



EMERGENCY FOOD BUYERS GUIDE



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The Emergency Food Buyer's Guide

Your Guide to Purchasing Food for the Long Term

Limited Edition

Updated August 8, 2015

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I would also like to thank you, my readers, for being loyal fans of my website at Backdoor Survival. When I say you are the best on the planet, I mean it. This eBook is my gift to you, with gratitude.



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Introduction: Emergencies Are Real

Sometimes it's easy to forget what a fragile way of life we live and how dependent we are on the technological conveniences of the modern day. Most of us have free-flowing water at our fingertips, electricity and power that feed directly into our homes, and grocery stores around the corner with shelves filled with row after row of fresh food to be had, often 24 hours a day.

But take one look at the news--the natural disasters that are occurring with increasing frequency and severity, the political unrest that constantly rages in countries across the globe, the economies failing all around us--and we are reminded that our system is not infallible. Indeed, it is a fragile system on which we rely, a little like an elaborate structure made out of dominoes--one single domino's shift will send the whole thing crashing down.



Image by Eneas De Troya

Take our just-in-time merchandising system used by most of the stores across the country. To reduce waste and improve efficiency, stores no longer have a few days' worth of goods sitting in the back, awaiting their turn on the shelves. Instead, as an item is scanned for purchase, it is removed from the inventory and reordered for delivery in the next shipment the store receives.

This leads us to the trucking system – the main domino supporting the structure described above. If for any reason the trucks stopped running, we'd have a disaster on our hands. Some estimate that food shortages could begin in as little as 24 hours after a transportation failure. Within 2-3 days, essential supplies would completely vanish as people begin to panic. By the end of the week, it would be chaos. (If you've ever heard that saying, "We're only 3 meals away from anarchy," it could be describing this very scenario.)

A variety of events could cause the trucking system to fail. An EMP or solar flare could take down power and computers, including those that keep the engines running. Fuel prices could escalate to the point that trucking companies could no longer afford to keep vehicles on the road. A natural disaster or storm could make roads to a particular geographic area impassable. Civil unrest could accelerate to the point that trucks could no longer get through to deliver supplies. The list of possibilities could go on and on.

And the transportation system is just one single domino. The bottom line is, our supply chain is delicate, and it wouldn't take much to break it

It's no surprise, then, that more and more people are getting educated on emergency preparedness. These people know that in an emergency situation, we cannot rely on the government or other people to provide for the needs of our families. The only way to be sure that our loved ones will be taken care of in an emergency is to get prepared and look after them ourselves.

If we want to be able to meet our own and our families' needs in a crisis, having a sufficient store of emergency food is a crucial first step. But anyone who has begun to store emergency food knows that there is an overwhelming amount of conflicting and confusing information out there on the web. Opinions vary about what to store, how much to store, and how to store it. In this little e-book, I hope to provide some basic information that will allow you to make the best choices for you and your family when building up your

supply of emergency food. Specifically, I will discuss common questions about how much food to store, the benefits and risks of different types of food storage, the importance of storing healthy and tasty food, and how best to store what you've bought.

Much of the information you will read comes from articles posted on Backdoor Survival while other information has been gleaned from resources around the web. As you digest this material, think about your own needs and your own circumstances. One size definitely does not fit all so pick your way carefully and customize your emergency food plan with strategies that work for you and your family.

Are you ready to start?

Chapter 1: How Much Food to Store?

One of the most common questions people have when getting started with emergency food storage is “How much food do I need?”

There are a few considerations to make when deciding on amounts.

How Much Food is Enough?

When choosing emergency foods to store, the most important rule to remember is to go by calories, not by “serving.” Emergency food companies have different definitions for what constitutes a serving, and emergency food kits are not one-size-fits-all, even though they may be advertised that way. The first step in establishing a good food storage supply is to figure out how many calories you and your family need to survive for the length of time you would like to be supplied for.

Sounds simple, right? Let's go into a little more detail.

Each person's body has a base amount of calories it requires just to perform basic functions, like pumping blood, breathing, and performing cellular work. Nutrition experts call the amount of calories a body needs to maintain its current condition the basal metabolic rate. Even if you are not performing any physical activity, your body requires this amount of calories to maintain its current state.

There are many different factors that affect a person's basal metabolic rate – or BMR - so it would require a lot of time and testing to determine an exact amount of calories that an individual person would need to survive.

The American Council on Exercise gives a simple formula to calculate roughly how much an average person needs to survive:

Adult males should multiply their weight by 12; Adult females should multiply their weight by 11. So if you are an adult female and weigh 140 pounds, your BMR would be roughly 1540 calories per day.

Keep in mind that this formula calculates the amount of calories a person would need just to survive in his/her current state while performing no physical labor. In a true emergency situation, you may have a much greater need for calories because of the extreme physical exertion and high stress that may be involved. As well, stress burns an astonishing amount of calories, and a crisis is nothing if not stressful. Because of all of these factors, you can expect that your caloric needs will most likely be higher than the estimates of all of these formulas.

The BMR is only a starting point. It is a good idea to gather at least that many calories for the people in your family and then work up from there. A good goal is to shoot for 2000-2500 calories per person which gives you plenty of leeway to insure both adequate calories and adequate nutrition.

Once you figure out how many calories your family will need in a day, you then need to decide how many months' worth of food you will stock up on and store. To some extent this time period is dictated by personal preference. And most certainly, for most, cost and storage facilities will play a large role in dictating your food storage capacity.

Obviously, the longer period of time you are supplied for, the better, but most people can't afford to go out and buy a year's worth of food at once. Don't let that prevent you from getting started. The very best recommendation is to start modestly and build up. Begin with a one month food supply then expand to a three month supply. Later you can work up to a six-month supply, then a year. Grow your emergency food storage supply until you feel safe and protected food-wise for the days following a disaster or what a like to call a "disruptive event".

Think of your emergency food supply as insurance and store as much as you practically and affordably can handle.

Watch Out for Serving Sizes

When you are choosing an emergency food supplier, it is vital to look at how many calories are in what the supplier calls a serving. One of the big marketing ploys that some food storage companies use is to advertise that they have the cheapest prices on a cost-per-serving basis without mentioning what their serving sizes are. When you take a look at their serving sizes, they are not enough to live on. For example, a company might advertise that it only charges \$1.25 per serving, but the serving sizes are only 220 calories. There aren't too many people who would consider 220 calories a complete serving.

Similarly, a food storage company might offer what they label a six-month food supply that supposedly offers three servings a day. If you look closer, though, these servings are, again, often only 200 calories or so apiece, making that somewhere around 600 calories a day that you are supposed to be able to live on for six months. This is not even enough caloric intake for a child, so basically you and your family would be starving for six months. This is not how you want to be living in an emergency situation. Check the amount of calories in a serving size and buy according to your caloric needs, not the misleading "serving sizes" recommended by the manufacturer.

Make Sure the Calories are Good Calories

Once you've established that there are enough calories for your family in an emergency food, the next step is to make sure that the calories are good calories and not just fillers. Some readymade food storage packages are advertised as having 400 calories per serving, but then the majority of the calories come from things like drinks and desserts packed with sugar or filler foods like shortening and butter. Cheap fillers like these will

Another issue to look out for is the chemicals in your food. When you eat heavily preserved foods, your body can't break them down to use the nutrients in them (if there are nutrients left, after all that processing in the first place.) This is called "bio-availability."

When you feed your body something it doesn't recognize as food, it's nearly impossible for the digestive acids in the gut to break it down. Highly preserved foods remain recognizable most of the way through the system until they are ready to be excreted. This means that the few nutrients that may be present are not made available.

Stock your pantry with whole foods that the body can break down through ordinary digestive processes. Whenever possible, look for items that have less than 5 ingredients, all of which are easily pictured in your mind's eye. Have you ever seen a TBHQ or a Disodium Guanylate? No? Then you probably don't want to store them in your emergency food supplies.

Balance your diet

It's important for more than one reason to have a wide variety of foods in your storage stockpile. First of all, a variety can help fight against food fatigue, which is a very real concern if you have to eat the same thing, meal after meal. Plain old rice and plain old beans will keep you alive but you may succumb to food fatigue from the boredom of it all. You will lose your appetite, and that can be very dangerous when you're calling upon your body to do more physical labor than you normally perform.

Most importantly, though, a variety of foods helps to keep you well-supplied with all of the nutrients you need to remain healthy and thrive. Your food supply should contain a good balance of these important components:

- Protein
- Fat
- Grains
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Pantry Basics

Each of these components serves a very important purpose for your body's optimum level of functioning. Let's take a closer look at each one.

Protein

Meat is so perishable and expensive that many pantries have a definite short-fall of protein. This is definitely not a place you want to slack on, however. When a person performs physical labor, their muscles break down just a little bit, and then rebuild themselves and come back just a little bit stronger. However, if they don't have a sufficient amount of protein, they can't heal, and they actually become weaker.

This is particularly important in the aftermath of a disaster, because that is a time in which you may be performing more physical labor than you're used to. Adults should have a minimum of 50 grams of protein per day, and a child should have 15-20 grams of protein per day.

Fat

Over the years common wisdom says that a low-fat diet is healthier. However, more recent research has found that you actually need so-called "healthy fats" to function well.

Healthy fats help you to get needed calories, help your brain to function better, and aid your joints. A moderate consumption of healthy fats will keep your body operating at prime condition.

Coconut oil, olive oil, and nuts are all examples of healthy fats. Only one small serving per day is necessary for optimal health.

Grains

Grains are a popular addition to food storage stockpiles, in part because you can buy huge quantities for a very reasonable price. In fact, most food storage calculators recommend a whopping 300 pounds of grains per person per year. While that sounds like a huge amount of grain, keep in mind that it isn't just flour and wheat berries. Other popular grains include things like:

- Rice
- Flour
- Wheat
- Quinoa
- Couscous
- Cornmeal
- Barley
- Oats
- Pasta

Grains are high in carbohydrates, which in our normal daily life, many of us try to avoid. However, in a disaster situation during which you are reliant on your pantry, you'll welcome the boost of energy they provide. As well, some grains are quite high in fiber, which will keep you regular while you are consuming other foods that can have the opposite effect. Divide up your grain storage based on the things your family enjoys most. Keep in mind the special needs of any family members with allergies or intolerances to gluten.

Fruits and Vegetables

Produce is a vital part of your daily diet. Experts recommend a minimum of 5 servings per day for adults, and 3 for children. Fruits and vegetables are loaded with the vitamins and nutrients you need to thrive and to keep your immune system functioning at optimum levels. Without enough produce, the risk increases for nutritional deficiency diseases like beriberi, folate deficiency, scurvy, and Vitamin A

deficiency. At a bare minimum during an emergency scenario, adults should have 3 half cup servings per day to head off deficiency issues.

However, if the store isn't open and it's not garden season, you'll be hard pressed to find fresh fruits and vegetables in the middle of a disaster. You must rely

- Freeze dried
- Dehydrated
- Canned
- Frozen

Another option is sprouting. Sprouting can provide you with fresh greens in as little as a week. No garden is needed for sprouting to take place, just a sunny window, making it possible to grow your own greens in a high-rise apartment.

Pantry Basics

Don't forget the items you need to make food from scratch. Pantry basics like baking items, sweeteners, salt, pepper, and other spices will make your dining experience far more pleasurable and will help to keep food fatigue at bay

Stock up on things like:

- Baking soda
- Baking powder
- Yeast
- Cocoa
- Nonfat dry milk
- Shortening
- Lard
- White sugar
- Brown sugar
- Honey
- Molasses
- Maple syrup
- Salt
- White vinegar
- Black pepper
- Herbs and spices
- Cornstarch
- Powdered eggs

Let's Review

First, decide how many calories you and your family members need per day at the very least to survive. Then do some research and find out how many calories come in a serving or in a package of different brands of emergency food. Find the best prices you can on a per-calorie basis, rather than a per-serving basis. Get a wide variety of foods to meet all of your nutritional needs. Last, make sure the calories you are storing come from nutritious real food rather than filler ingredients that do not provide real sustenance and preservatives that make it impossible to digest.

Chapter 2: Food Storage Types Compared

In the wide world of food storage options, it's easy to get overwhelmed. Are canned goods better? What about buckets full of grains? Are MREs really a feasible food storage option? What's all the hype about freeze-dried foods? How do you know which is right for you?

As you navigate your options, there are many factors that should weigh in your decision, including the nutritional content maintained by the different types of food storage, the ease of storage and transport, the cost, the shelf-life, the taste, and the ease of preparation. For your convenience, here is a short summary of the different types of food storage options and their relative benefits and risks.

Canned Goods and #10 Tins

Canned goods are probably the most familiar of the food storage types. Most preppers have a few shelves groaning with store-bought cans of fruits, vegetables, meat, soups, and stews.

Cans are easy to find in any store and thus may seem like an unintimidating food storage option for some. Another benefit of cans is that wet-packed cans contain water or juice with the contents of the can, which could be beneficial if water supplies are low during an emergency situation.

Commercially canned foods are impervious to rodents and require no additional attention before you add them to your storage area. While you shouldn't let them get too hot or freeze, canned foods can withstand a broader range of temperatures than food packaged by other methods. Canned foods are a good, fairly inexpensive way to get fruits and vegetables into your stockpile.

For convenience, many food products are sold in large #10 tins which facilitate storage in a compact space.



Some disadvantages of cans are that the wet ingredients do not last as long, typically just one to five years, so they have to be rotated more frequently than other types of food storage. Also, cans are not as convenient as some of the other options are to store because they are heavy and bulky. Cans also must be checked frequently to make sure they have not become contaminated with botulism-carrying bacteria.

Then there are possible concerns with BPA in the lining of the cans, an issue that is beyond the scope of this eBook.

Number-10 tins (or cans), which are a common food storage option, can be a bad idea because once they are open, their contents must be consumed as soon as possible or otherwise re-packaged for safe long-term storage. The alternative is eating the same food item for several meals in a row – over and over and over again. In our fresh-vegetable-on-demand world, finicky family members may turn up their noses at the unfamiliar softer texture of canned fruits and vegetables.

Another issue with canned foods is that many of them contain very high levels of sodium, particularly soups, stews, and vegetables. This is especially dangerous if any family members suffer from high blood pressure or heart disease. Salty foods can also cause you to be thirstier, which is a negative during situations when your water supply is limited.

Bulk Grains and Beans

Bulk grains are another very common way to store food. Many people like bulk grains because they are a do-it-yourself method of storage. If stored properly (more on that later) most bulk grains will last a long time (with the exception of brown rice).

Grains and beans offer inexpensive and nutritious sources of carbohydrates to supply you with energy to get through your tasks. They're tasty and filling and can stretch other types of food storage by adding some bulk to a meal.

However, bulk grains can also be inconvenient to store because they typically come in five-gallon buckets. The buckets are heavy to lift and move, and they require a fair bit of storage space. Many people have difficulty removing the lids of the bucket, so if you store food this way, be sure and get a bucket opener – you'll thank me for this.

Their biggest disadvantage is that food storage that relies on bulk grains rests upon the assumption that in an emergency situation you would have power and a means to cook. This presents a very difficult problem if the emergency situation you find yourself in is one without power (which is fairly common). Without a stove or oven, it is difficult to make bread from your wheat, simmer your beans for hours, or boil your oats. In any kind of no-power scenario, you would have an abundance of food but no way to prepare it. Also keep in mind that most grains have a fairly long preparation time, so if you are using an off-grid method to prepare them, you're going to use a lot of fuel.

Another problem is that many people have never cooked a bean from scratch in their lives, let alone ground their own wheat to make flour. It takes a little practice to perfect, and this isn't something you want to try for the first time in the midst of an emergency. Still, if you are willing to learn, bulk grains can be an excellent and delicious option. You will find an excellent resource in John Hill's book, *How to Live on Wheat* (see Resources) and also in the article *Why Store Wheat – Wheat 101 for Newbies*.

MREs

Meals ready to eat (MREs) are just what they sound like. They are full-course meals that have everything in one--entree, side dish, dessert, drink, condiments, and often a small no-power-needed heating device. MREs do not require water and are easily the most convenient of the food storage options.

All of that convenience aside, there are some downsides to MREs. They are often made up of high-fat and high-sodium foods. They are rumored to cause constipation, so if MREs are a big part of your food storage plan, you need to also stock a remedy for that. Some of them taste okay, but many of them are terrible.

As far as storage goes, they are bulky and heavy. They are also typically more expensive than other food storage types. The greatest disadvantage of MREs is that they have a relatively short shelf-life, usually somewhere around three years.

On a personal note, I have chosen to exclude MREs from my food storage simply because they are flat out unappetizing. Of course, your mileage may vary.

MREs

Another emergency food option is meals that are a combination of dehydrated and freeze-dried food. One of the benefits of these types of foods is that all

you have to do is add water (a smaller amount than would be needed to cook them), and the meal is done. In addition, they generally make for good-tasting meals because the freeze-drying process retains all the original flavor and smells of the food in its original state. The freeze-drying process also allows the food to retain its nutrients and thereby makes it one of the most nutritious options as well. Dehydrated and freeze-dried meals are lightweight. They take up very little space, because the food shrinks greatly when you remove all the water from it. This makes them very easy to store, a particular bonus if you have little space. They are also easy to move and transport in a possible evacuation



Dehydrated and freeze-dried meals are often stored in Mylar pouches. It's a good idea if they are then packaged in buckets to increase air-tightness. Stackable buckets are nice as opposed to cardboard boxes, which are useless in a flood.

Because of the wide variety of ingredients available freeze-dried, you can keep a lot of normalcy in your emergency diet. Well after the last bell pepper is gone from the barren supermarket, you'll have them sitting on your shelves for fajitas or omelets.

The main disadvantage of these types of meals is that you do need to have water to add to them. However, water should be a big part of your emergency preparation anyway, so this is not a big setback.

Study your options on food storage packaging and decide which is right for you. Many people like to do a combination of the different types of food storage, starting with their staples and then filling in the rest as they go. Whichever option you decide to go with, make sure you consider all the factors and make an informed decision.

Chapter 3: Ingredients Matter

Some so-called “experts” in emergency preparedness will tell you that the quality of the food you store doesn't matter, as long as you have food stored and it is food that will last for a long time without spoiling. The logic is something along the lines of you'll eat anything if you're hungry enough.

It is probably true that it's better to have something stored than to have nothing; however, in an emergency more than any other time, it's crucial to be filling your body with nourishing ingredients that will keep you in top form rather than ingredients that could leave you susceptible to sickness and less-than-ideal mental and physical health. If your motive in building up food storage is to protect your family, then truly protect your family—from starvation and also from sickness and disease that can be caused by harmful ingredients in food.

With that said, emergency food is made to last a long time. In order to make their foods last, some emergency food companies cut corners and add a variety of artificial preservatives, dyes, and flavors to their emergency foods. This is an important thing to watch out for when selecting your food storage. Here are a few considerations to keep in mind as you look around.

Avoid Hydrolyzed Yeast Extract and Similar Ingredients

Hydrolyzed yeast extract is a controversial ingredient found in many packaged foods and very commonly in food storage items. It is primarily used as a flavor-enhancer and is created by breaking down yeast cells. The FDA classifies yeast extract as a natural ingredient, but according to many health experts, yeast extract is a cheaper alternative to monosodium glutamate (MSG) and actually does contain some MSG.

Some health and consumer advocates go so far as to say that labeling something as containing yeast extract is just an underhand way food companies can get around saying that a product contains MSG.

Most people have heard the negative press about MSG. Consumption of MSG has been linked to a variety of scary conditions, including headaches, numbness in the face and neck, heart palpitations, chest pain, nausea, weakness, appetite control problems, anxiety, depression, and a host of other negative symptoms. It's not an ingredient to mess around with, especially not in food that is supposed to sustain you in an emergency.

Even if you don't believe all the negative press about yeast extract and MSG, added flavorings like yeast extract are simply unnecessary in food packaging, and consuming emergency foods that contain added flavorings and preservatives would only expose you to more risks in what would presumably already be a risky situation. To be safe, look for emergency foods that are free of hydrolyzed yeast extract and other artificial additives.

For a good list of other additives that are linked to MSG, check out the following article:

[Names of ingredients that contain processed free glutamic acid \(MSG\).](#)

Look for GMO-Free Foods

An equally important consideration to make when looking for emergency food is to be sure it is free of genetically modified ingredients. [Genetically modified foods](#) are another controversial topic in the world of food and nutrition.

Genetically modified organisms are created by taking the genetic material of one organism and inserting it into the genetic code of another organism. This bold practice is becoming more and more widespread but is widely acknowledged as a risky and

understudied process. Many experts opposed to genetically modified foods argue that despite the increasing insertion of GMO ingredients into mainstream foods, there has not been adequate testing on human subjects and there are still too many unknowns about the health effects these human-engineered foods could have.

Some health groups, like the Center for Food Safety, have gone so far as to claim that genetically modified foods can increase the likelihood of antibiotic resistance, immunosuppression, and even cancer. Why put your family at risk with ingredients that are untested when you will have an abundance of other worries in a survival situation?

Because the use of genetically modified food is becoming such a widespread practice in manufactured foods, very few emergency foods are free of GMO ingredients. However, there are a few companies that produce emergency foods that are GMO-free. If this is an issue that is important to you, when choosing food, check to be sure that the emergency food is CERTIFIED GMO-free.

Some companies may claim to be free of genetically-modified ingredients, but without the certification, there is no proof.

Other Ingredients to be Wary Of

Other health considerations you may want to make are to check for amounts of cholesterol, trans fats, and sodium. Packaged foods often have high amounts of these three things, and emergency foods are no exception. Some high-quality emergency food brands are conscientious about their amounts of cholesterol, trans fats, and sodium, but you have to read the labels to be sure.

Make Sure Your Food Storage Ingredients Will Stand the Test of Time

While still being healthy, emergency food, of course, needs to be able to last. As you look for the right emergency food for you, be aware that some food storage companies

haven't done their research when it comes to ingredients that keep. As a result, they incorporate ingredients into their emergency food that go bad after a relatively short period of time.

Canola oil, for example, will only last a year before it goes rancid, thus spoiling whatever food it is used in. Amateur food companies who don't know better will use canola oil in their granola to make the clusters stick together. Uneducated food buyers end up with a worthless product after just a year.

The bottom line is that it's important to know what goes into your food storage food.

You are taking the time to buy emergency food. Also take the time to do some research

on the food you are buying to be sure it will contribute to the health and well-being of

you and your family in a disaster.

Let's Review

Focus on quality ingredients and avoid harmful ones. Your food storage is supposed to nourish you and keep you healthy during an emergency. Steer clear of additives like yeast extract, MSG, lots of preservatives, and artificial flavors. Also avoid genetically modified foods, excess cholesterol, excess sodium, and trans fats. Opt for long-lasting ingredients that won't become rancid in a short period of time.

Chapter 4: Taste Matters

Emergency-preparedness gurus often publish lists of specific items you need to store for an emergency. One popular guideline goes something like this: For a year's worth of food storage, each person needs 350 pounds of grain, 75 pounds of milk, 65 pounds of sugar, and so on.

To me this is nonsense. Although this type of specific food guideline can be a helpful starting point for some, for the most part these are not the kinds of foods you eat regularly in their bulk form and are not what you should store if you are just beginning your emergency food storage program.

Store Food You Regularly Eat

This principle cannot be overstated. Store food that your family enjoys together often. In times of disaster, when so many other adjustments in daily life are required, having food routines that carry over from life before will make hard situations easier to adjust to.

When you were a kid, do you remember ever going over to a friend's house to eat dinner? Even if it was a close friend, everything about the dinner seemed alien to you-- the way they folded their napkins, the saltiness of their gravy, the smells of the food cooking that were so different from the smells in your own kitchen at home at dinnertime. Little differences like this mattered and affected your comfort level in the home. Eating food from different cultures can sometimes put us in this situation too.

Routine, especially where food is concerned, can be powerful in an emergency situation. Food affects the way we feel, and if it is unfamiliar, it can be hard to stomach. This can make an unfamiliar, scary situation that much worse.

Many food storage suppliers offer entree options that are familiar favorites in most families, like macaroni and cheese, enchiladas, chili, and the like. Look around at what options are available to you and make selections based on what you know your family already eats on a regular basis.

Store Food that Tastes Good

At first glance, taste might not seem a very important consideration as you are collecting emergency food. It's easy to justify buying food storage that is not palatable and saying to ourselves, "It will be an emergency. Whether I like the food I'm eating or not will be the least of my worries." However, making sure your food storage is appealing to you and your family is more important than it initially seems. There is something to be said for having food that tastes good and makes you feel comfortable, especially in an emergency situation.

And if you have kids, buying good-tasting food is even more important. Kids can be notoriously picky eaters. If you are desperate to get your child to eat his dinner on a regular night at the dinner table, think of the multiplied desperation you are going to feel in an emergency situation trying to get your child to eat. It's not just about preferences, either. In emergency situations, kids in particular have a hard time forcing themselves to eat something, especially if the food does not taste good. On the other hand, if the food is something your child loves, it can be a real help when times are bad.

Another concern having to do with the taste of the food is lack of waste. When you are in a situation during which you are consuming your storage food, you could be wondering how long that food will have to last. In the best of times it is frustrating to throw away food that was partially eaten. Can you imagine how stressful it would be to waste food that no one could choke down during an emergency that could continue for quite some time?

Food that is familiar and tastes good to us has the power to make us feel comfortable, relaxed, and cared for, even in stressful situations.

Sample Your Options

Never make a food storage purchase without trying out some samples first. Most food storage companies have small sample packs of their larger food kits that are fairly cheap. Others offer pantry sized cans of common stand-alone items such as fruits, vegetables, meats, milk, butter and more. These are ideal for sampling and relatively low in cost.

Test a few and choose the ones that most suit your family's taste buds.

When you order a sample, ask the company if the food they are sending to you is the same as what is in the packages. Sometimes companies will send out a higher quality of food in their sample packages as a way of tricking buyers into thinking all of their food is wonderful. Sadly, this is really true – been there, done that.

Variety is Optimal

Also important when creating your food supply is to make sure you are building up variety. You don't want to be stuck eating canned beans for six months. You will survive, yes, but mealtimes will be more than a chore.

Consider also that eating the same foods over and over for a long period of time could leave you deficient in certain vitamins and minerals found in a variety of foods, as discussed previously.

A good idea is to start out by collecting different entree options. As you have enough of those, add in side dishes that will be full of good calories and allow for variety.

Remember Special Dietary Needs

Don't forget about stocking up for family members with different diets. These days, there are many types of food intolerances, and you don't want to make a bad situation worse by feeding someone a meal that makes them feel ill.

Plenty of food storage companies offer gluten-free, sugar-free, dairy-free, and vegetarian options for those with food intolerances, religious restrictions, preferences, or medical needs. Also, if you have a family member with allergies, read labels carefully to be sure that packaged foods contain no ingredients that will cause a reaction. Depending upon the severity of the allergy, an emergency situation would be the worst possible time for a reaction, when medical assistance might not be readily available.

It all comes back to storing food you regularly eat.

Don't Forget Some Treats

A commonly-overlooked aspect of food storage is the idea of storing a few luxury items, things that you are used to having and would not like to do without. These items might be things like coffee or chocolate or other specialty foods that are part of your routine. Having luxury items may not seem to matter much, but don't underestimate the power of a simple treat in a survival situation. It might simply be good for morale, but it could also be a valuable bartering item should things come to that. Mostly, having little treats stored can make life in an emergency more livable.

Food storage can be a big purchase. Take the time to figure out what food you and your family will eat comfortably. An emergency is not the time to try new foods, and it's also not the time to force your family to eat food they do not like. Food should be a comfort in bad situations, not a negative factor adding to the stress.

Let's Review

When selecting your emergency food, remember to stay fairly close to your normal diet. An emergency is not the time to experiment and try a brand new menu. Familiar foods are comforting and they help you to avoid waste.

Be careful to store away foods that all family members can consume without negative effects. Keep intolerances, allergies, and health concerns in mind when selecting items for your long term food storage.

And don't forget, a few treats are good for the soul.

Chapter 5: Make It Last

Now you know what and how much to store. Let's look next at the packaging and storing of emergency food and how you can achieve maximum shelf life.

Food Storage Shelf Life

The ideal store of emergency food would be made up largely of foods that have a shelf life of 25 years or more. The shorter the shelf life, the more often rotation and replacement are required. Rotation can become an expensive practice and requires a lot of organization to keep on top of. If your food is made up of mostly long-term foods, you can buy it and only have to worry about it a few times in your life.

Keep in mind that most food storage companies will claim a 25-year shelf life, but sometimes this is just a number made up for marketing. Be aware of this, and make sure you know the properties of a food storage item that is likely to last a long time.

How will you know how long food storage food should really last? Studies done recently by the Department of Nutrition, Dietetics, and Food Science at Brigham Young University looked at various foods that had been stored for 30 years and examined them for edibility and nutrition after 30 years of storage. Here are a few of their findings:

Salt, baking soda, baking powder, and granulated sugar, when stored in their original containers and stored properly, have no known shelf life.

Wheat and rice, when stored in cans, foil pouches, or buckets, can last 30+ years.

Powdered milk, oats, instant potatoes, dried apples, macaroni pasta, and pinto beans, when stored in a can or foil pouch with oxygen absorber, can last 15-30 years.

Wet-pack canned foods can last a few years, but acidic foods like tomatoes can cause the cans to corrode if stored too long. Foods like yeast and cooking oil will last for a year and a half, and powdered eggs will last one year.

For more helpful information on the shelf life of different foods and ways of packaging, check out BYU's College of Life Sciences website, which lists all their current research on the subject

Oxygen is the Enemy of Shelf Life

In order to achieve optimal shelf life, emergency food must have extremely low oxygen levels. Oxygen destroys food storage shelf life because even small amounts can grow bacteria and spoil food.

In general, the residual oxygen level once a food has been packaged should be well below 2 percent. If a food storage company will not disclose the levels of oxygen in their food, or if they simply admit that they do not test for oxygen levels, steer clear of that food. If it is not tested for extremely low oxygen, it simply cannot last for the amount of time most companies advertise.

A good thing to watch for is that suppliers use oxygen absorbers in their packaging. Oxygen absorbers can extend shelf life and prevent the growth of aerobic pathogens. Nitrogen flushes are another plus in packaging. Both of these practices used together can eliminate virtually all oxygen. When you are looking for a food storage supplier, make sure they use one or both of these practices in packaging.

How to Store Your Food for Best Results

Once you have gathered your food storage, the next step is to know how to store it properly. As I wrote in the [Survival Basics: The Six Enemies of Food Storage](#), in order for food storage to last as long as it can, it must be kept away from moisture, oxygen, light, and heat. If you have made the right choices when selecting your food storage products, the first three of these requirements will already be met--your containers will be airtight and will not let in moisture or light. The last requirement--keeping it away from heat--is up to you.

Keep in mind that food from the grocery store is rarely packaged in a manner that will withstand the test of time. If you buy smaller bags of beans or rice, for example, you need to be prepared to repackage those at home.

Along with your food stockpile, be sure that you also invest in food storage supplies like:

- Mylar bags
- Bag sealers (you can also use a clothing iron or a hair straightening iron to seal bags)
- Food grade buckets
- Oxygen absorbers
- Desiccant packets
- Vacuum sealer
- Food-grade diatomaceous earth

You can learn in detail about repackaging food at the following links. Learn about:

- [Mylar bags](#)
- [Oxygen absorbers](#)
- [Food grade buckets with gamma lids](#)
- [Using a Food Saver to vacuum-can food](#)

Store your supplies in the coolest place you have. Some possible places might be root cellars, basements, under-the-stairs storage areas, or pantries and closets that are away from heating vents and refrigerators/freezers. What you are going for is a consistently cool and dry place. If you simply have no other options, you might also consider storing your food in a garage or outdoor shed as long as you remember to move the food to a cooler place during the summer months, as these places can get very hot.

Also be sure that your food storage supply is away from rodents, insects, and other intruders. Usually, keeping it off the ground is a good way to avoid these pests.

Conclusion: Be Prepared

You should now be equipped with some basic knowledge and tools to make smart decisions on how much emergency food to store, the best kind of food to store, and how to store it. If anything, the most important principles you should have learned are to do your research and know what you are buying and to make informed choices that will cater to your family's needs and preferences.

The message of emergency preparedness is often all doom and gloom, something along the lines of *"The end is near! Watch out!"*

However, when you are prepared, that warning call will not sound so grim. With a solid supply of emergency food stored in your home, you will be able to rest easy knowing that you've done all you can and will be able to meet your family's needs no matter what the situation.

To learn more about emergency food, emergency food storage and family preparedness in general, visit the website at www.backdoorsurvival.com. There you will find a wealth of information on a variety of topics to guide you along the path preparedness.

Resources: Emergency Food Buyers Guide

The first version of the Emergency Food Buyer's Guide came out in 2012. Since then, a lot has changed in the world of emergency foods. Instead of a handful of emergency food storage companies, there are dozens. Some are good, other not so much.

Over the years, I have found a handful of companies and products that have consistently delivered excellent quality and customer service. I welcome you to take a look at my personal choices and furthermore, to visit the fine food storage companies that advertise on the Backdoor Survival website.

It is the support of these companies that allow Backdoor Survival to be free for everyone.

[CLICK HERE FOR A LIST OF RESOURCES](#)

Interested in Learning More?

For even more information on Emergency Food Storage, I invite you to take a peek at my book, [Prepper's Guide to Food Storage](#). I wrote this book so that you would have the information you need to successfully store food available in one, easy-to-read volume.

The Prepper's Guide to Food Storage is only 99 cents for the e-Book and under \$6.00 for the print book.

[CLICK HERE to learn more!](#)

The Prepper's Guide to Food Storage A Practical Guide to Storing Food for the Long Term



When most people start thinking about family preparedness, they focus on food. Not shelter, gear, sanitation, power, self-defense or the myriad of other concerns that need to be addressed following an emergency or disaster situation. Quite simply, food is the number one concern people have second only to their concern for having an adequate supply of water.

The [Prepper's Guide to Food Storage](#) is a book about food: What to store, how to store it and best practices. It is a roadmap for showing ordinary citizens that long-term food storage is not something that will overwhelm or burden the family budget.

This book is based upon my own tried and true personal experience as someone who has learned to live the preparedness lifestyle by approaching emergency preparedness and planning in a systematic, step-by-step manner

This book covers:

- Store What You Eat and Eat What you Store
- 20 Items to Kick Start Your Food Storage Pantry
- Tips for Building an Emergency Food Supply
- Common Food Storage Mistakes
- Moving Beyond Pre-packaged Foods
- And much, much more!

Whether you simply want to prepare for natural disasters or whether you believe the world is headed toward a major food crisis, this book is for you. It covers basic tips and techniques you can use to stock your food storage pantry so that you can be assured that your family will have food to eat, no matter what.

[**CLICK HERE to learn more!**](#)

About Gaye Levy

Gaye Levy, also known as the Survival Woman, grew up and attended school in the Greater Seattle area. After spending many years as an executive in the software industry, she started a specialized accounting practice offering contract CFO work to emerging high tech and service industries. She has now abandoned city life and has moved to a serenely beautiful rural area on an island in NW Washington State. She lives and teaches the principles of a sustainable and self-reliant lifestyle through her website at BackdoorSurvival.com.

At Backdoor Survival, Gaye speaks her mind and delivers her message of prepping with optimism and grace, regardless of the uncertain times and mayhem swirling around us.

You can read more about Gaye on her website:

[About Backdoor Survival & Gaye](#)

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