

DIY: How To Make MREs At Home

MREs, or Meals Ready to Eat, have been a staple military supply for decades. For those of us in the survival world, we all know what they are, but we also know that they're pretty pricey to buy. Also, many of them don't taste so great.

So, since we're all about doing things for ourselves, I wondered if it was possible to make MREs at home. It turns out that it is, and you don't even need any high-dollar equipment.

There are a few things that you need to keep in mind when you're making MREs. First, you want high-calorie, nutrient-dense foods. Depending on how long you may need them, you may need to ration them to one per day in order to be able to carry enough to get you through. Make sure that each MRE has at least 1200 calories if you're only going to eat one per day. That's the minimum for you to survive.

Next, you need to consider the weight and mass of the MRE. You want them to fit in your bug-out bag so you're going to be carrying them, along with all of your other necessities. You also want to make foods with long shelf lives; the shorter the shelf life, the more often you're going to need to replace them.

Consider everything that you'll need for a full meal and include it in your [MRE](#). This may include single-serving instant coffee packs in your breakfast MREs or single-serving Gatorade packets in your other MREs. You can buy individual water packets to include as well.

For this article, we're going to use a vacuum sealer because that's the best way to ensure longer shelf life. If you don't have a vacuum sealer, we suggest buying one. If you don't want to buy one, we're going to include some ideas for making MRE packages using food that's already vacuum packed or otherwise sealed to increase shelf life.

Mylar Bags vs. Plastic Bags

While Mylar bags are far superior to plastic bags, they're also more expensive and require oxygen absorbers and high-temperature (at least 400 degrees F) sealers. Personally, my flatiron for my hair goes that high and works for sealing Mylar but if you don't want to spend the extra money, plastic, vacuum-sealed bags will work. Mylar bags offer [10-12 year shelf life](#) while food vacuum sealed in plastic bags will last for 1-3 years depending upon what's in it.

Types of Food

There are a few different methods that you can use to preserve your MREs. You can use any of these:

- [Dehydrated foods that you either make yourself or purchase.](#)
- Freeze-dried foods
- Powdered foods
- Food that you cook, then vacuum seal
- Pre-bought vacuum sealed meats such as chicken, tuna, spam and salmon
- Dry foods that you add water to, such as instant oatmeal, instant mashed potatoes, and instant rice
- Salt and pepper packets that you get from fast-food restaurants

Remember that if you include dry foods that need to be reconstituted with water, you need to include a packet of water or be prepared to use water from your supply. The water pouches are good because you can just tape them to the outside of the MRE and add it to the meal. An added bonus is that if you run out of water, you have an extra pack.

Should you want to pack the extra weight, there are MRE heaters made from a combination of magnesium, iron and salt.

When you add water, they reach temperatures of over 100 degrees and can heat a meal up in 10-12 minutes. They're light-weight and don't take up much space. Trioxane heating bars are also an old-school option and can also be used as fire starters. You could also use either to heat water for your coffee.

We're now going to discuss how to make some MREs that are both tasty and calorie-dense which either use dried foods that you reconstitute or you create using prepackaged foods. Each recipe will be enough to make 1 MRE.

Seasoning Packets

Pre-made seasoning packets will add flavor to your MREs – something that the original military MREs were seriously lacking in. If you'd like, you can simply use store-bought dried seasonings to your MRE before you seal it, or you can [make your own using dried herbs and spices](#). Here are some good examples. Each recipe makes about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup seasoning, which you can then ration into 1-tbsp portions in little zip-lock jewelry baggies and toss them in your MRE kit.

Italian Seasoning Blend

- 1 tbsp. oregano
- 1 1/2 tbsp. parsley
- 1 1/2 tbsp. basil
- 1/2 tbsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. rosemary

Southwest Seasoning Blend

- 1 tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tbsp. paprika
- 1/2 tbsp. ground coriander
- 1/2 tbsp. garlic powder

- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1/2 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 tsp. dried oregano

Reconstituted MREs

You'll need water packs for these, and a heater or other means to heat the water.

Southwest Chicken and Rice

- 1 pack vacuum sealed single-serving chicken
- 1/2 cup instant rice
- 1 packet southwest seasoning mix
- 1 Tbsp. dehydrated veggies, your choice
- 1 water packet

Instructions:

Add the rice and veggies to a bag and vacuum pack. Add this, along with the seasoning packet and the chicken to your MRE bag. Tape the water packet to the outside of the MRE bag.



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Spam, Gravy and Egg Scramble

- 1 single-serving vacuum packed spam
- 3 Tbsp. powdered sausage or peppered gravy mix
- 2 Tbsp. powdered egg
- 1 4-oz water pack
- 1 single-serving pack instant coffee

Instructions:

Place gravy mix and powdered egg in 2 separate small bags and ziplock or vacuum seal. Add both packets, along with spam and instant coffee packet, to your MRE bag. Prepare according to what kind of bag you're using. Tape water packet to bag.

Fruit-packed Oatmeal

- 2 packets instant oatmeal
- 2 single serving packets of your favorite dried fruits
- 1 4-oz pack water
- 1 single-serving pack instant coffee

Instructions:

Add packets of instant oatmeal, fruit and coffee to your MRE bag. If you like cream or sugar in your coffee, add packs of those to bag according to taste. Seal bag accordingly. Tape water to outside of bag.

Shit on a Shingle

- 1 3-oz packet dried beef
- 1/4 cup peppered gravy mix
- 2 4-oz packets of water
- 1 single-serving pack of instant coffee or Gatorade
- 4 2-packs of saltine crackers (you may be able to find bigger single-serving packs, but these are free at restaurants!)

Instructions:

Vacuum pack the gravy mix. Put all ingredients except water in your MRE bag. Tape water packets to the outside of the bag.

There are single-serving vacuum packed portions of tuna and chicken that you can add to your MRE bag along with a spice packet of your choice, crackers, a pack of mayo, and packs of mayo, pickle relish, salt and pepper in order to make tuna or chicken salad on the go, too. Just toss the individual packs into your MRE bag and you've got a meal that's really good for you considering the situation.



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I just touched on some extremely basic recipes and I know that I didn't cover nearly enough ground, so if you have experience making or eating MRE's, please share thoughts and recipes with us in the comments section below. I saw some awesome dessert

recipes out there too, so PLEASE share any of those that you have because sometimes a moral boost in the form of apple crisp is amazing!

*This article has been written by **Theresa Crouse** for [Survivopedia](#).*