

Smart Prepping Strategies When Money Is Tight

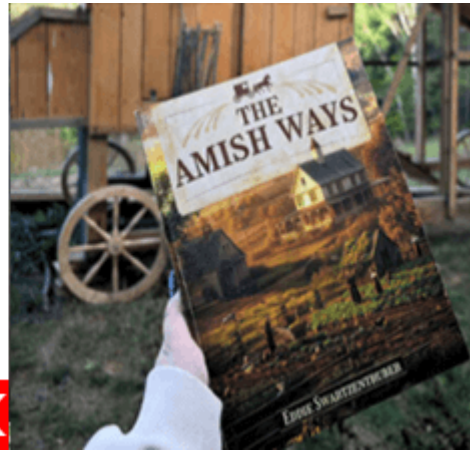
We all know that the economy has been anything but ideal for the last few years. High inflation, especially in key consumer goods, like food, have stretched the average family's budget to the limit, and beyond. Those who were living from paycheck to paycheck are finding themselves forced to decide what bills to pay and what things to let go. In the midst of all this, it can be extremely hard to even think about prepping, let alone actually doing it.

But all this economic turmoil can also go to prove why we need to be prepping. As difficult as it might be, now more than ever, we need to do whatever we can to ensure that we are ready for a disaster. With the economy in decline, government agencies and non-profit organizations are less able to provide the help we may need in a crisis. If we can't take care of ourselves and our families, there may not be anyone else that we can turn to.

Prepping has always required sacrifice... and often, quite a bit of sacrifice. Whether we're talking about a pioneer family during the westward expansion of our country, women trying to keep the home fires burning, while their husbands and sons were off winning World War II, or a family who survived through COVID, the issue is the same. Being prepared and surviving requires sacrifice.

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But that sacrifice is always better than the other option; that of dying of starvation, because we didn't put the necessary effort into making sure we could survive. We all know this, so do whatever we can, even when it's hard. But there's always the temptation to throw in the towel.

Live in Survival Mode

The COVID-19 pandemic wasn't all that far in our collective history. We might all be tired of hearing about it, but there were many lessons that we should all have learned in that 16 months. Yet surprisingly, after spending years preparing for such an event, there are many preppers who didn't see it for the disaster that it was, even while living through it.

One of the most valuable lessons I personally learned, during that time, was how to prep while living in a disaster. The shortages we encountered in the stores, made it necessary for many of us to dig into our stockpiles. Yet, even while doing that, we were still taking whatever opportunities we could, to continue building those stockpiles. Not knowing what problems tomorrow might bring, none of us were comfortable allowing our survival stockpiles to run down. Therefore, we continued to buy, replacing what we used, whenever we could.

But while all that was going on, there were many preppers who didn't see the pandemic as a survival situation. They complained about not being able to buy food, while sitting on

many months' worth of supplies, stashed away in their homes. They suffered needlessly, just like those who weren't prepared.

While those people were complaining about shortages, I was transforming my lifestyle, going into survival mode. When the opportunity presented itself to build my stockpile, even a little bit, I did. When that opportunity wasn't there, I got by just fine on what I had.

I need to add here that this wasn't based on years of prepping. Less than two years before COVID started, I went through a personal disaster, which caused me to lose my entire stockpile. Six-months of food for eight adults was gone, just as thoroughly as if it had gone up in smoke. At the time of the pandemic, I was living in a 700 square-foot apartment, which left very little room to build a new stockpile. Nevertheless, we built what we could and it carried us through the pandemic.

But here's the thing; I didn't stop living in survival mode once that was over. It became more than something we did to get through the pandemic, it became a lifestyle change. We've continued eating what we need, out of our stockpile, while all the time we are also buying food for our stockpile, building it up. Essentially, our stockpile has become a massive pantry, with some pretty hefty "minimum stocking levels" to borrow a term from retail.

Look for Opportunities

One of the things that living off our stockpile allows us to do, is to save money on food. We do that by using all the old tricks, like taking advantage of sales and bargains. Take meat for example. That's one of the hardest things for most preppers to add to their stockpiles. Yet we have two freezers full of meat, enough to last my wife and I well over half a year (maybe more). Every bit of it has been bought at reduced

prices, most of it in family packs with “reduced for quick sale” stickers on it. We bring that home, repackage it in smaller, vacuum-sealed packages, and squeeze it into the freezer.

For those who are saying something like, “You fool! All that meat will go bad if the power goes out.” please realize that I’ve already thought of that. We have enough capability to preserve meat, via a combination of smoking, dehydrating, and canning, to get all that frozen meat preserved, before it can go bad, should we lose the ability to depend on the power grid.

Our restocking doesn’t stop there. my wife is a world-class champion at finding sales. While I can’t claim that no food comes into our home that isn’t bought on sale, I can claim that nothing is bought in quantity, unless it is on sale. I can also confidently say that no sale goes by that she hasn’t checked thoroughly, looking to see what she can add to our stockpile. With a vacuum sealer, we are able to buy in bulk and package just about anything for long-term storage.

I’ve noticed through the years, that many preppers buy and build their stockpile to fit a menu. But the truth of the matter is that once we find ourselves living in survival mode, that menu will probably be one of the first things lost. We’ll cook what we have, even if it doesn’t seem to go together. Fortunately for me, my wife is a great cook, with an incredible knowledge of how to get the most out of spices and seasonings. She can take just about anything and make it taste good, by adding the right seasonings to it.

Do it Yourself

As we all know, people who survived in the past did so mostly because of their self-sufficiency. They could get by just fine, when the stores were out of stock and didn’t need to wait for the government to bail them out. Whether it was

getting through the cold winter months or surviving through a hurricane, people took care of themselves.

During World War II, the federal government encouraged Americans to plant “Victory Gardens” and grow their own produce. Here in the prepping community, that same idea is talked about all the time. even so, the percentage of preppers who are actually growing food is still way too low, with many preppers telling themselves that they’ll start doing it when a disaster strikes. That’s going to be too late.

It takes time to get a garden growing. The first year is just about getting the soil into condition. You can’t expect to get much out of your garden in that year. But what’s worse isn’t the time it takes to get the garden going; it’s the time that it takes for the gardener to learn how to grow things. unless you’re already an avid gardener, you’re probably going to have more failures than success.

But there’s another important issue about growing our own food, that none of us can afford to forget. That is, it takes a large garden to grow enough food to live on. The 10 or 12-foot garden that most people think is a “big garden” is just one garden bed. Add another ten of those, or so, if you want to grow enough to live on.

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The truth is, it takes a lot to get a garden started. But once you do, you can grow at least part of your food for a very

reasonable cost. Considering how food prices keep going up; being able to grow your own is definitely worth the effort.

Conclusion

We have to remember that survival is a lifestyle. If all we do is prepare to survive “some day,” stockpiling survival gear and supplies we won’t be ready. Those who survive are the ones who can do what needs to be done instinctively; and that only comes by doing it all the time. We have to build what people are calling “muscle memory.” When you and I start changing our lifestyle to more closely match that which we need to have during a time of crisis, then and only then, will we be able to say that we’re beginning to be prepare to survive the next catastrophe.