

The Prepper's Food Storage Checklist

By M.D. Creekmore

When it comes to storing enough food to survive, unassisted and on your own for three six-months or a full year or even longer, is the point where most new preppers get overwhelmed and some even give-up all together. And while I agree that storing and rotating such a large amount of food on a continuing basis can be a lot of work and takes dedication, it is by no means impossible, and if done right can even be enjoyable.

But where do you start? You should start with the basics first wheat (or other grains, for those who have trouble with wheat), rice, beans, oats, corn, salt, honey, cooking oil and powdered milk.

Wheat

This is the backbone of your survival diet. Wheat is nature's longest storing seed, with an indefinite shelf life given proper storage conditions. The wheat (and other grains) can also be sprouted, adding fresh greens to the diet even in winter.

Rice

Rice is my favorite storage foods and I actually prefer rice over wheat for storage, but that's a personal decision, and well I like rice and rice dishes. White rice stores better and has a longer shelf-life than brown rice; however brown rice has more nutritional value. Despite the trade-off in storage duration, I still prefer brown rice for storage because of the added nutritional value.

Beans

Beans, corn and rice combined make a complete food, providing just about everything you need to survive. Add some fresh green sprouts or garden produce and extra vitamin C just to be sure you're getting enough to avoid scurvy, and you'll be well fed and healthy.

I like to store a combination of pinto beans, black beans and mung beans. How much you store of each will depend on your personal preferences to taste.

Oats

Don't go overboard when storing oats, about 20 pounds per adult per year is plenty. Oats have a storage life of approximately four to six years, depending on storage conditions and whether or not they have been opened after being packaged for long-term storage.

Corn

Corn equals cornmeal, cornbread, cornmeal mush, corncakes, and a huge list of other foods that you can prepare using the seed. I store whole corn because it stores much better and with at least double the shelf-life of cracked corn.

Salt

While not a food but a mineral, salt is none the less essential to the diet and individual health. Salt is also used in the preservation of food and animal products. Salt, like wheat, has an indefinite shelf life. Store at least 10 pounds of iodized salt per person, per year.

It's also a good idea to stock-up on salt-blocks to attract game animals for future harvesting. You can find these in the sporting goods stores and other outlets that sell to hunters. You can also get these through your local farmers co-op, where they sell them for domestic livestock supplementation.

Honey or Sugar

As a sweetener honey makes an unequalled contribution to the diet. Honey, like wheat and salt, has an indefinite self-life. Store at least 10 pounds per person. If the honey hardens and crystallizes, heat it slowly in a double boiler to reconstitute.

Cooking Oil

There is some controversy as to which is best for storage in the preppers pantry, vegetable oil or olive oil, while both will work fine and you should stock up on the one that you like best. I recommend putting away, 10 quarts, per person, per year.

Powdered Milk

Most people turn their nose at the thought of powdered milk, preferring whole milk from the supermarket shelf. Granted it does have a slightly different taste, but it's not unpleasant to drink, and after a week or two it seems to "grow" on you. Studies have shown that nonfat powdered milk, when packaged (nitrogen-packed) and stored properly has a storage life of 20 years or more.

Stockpiling Hard To Store Foods

I prefer to buy those hard-to-store long-term items like powdered milk, dry margarine, butter powder, buttermilk powder, cheese powder, shortening, and powdered eggs prepackaged for long-term storage in #10 metal cans, from Augason Farms or other reputable survival food vendors.

Supermarket Canned Foods

Canned foods from the supermarket have many advantages when it comes to food storage, they have a decent shelf-life on average of 2-5 years for most products, (note: shelf-life means that the foods retain 100% of their listed original nutritional value up until that point – store bought canned foods remain edible, far past the listed expiration dates in most cases).

As long as the cans aren't bulging, rusted through or punctured and the foods smell fresh, upon opening then I would not hesitate to eat canned goods that are far past their listed expiration date. But that is a personal choice and one you'll have to make yourself, when the decision is needed.

Store bought canned foods have several advantages over freeze-dried or dehydrated foods, including cost and calories contained per serving. Another advantage is that canned foods already, have their own water supply for preparation, so there is no need to use any potable water from your storage.

Despite the advantages of canned foods over freeze-dried and dehydrated foods, canned goods do have some disadvantages in comparison, like, weight, space needed for storage, and shelf-life.

I like to include a combination of the basic foods like wheat, rice and beans, store bought canned foods and certain "packaged for long-term storage" foods that are hard to store like powdered milk from one of the reputable survival food vendors...

All canned foods should be dated using a permanent marker and rotated on a FIFO (first-in-first-out) basis. I suggest that you build a rotating canned food shelf that will automatically rotate your canned foods when added and pulled from the shelf.

Always keep a note pad beside the shelf or in your kitchen, and write down every item that you take from the shelf and then take the note with you on your next trip to the supermarket, and then buy and restock the items that you've taken from the shelf, that way you always have a fully stocked shelf and a fresh supply.

Don't Forget the Can Opener:

Sure you could use a knife, but a manual can opener is easier and safer – so whatever else you do, don't forget the can opener. Buy several or the strongest made ones that you can find.

Other Foods

After you get the basic foods listed above in the needed proportions (see below), it is a simple matter to add other foods as you get the extra money.

Canned meats: We all know that SPAM is the preppers go to for a cheap "meat" source that has a longer than average shelf-life, and fat content. Canned hams, tuna, salmon, chicken, and turkey are all welcome additions in my pantry shelf – stock-up on the meats that your family normally eat and date and rotate just as you would any other canned food.

White flour: White flour from the store has a much longer shelf-life than does whole wheat flour, because it has been "processed" which removes the oily germ, but unfortunately this "processing also removes the nutrition.

Processed white flour has a shelf-life of over five years, if kept dry and safe from pests (like the meal moth). Mill moths get into the flour, lay eggs and those eggs turn into flour weevils, which ruin the flour. Look for tiny dark specks in the flour, as this is the first sign that the flour has been infested.

If it clumps together because of settling, just break it apart and run it through a sifter before use.

Store flour for long-term storage in airtight containers, with oxygen absorbers added – see details below. You can also freeze flour that has been put into five-gallon buckets. Freezing will also kill any meal moths that happen to have been trapped inside, before they can do any damage to your flour.

Most of my “flour” is in the form of whole wheat berries, that I have to mill (grind) before use, but I do have some processed flour in my pantry, for lazy days when I don’t feel like grinding whole wheat into usable flour.

Peanut butter: Peanut butter is a good source of fat and calories and has a decent shelf-life. Peanut butter is also an energy food and one that I always take on hunting and camping trips. Unopened peanut butter will last for years.

Spices: Be sure to include a good selection on spices in your food storage. Spices can make even the most awkward foods palatable, and help to alleviate food boredom. Cinnamon, Turmeric, Paprika, Ginger, Oregano, and Garlic are my favorites and makeup the bulk of the spices in my pantry.

Baking powder, baking soda and yeast: Baking powder, baking soda and yeast (keep yeast frozen to extend shelf-life) are also essential, since you’re storing and baking using unprocessed grains.

Dried pasta: Dried pasta will keep indefinitely, if kept dry in bug and rodent proof containers.

Comfort Foods:

Storing a sufficient amount of “comfort foods” is very important, to your psychological well-being as well as too alleviate “food-boredom” that is sure to set in after eating only storage foods for several months. Comfort foods are even more important if you have children or need to care for the elderly.

Consider comfort foods such as - Jell-O, instant pudding mix, cake mix, hard-candies, chewing-gum, Spaghettios, mac and cheese, brownie mix, canned spaghetti and meatballs, mashed potatoes, popcorn, cocoa, tea, coffee, powdered juice mixes, sunflower seeds etc... And remember to date and rotate on a FIFO basis.

We crave variety and having a supply of familiar comfort foods can go a long way toward retaining our sanity and self-worth during a long term disaster. You can only deny yourself for so long before desperation and depression start to set in. Life will be difficult enough – give yourself a treat. You deserve it.

It is a proven fact that if we are forced to eat foods we don't want or the same foods for extended periods – just to stay alive - dissociation begins to set in. We begin to float away as an escape – we still eat to stay alive, but suffer a lack of focus and become disorientated in relation to our surroundings.

This is dangerous in a survival setting. Don't think it can happen? Try eating nothing but beans and rice for three months and you'll see what I mean. Having a supply of comfort foods can help by providing at least some form of normalcy to your life.

Older folks and children will have the hardest time adjusting to new or unfamiliar foods, with many refusing to eat altogether, especially if the food is unnecessarily bland or unappetizing. Comfort foods will help them cope.

Vitamins:

To ensure that you're getting a sufficient amount of needed daily vitamins and minerals for optimum health, you need to stockpile a good multi-vitamin and mineral supplement. Also consider extra vitamin C and D. Vitamin D is of extra importance if you're forced to stay inside (bugging in) for a longer than normal period of time and thus are unable to receive the needed vitamin D producing sunlight that is required for optimal health.

Don't Forget about Your Pets:

Don't forget to include a sufficient amount of food in your stockpile to feed your pets. A decent dog will increase your chances of survival, because they can hunt and alert you to trespassers and other trouble. I prefer smaller dual-purpose breeds, with my choice for a working dog being the Jack Russell terrier.

A Sample Three Month Food Supply for One Adult

Wheat 75 Pounds

Grains, rice, oats etc. 25 Pounds

Canned meats 5 Pounds

Canned margarine, powdered eggs etc. 2 Pounds

Dried beans, peas, lentils, etc., 6 Pounds

Dried fruit juice and concentrates 6 Pounds

Dried fruits or canned 25 Pound (if dried, then equal to this fresh weight)

Comfort foods 3 Pounds

Non-fat dried milk 25 pounds

Peanut butter or substitute protein / fat source 3 pounds

Dried potatoes 12 pound (equal to this fresh weight)

Salt 2 pounds

Shortening oils 3 quarts

Sugar or honey 12 pounds

Canned or dried vegetables 9 pounds (if dried, then equal to this fresh weight)

Please bear in mind that the above list is only a sample to help you get started, the most useful food storage list is the one that you put together yourself. After all who knows better than you, what you and your family, likes to eat and in what amounts.

Where to Put All this Food?

After reading the above recommendations, you're probably asking yourself where in the heck, you're going to store all of this food. Well that's a good question and one that you alone can answer for your situation better than anyone else, but I'll make a few suggestions that I hope will point you in the right direction.

The absolute best place in an underground bunker, root cellar or basement, unfortunately most people don't have any of those and have to make due with other less ideal storage options... Consider a spare bedroom, attached garage, detached storage building on your property, or as a last-resort a nearby storage unit rental.

If at all possible put in an underground storage area of some sort to keep you storage foods safe (and you) safe from weather extremes, as well as the main enemy of your food-storage shelf-life; heat. An excellent option, and inexpensive when compared to other suitable alternatives is the buried shipping container.

How to Store Dried Beans and Grains at Home for Long-Term Storage with Oxygen Absorbers & Mylar Bags

I store all my grains, beans and other dry foods (besides sugar, salt or sprouting seeds) inside food-grade five-gallon plastic buckets. There is some controversy over what is and isn't food grade. Most buckets with #2 inside a small triangle on the bottom are food grade, but not all - the only way to be reasonably certain is to contact the manufacturer and ask.

I buy mine from the local hardware store in the paint department. They also have them at my Wal-Mart, but, I prefer to buy from local business owners if possible. Sometimes they can even be gotten free from bakeries and restaurants, just be sure they only held food products - not paint, chemicals or other things that can make you sick or dead.

Foods packed in oxygen don't store as well as those in an oxygen free atmosphere. Oxygen absorbers (available from Emergency Essentials ®) work by removing the air from the enclosed container, leaving an atmosphere of 99% pure nitrogen in a partial vacuum inside the buckets.

Don't open the bag of oxygen absorbers until ready to use because they will absorb oxygen from the surrounding air and become useless. Have everything ready to go before you open the package. Any unused oxygen absorbers can be stored inside a small canning jar until needed.

Be sure to have everything ready to go before you start. Line the inside of the bucket with an appropriately sized Mylar bag (also available from Emergency Essentials[®]) these help to keep light and moisture out extending the storage life of the foods inside.

The Mylar bag also offers a layer of protection between the food and the plastic bucket, if for some reason the bucket that you're using isn't considered food-grade.

Pour the food into the buckets a little at a time, shaking each bucket as it is being filled to settle and distribute the contents. Fill each bucket to about ½ inch from the top and throw in one 2000 cc oxygen absorber in each five-gallon bucket of food.

Now to seal the Mylar bag – first roll the top of the bag closed on one end leaving an opening at the other and press out any air that has been trapped inside, next place a 2x4 across the top of the bucket and pull the Mylar bag over the 2x4 and seal with a clothing iron set at the highest setting in a typical ironing fashion across the board.

Quickly put the lids on each bucket and pound shut by laying the board across the top and striking with a hammer or rubber mallet. After a few hours the absorbers will create a vacuum that will cause the lids on the buckets to “pop down” indicating a good seal and a proper atmosphere for long term storage. Be sure to label each with date, content and weight, written on the front with a permanent marker.

Copyright 2014 M.D. Creekmore – TheSurvivalistBlog.net

All materials contained on this publication are protected by United States copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, published or broadcast without the prior written permission of M.D. Creekmore the owner of the content.