

How To Store Your Food For The Long Term

For every serious prepper, food storage remains a constant concern.

Regardless of the event you are preparing for, storing food allows you to survive for extended periods of time and will give you the peace of mind required to concentrate on using your survival skills. The fear of hunger is something that always lingers above us, no matter how full our pantry is.

You can't help yourself thinking about this, and it's all due to our genetic memory developed throughout human history. If you think about it, food was often scarce, and starvation was always a problem for past generation. Storing food properly was one of the first skills we humans learned.



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History showed us that every major civilization on this planet was built on a surplus of food. It was through food storage techniques that people had the opportunity to come together and build kingdoms. Those who managed to store food for the winter would get to see another spring.

Even in our civilized world, food shortages still take the lives of less fortunate people. Being able to store food is a skill useful not only for preppers and survivalists but for every human in general. If you have a full pantry, you will have good morale, and you can face everything life throws at

you.

Starting with food storage

Just like every project, you should start small and grow over time. Since it may be your first time doing this, there's no point in going all in and risk of losing it all. Start with a few bags of rice or some extra cans of vegetables and any other foods your family eats. You can do so every time you go shopping, and it doesn't have to be a pressing concern.

Most, if not all, supermarkets have modern foods that store really well, and you can find a large variety at good prices. Once you buy some extra for your pantry, develop the habit of writing on the package the date you bought them. This will help you down the road with the proper cycling of your foods.

Cycling through foods

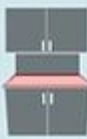
This becomes mandatory for every food storage tactic, and you don't just buy the food to store it away and forget about it. It's not there just to help you when the end of the world comes, and it can be used under various circumstances (unemployment, temporary shortage, etc.).

Once you fill up your pantry, you will need to make sure nothing goes to waste. To cycle through your food, you need to eat from the oldest of your stored goods and replace what you used. To keep your stocks fresh and complete just follow the rule: "First in, first out."

Even your dry food needs to be properly inventoried, and you need to cycle through it annually. Rather than using digital timesheets, I suggest you go with the classical pen and paper. These will never let you down in case the power goes down.

Below are the most common and a few unusual methods of food storage.

Drying

How to store food properly					
		APPLES Keep in the fridge drawer for up to 3 WEEKS			SWEET POTATOES Keep in a dark, cool place for 2 WEEKS
		CITRUS FRUIT Keep in the fridge shelf for up to 2 WEEKS			SQUASHES & MARROWS Keep in a dark, cool place for 1 MONTH
		RIPE AVOCADO Keep in the fridge shelf for up to 4 DAYS			BACON Keep in the fridge for up to 2 WEEKS
		BERRIES Keep in the fridge drawer for up to 5 DAYS			BACON Keep in the freezer for up to 1 MONTH
		UNRIPE MELON Keep on the countertop for up to 5 DAYS			UNOPENED DELI COLD CUTS Keep in the fridge shelf for up to 2 WEEKS
		RIPE PLUMS & PEACHES Keep in the fridge for up to 5 DAYS			LIVE SHELLFISH Keep in the fridge shelf for up to 1 DAY
		PEARS Keep on the countertop for up to 4 DAYS			RAW FISH, MEAT & POULTRY Keep in the freezer for up to 6 MONTHS
		CARROTS Keep in the fridge drawer for up to 3 WEEKS			EGGS IN A CARTON Keep in the fridge shelf for up to 2 WEEKS OR UNTIL EXPIRATORY DATE
		CAULIFLOWER Keep in the fridge drawer for up to 5 DAYS			UNOPENED SMOKED FISH Keep in the fridge shelf for up to 3 MONTHS
		CELERY Keep in the fridge drawer for up to 2 WEEKS			CUCUMBER Keep in the fridge drawer for up to 1 WEEK

When organizing a survival pantry, the first foods on every list are usually grains and beans. Most people buy their food already dried and prepare for storage while others like to prepare it themselves. Regardless of the method you prefer, keeping such goods dry can often become a challenge. It becomes even more of a problem if you don't have enough storage space in your home.

Choosing a place outside of the home to store your dried goods require constant supervision of the place since dampness, insects, and rodents can ruin your entire food storage in a few hours. It requires a lot of work to keep it safe, to make sure the food will still be edible when you need it the most.

You can store grains, beans, and legumes in bulk, but you will need to invest in some proper containers. Also, desiccants and oxygen absorbers are required to keep the food dry and remove any moisture buildup. Double bag your food stores and secure the covers to the cans. You can use plastic containers to store smaller amounts of foods (up to 10 pounds).

Now, when it comes to the drying process itself, you can dry pretty much any food you can think of. Some preppers use a professional or commercial food dehydrator while others still use the old method of drying food in the oven. You can dry vegetables, fruits, and meats if you follow the basic rules of food drying and you can make it all in the comfort of your home

Blanching and Canning

These methods are used today as they were when your grandparents and great-grandparents handled all the food storage needs. They will provide food diversity required during long-term survival.

Blanching is a technique that works best in combination with freezing. It basically involves submerging the food in boiling

water (to start the cooking process) and then removing it from the hot water and immediately submerging the food in cold water to stop the changes. Bagging and freezing should be done straight away to preserve the fresh nature and aroma of the foods. Blanching is mostly done for vegetables, and it makes cooking much easier.

The canning method involves sealing cooked food while hot to kill all bacteria that might spoil it. As a main rule, canned foods should be stored at room temperature away from sunlight.

There is a lot of literature on canning, and I won't go into details about it. Just keep in mind that with a little bit of practice, meats, fruits, and vegetables can be canned and stored for several years. Making jams, jellies, and pickles are a family hobby for some and a tradition developed over many years. Canning also helps you save money since once you consume the foods, you can reuse the canning jars for a new batch. Nothing goes to waste in terms of packaging.

Pickling, Brining and Salting

The food engineers of the past have experienced with natural and artificial preservatives to help prolong the life of foods. While many prefer to use the artificial options these days like powdered and liquid chemicals, some still focus on the old methods of preserving food with vinegar, salt, and spices. It's the proper way to go since you can learn how to make vinegar at home and you can store salt in large quantities at reasonable costs, and dry your own herbs and spices.

Pickling

This food preservation method was vastly used in ancient times, and it's still used today by many homesteaders. The technique involves using the combination of salt and vinegar to preserve fruits, vegetables, and meat.

Brining

The brine is a solution made of salt, sugar, and cold water.

This preservation method is somehow similar to marinating, and it is mainly used for meat and poultry. For this technique to work properly, you will need to soak the food in brine for six to twelve hours to prevent the growth of food microbes. In general, the soaking duration will vary depending on the size of the meat.

Salting

This food preservation technique is perhaps one of the oldest, and it works because the salt draws all the moisture of the meat, which consequently prevents the growth of bacteria and other microbes. It is still a method used primarily in cold regions.

If you would like to use this method, you will need to make sure the meat is not kept in open air after salting and cover it with a lid or plastic. As you can imagine, foods preserved using this method will taste quite salty, and it may not be for everyone.

Smoking

In our country, smoking is used for cooking and flavoring, and it has become a form of art in many states. However, it is also an ancient method of preserving food for long periods of time. In the past, the technique was used mostly for meat and fish, but nowadays people are using it also for vegetables.

Smoking works because the intense heat from burning materials (like wood or pellets) kills bacteria and other food microorganisms, and the process is rather simple.

The technique involves heating the meat above a fire (fueled by hardwood) and the temperature is kept between 43°F and

159° F. The smoking time depends on the type and amount of meat you are using.

People from my network have started using a vacuum sealer to preserve the smoked goods for extended periods of time.



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Preservation in oil and honey

These are ancient food preservation techniques that helped our ancestors build reliable stocks of food. They are not entirely common to the modern prepper, although these methods are very effective. I recommend you look into it.

The process is rather simple, but it requires paying attention and a little bit of practice. You will need to cover the meat, fruits, and vegetables with honey or oil to prevent the growth of bacteria.

Honey has sugar and osmotic value that will draw out moisture from the food. In a similar way, oil kills pathogens and blocks the intake (flow) of oxygen to the food. Even if some microbes are present on the food, they will not last due to the lack of oxygen.

I've eaten meat preserved in honey when I traveled to Africa, and I had the chance to see and hear from our guests how they prepared the meat for storage. They would first grill or smoke the meat and allow it to cool down. They would prepare jars or small wooden barrels by adding a layer of honey in the

containers. After that, they would add the pieces of meat until the honey starts to rise up, reaching the top of the jar. Remember the meat has to be completely submerged.

As I've understood from them, this can also be done with raw meat, but it requires to be drained of blood and washed properly. Lightly grilling or smoking the meat is much safer. The meat should last forever as long as you keep good hygiene.

A few tips for long-term storage

When you start storing food, you will soon notice that such a project will take quite some space and time, and it will increase over time. The space for food storage is affected by factors such as number of family members, planned period (one year, two or more) and most importantly, your budget.

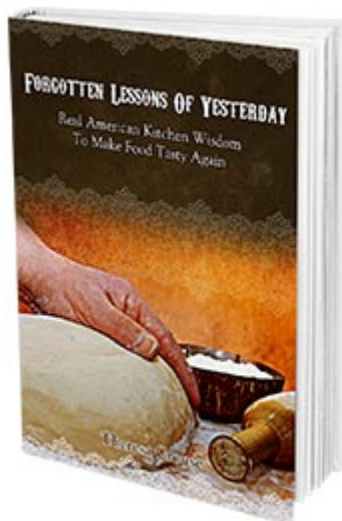
You will need to have a dedicated space for this project, and once you manage to acquire it, you will need to keep in mind the following:

- The storage space needs to be dry to avoid problems caused by mold and rot
- A food storage area should have a constant temperature, especially if you plan on storing lots of home-canned foods
- The food storage space should be protected against rodents and other pests. Rather than using chemicals, try looking into natural methods to keep pests at bay
- The food storage space needs to be easily accessible and conveniently located. You must be able to get to it in time, and it must be secured from looters.
- Everyone from your family needs to know what's stored, how the food should be cycled and what it can be used for
- Always check your food and test various items at random to see if the food is still edible

Concluding

No matter what you look at things and whatever people or experts will tell you, food becomes your number one concern if you are a preparedness like-minded individual. Having a food stash makes sense not only for when SHTF, but for every situation that may occur.

More than half of Americans have less than a week's worth of food in their home, and you probably don't want to be one of them. It doesn't matter if you live in a remote location or an apartment in the big city. You should always have food stored that will help you survive when there's no outside help.



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