has an opinion on this topic. What it boils down to is what works best for you and your family's needs. There are pros and cons to each and we are going to discuss those here. Ideally, a nice mixture of freeze-dried and canned foods is ideal with a handful of dehydrated foods to take along on expeditions to find food and water.

## Freeze-Dried

Hands down, freeze-dried tends to be the favorite among preppers. There are plenty of reasons why and only one real reason why not.

Pros:

- Large variety of fruits, vegetables and meals available
- Stores for years, decades even
- Requires very little water to reconstitute
- Lightweight and easy to pack if necessary
- Retains majority of nutritional value of the food
- Has the best flavor



Cons:

- Cost—Can be very expensive, as much as \$60 for a single can of food

## Dehydrated

Dehydration is another option for storing a variety of foods. It is something that has been around for centuries and can even be used when there is no electricity.

Drying food with the sun's solar energy is an efficient way to preserve food even in a post-apocalyptic situation. Let's look at the pros and cons to storing dehydrated foods.

### Pros:

- Can be done at home with food from the garden
- Fairly inexpensive
- Lightweight and easy to carry in backpacks
- Can be eaten as is, without reconstituting
- Can be stored for years

### Cons:

- Dehydration removes all the water from a food, which leaves it lacking in nutritional value
- Takes a long time to reconstitute
- Taste is not as good as freeze-dried or canned foods

### Real Prepper Stories:

*"I think some of it may depend on how you made the jerky. I cut really thin slices and hang it up to dry- that's it. I had some I forgot about because of a move and ate it 10 years later- still okay 😊."*

*Crockett, 10-4-09*

## Canned

Canned foods tend to be another favorite among those building up a food storage supply.

### Pros:

- Widely available at local grocery stores



- Inexpensive and available in bulk for further cost savings
- No water necessary to make food edible
- No heating or cooking necessary
- Stores for a couple of years
- Lots of flavor

Cons:

- Heavy and not ideal for carrying in bags
- High in sodium, which can be dangerous when water is sparse
- Risk of food poisoning from old or improperly stored food

**Real Prepper Stories:**

*"We just had chicken home canned in 2/09 in last night's chicken and dumplings. I'm still here doing just fine. Going to eat it again for lunch. And that is bone in home canned chicken. Five years and we still have half a dozen more from that year. We ate another quart jar last week with 2009 rice stored in a juice bottle under the bed."*

*Nutty Old Geezer, Texas (2-9-14)*

Now that you see all of the pros and cons to each type of food, you can make a more informed decision. While you may not feel taste is going to be an important factor when it comes to surviving, it truly is. Food that tastes good gives us a sense of comfort. When things are chaotic, sitting down and eating something that tastes good and reminds us of the way things were can go a long way to settling the mind and giving you a little peace. Do your best to create a varied supply of food that will afford you the luxury of changing things up from time to time. Eating canned beans for 30 days straight will not only wreak havoc on your digestive system, but you will never want to see another bean for as long as you live. Convincing your children that they have to eat canned spinach to survive isn't going to be easy either.

## **Home-Made Survival Foods**

One of the main goals of most preppers is to be self-sufficient. That is a skill that takes years to hone. Because of this, many preppers practice their gardening skills and food preservation skills way in advance of an actual shutdown. With all of that practice, you are going to likely have a plethora of fruits, veggies and meat if you are getting into the hunting thing. You can save hundreds, possibly thousands of dollars on commercial food by doing the preservation yourself. Even if you don't grow your own food, you can take advantage of farmer's markets and neighbor's generosity. Buying fresh produce in bulk is often much cheaper than buying the same foods canned or dehydrated.

Raising your own animals as a food source is another way you can be self-sufficient. The meat you get from harvesting chickens, cows or pigs can be used to round out your emergency food storage. The possibilities are endless. When you set your mind to it, you can make anything you would typically buy in the supermarket. Welcome to the pioneer days!

### **Canning Instructions**

You can home-can nearly anything! Often times, you will discover that the strawberry jam you prepared in your kitchen often tastes ten times better than the stuff you buy in the store. What's even better is you know exactly what is in the jam. You don't have to worry about various preservatives and what not being thrown in for extra flavor. It is sweet, natural goodness prepared with love.

By far, fruit is the easiest and safest to can in your kitchen. You don't have to worry so much about the fruit spoiling and becoming unsafe to eat. You don't need a pressure canner either. A water bath will process the fruit and seal the jars making them safe to eat for years to come. Of course, you will need to follow the guidelines established by the government. They are there to keep you safe.

Vegetables require a little more care in canning. You will need a pressure cooker to properly can all vegetables. Process times are not to be fooled around with. You need to follow them to the letter to avoid the vegetables from spoiling. Certain



veggies, like tomatoes, require special handling. However, once you have done your research, you can do a lot of great things with the excess tomatoes from your garden. Spaghetti sauce, tomato sauce and tomato paste are all very useful items to have in your food storage. Potatoes

are extremely difficult to can and because of their low-acidity, they are simply not safe to can.

Meat can certainly be canned, but it is one of those items you will have to handle carefully. There are plenty of risks to canning meat, but it can be done. Don't experiment and bend the rules. It simply isn't worth the risk.

Home-canned food is good for about 1 to 2 years in optimal circumstances. However, there are plenty of people who eat their home-canned food for years. It is one of the personal preference things. Just look for signs of spoilage. If it looks good and smells good, it is probably fine.

There are many stories from folks who have opened canned food that was over 25 years. Our grandmas were master canners and it isn't unheard of to go into old woman's basement and find canned peaches and beans from the 1980s.

**Real Prepper Stories:**

*“Chesapeake Boy says: I can tell you that when my grandmother died in 2005, we opened some of the best canned carrots and green beans that I have ever eaten... they were canned in 1976.”*

*Chesapeake Boy, Maryland (8-27-2011)*

**Dehydrating**

Dehydration is an excellent way to preserve fruits and vegetables. And, quite frankly, it is a lot easier than canning. You will need a dehydrator. There are varying sizes and styles for you to choose from. Buy one that includes a pan for making fruit leather. You know those fruit roll-ups your children love? You can make your own in a dehydrator. It is important the food you dehydrate is thoroughly dried before storing. You can store your food in a Mylar bag, a mason jar with a lid or a vacuum sealed plastic bag. Keep a close eye on the dehydrated food. Look for signs of moisture inside the container. Any condensation is a warning sign. Mold growth is another major clue. You can add oxygen absorbers into the containers to help keep the food fresh and dry.

Fruits contain more moisture than veggies. Because of this, dehydrated fruit will have a shorter shelf life than vegetables. Many preppers preserve food from the gardens to last them until the harvest next year. A year is the ideal shelf life, but if it is completely dry and stored correctly, you can push that to two years.

**Real Prepper Stories:**

*“I have dehydrated veggies for over 17 years now. Have chowed down on Mason Jar, vacuum-packed veggies that were over 15 years old. Tasted great and as most university research says, plenty more nutrition than canning.”*

*Jack, Alaska (8-27-2011)*

With that said, there are always those pioneers who have hands-on knowledge. This person blows away the idea that dehydrated food is no good after a year: Check out this chart from the USDA about long term storage of canned and dehydrated foods. This proves why where you store is extremely important!

The USDA states: "Each 5.6 C. (10.08 F) drop in temperature doubles the storage life of the seeds."	
Temperature	Years
37.6	40
48.4	30
59.2	20
70.0	10
80.8	5
91.6	2.5
102.4	1.25

### Jerkying

If you have a meat source that can get you some great prices on meats or you hunt, you can make jerky. Jerky is delicious and full of the protein you need. You can basically make jerky out of most meat. Take the time to learn about which cuts work best to make jerky. Experiment with different seasonings to create one that suits your personal tastes.



You can buy a smoker or make one out of an old refrigerator. You will find different types of wood chips like applewood or mesquite that give your smoked meat a different flavor. As with dehydrating food, it is crucial you completely dry the meat to avoid it spoiling. Jerky will be one of those luxuries that people crave when things are in chaos.

Jerky is great, but it is not one of those things that stores long term very well. If it isn't dry enough, it will spoil, if it is too dry, you will rip your teeth out trying to eat. You have to walk a fine line. However, if you have made up a batch of jerky, store it in a sealed mason jar. Depending on the thickness of the meat and how dry the meat is, you can stretch the shelf life for a couple of years. The trick is to remove as much of the fat as possible. Don't put it in the freezer. This adds moisture to the jerky that you do not want.

*Crockett says: 10-4-09)*

#### **Real Prepper Stories:**

*"We've made some of our own (jerky) that has lasted better than five years, probably closer to six, and I think it could have gone longer."  
Gallo Pazzesco, California (4/25/10)*

### **Drying Spices**

If you are practicing your garden skills, you have probably tried growing fresh herbs. In fact, you don't even have to have a garden to grow herbs. You can grow them in a windowsill or on a sunny patio. Herbs are prolific! They are extremely easy to grow and require very little attention. Even the worst gardener can enjoy fresh herbs all year round. When you grow more than you can use, which is very common, you can start drying them. Drying spices is a cost-effective way to supply your food stores. It is incredibly easy to dry them and during the drying process, your home will smell fantastic!

To dry herbs like cilantro, oregano, dill and others, harvest shoots from the main plant. Tie a string around the bottom and hang the bunch upside down in your pantry or other dry, dark spot. It takes about 2 weeks for the herbs to dry completely. Once they have dried, remove the string and crumble the plants into Ziploc bags or jars. Seal and store! You can also use your dehydrator to dry your herbs overnight.

Many of your herbs, like dill and oregano, will produce seed heads that are just as valuable to the flavoring of food. When the plant produces flowers, leave them on until they dry out and create seed heads. Dill seed is an excellent addition to soups, stews and potato dishes. Oregano seeds are referred to as coriander. Coriander is used in a variety of recipes.

These seed heads can also be used to plant more herbs for a continuous cycle of fresh herbs without ever having to buy new seeds. If you are growing herbs in the garden, you will discover they can become a little overwhelming. Some herbs, like chives, can overtake a small space in very little time.

### **Heirloom Seeds**

A food storage is not complete without a way to replenish it. It isn't always feasible to store enough food to last your family for a year or more. There are some scenarios that could leave the world in a state of complete and total disruption for several years. It may take months and years for commerce to be restored. During that time, people will have to know how to get their own food. Hunting game will only satisfy a small portion of your daily diet. You have to know how to garden and you have to have seeds with which to plant fruits and vegetables. From the fruits and vegetables you do grow, you need to be able to propagate the seeds to plant more food. It is the only way survival can truly work.

Before you run out and buy hundreds of packets of those inexpensive seeds at your local hardware store, you need to understand they are not what you need.

You need to pay a little extra and buy what are known as heirloom seeds.

Heirloom seeds are the only kind that will produce fruits and vegetables with seeds that can be used to plant more producing plants. The inexpensive seed packs you tend to see on store shelves are not heirloom. The seeds in the vegetables that are produced will not go on to produce more food. You may certainly get a plant from the seed, but the plant will not produce edible fruits and vegetables.

Growing a garden from heirloom seeds will give you fresh new seeds every year.



You will soon have more seeds that you can use. These extra seeds can be sold or traded to your neighbors. They will prove invaluable in a post-disaster world.



### **Sprouting Seeds**

You will also want a nice supply of sprouting seeds to supplement your daily diet. Things like alfalfa and broccoli sprout seeds should be stored along with your heirloom seeds. Sprouts are incredibly easy to cultivate and provide a

great deal of nutrition. All it takes is a little water and about 10 days for the tiny seeds to sprout into an edible food. Use the sprouts in salads or eat plain.

The seeds are sold in bulk and a spoonful of the seeds can fill a bowl with sprouts. Eating sprouts is one way to get vital vitamins, minerals and nutrients while you are waiting for your broccoli and beans to grow. During the winter months, sprouting seeds ensures you are still getting enough dietary fiber and that all important dose of vegetables on a daily basis.

The following chart shows the approximate shelf life of various foods when they are stored properly. These shelf lives only apply to food that is not exposed to moisture, sunlight or extreme heat.

Dried Beans	8 to 10 years
Hard grains i.e. wheat and corn	15 to 20 years
White Rice	8 to 10 years
Brown Rice	1 to 2 years
Soft Grains i.e. oats, rye, barley	8 years
Dehydrated Fruits	10 to 15 years



Dehydrated Vegetables	8 to 10 years
Flour and other ground wheat, cornmeal, wheat flour	5 years
Pasta	10 to 15 years
Dried Dairy	5 to 10 years
Sprouting Seeds (alfalfa have an 8 year shelf life)	2 to 3 years
Heirloom Seeds	2 to 3 years

As you can see, you can spend years building a food storage without worrying about it going bad. This is how people manage to accumulate a year's worth of food. Buying in bulk and spending a little extra time creating an ideal storage place is the key to making your emergency survival storage last for years to come. Ultimately, spending a few dollars investing in the right equipment and tools will save you money in the long run.

### **Tools for Preparing Emergency Food at Home**

- Mylar Bags—Cases are available in 1-gallon and 5-gallon sizes
- Oxygen absorbers—silica bags
- Excalibur Dehydrator—a little more expensive but well worth the money!
- Presto Pressure Canner—Best value for the money
- Mason Jars—quart and pint
- Canning lids and bands—large-mouth and small-mouth depending on size of jars
- Jar remover for canning
- Funnel, strainer, corer, ladle
- Food preservers i.e. pectin, vinegar
- Foodsaver
- Smoker for making jerky without a dehydrator
- Foodsaver wide-mouth jar sealer
- 5-gallon food grade buckets

## Food Storage Tips and Tricks

Every person you talk to who has been working diligently towards an adequate food storage will likely tell you a special trick they use or one of their secrets to making food storage a little easier. You can learn a lot from other people and make your own food storage that much better. Pick and choose what works for you and tweak these tips to suit your family's needs.

\*To reduce the amount of oxygen in a bucket in which you will be storing food, drop in a small chunk of dry ice. As the dry ice evaporates, it basically eats up all of the oxygen in the bucket. No oxygen means no moisture to damage your stored food. The Co<sub>2</sub> that evaporates displaces the oxygen. You can use this trick in Mylar bags as well.

\*Dry canning is one of the latest and greatest tricks for preppers. It involves using Mason jars, preferably the quart jars and using them to store flour, oatmeal, rice and beans. Put the bags of product in the freezer overnight. Pull the food out and allow it to reach room temperature. Fill the quart jars close to the top. Turn on the oven to 275. Put the jars in the oven for an hour without the lids. Remove the jars and put new lids and clean bands on the jars. Allow the jars to sit on the counter until you hear the tell tale “pop” that indicates the lid has sealed. Store the jars in your food storage.

\*Avoid “food fatigue” by storing a variety of foods. Eating the same food day in and day out will have you wishing you would have stocked more toilet paper. Your body was not meant to live on the same food every single day.

## What to Eat First?

You have all that lovely food just sitting there waiting for a disaster. When disaster strikes, should you rip into your freeze-dried instant meals or go for some canned beans? The answer is neither. You want to eat the food in your refrigerator and freezer first. There are plenty of foods that you keep in the fridge, like fresh fruits and veggies, that don't technically need refrigeration. Eat those before you dig into the canned stuff. Any meat you have in the freezer can be cooked up or if you have done your homework and you know how to preserve meat with nothing more than the sun's rays—go for it. Only do that if you know what you are doing.

Once you have exhausted your refrigerator and freezer, go for the boxes of food that have short shelf lives. You probably have food in your pantry that you expected to eat before things went sideways. Eat anything that will not last for a while.

Then and only then, do you want to start digging into your emergency food stores. Home-canned foods should be eaten before commercially canned foods. However, that isn't to say you live off of homemade strawberry jam and ignore the canned beans and chili. You want to have a well-rounded diet. The idea is to consume the foods that won't last for years and save the stuff that will be good for several decades.

## Conclusion

As you get going on your own food and water storage, you are probably going to discover there are even more ways to make your system a little easier and suitable for your family. Don't put off storing food and water for an emergency. You just never know when disaster may strike. It may be in the form of Mother Nature, an act of terrorism or financial collapse. Nobody can plan or predict these things. When you are prepared to whether the storm, you feel better and don't have to worry about feeding your family. In a world of chaos, that can bring you a great deal of peace and comfort. It gives you the time and energy to focus on more important things like securing your shelter and enjoying the moments you do have.

Storing food and water isn't crazy. In this day and age, job loss or a major medical issue can send your family into survival mode. When your family's finances take a major hit, you will be able to survive on the food you have stored. When people talk about preppers preparing for an event that is unlikely to happen, they are not seeing the big picture. Nothing in this life is guaranteed. Knowing you have a backup plan that ensures your family has the basic necessities of life is a lot like having a million dollar insurance policy.

Don't delay a minute longer. Sit down and start planning how you will create an emergency food storage. Start working it into the budget today. Work on clearing a space in your home and making the shelves needed to hold your food stores. Plan on dedicating at least an hour a week to developing your emergency food and water storage so you are prepared for whatever the future may hold.