

# Steps to Preparedness #1: Food Storage

Welcome to the first installment of **Steps to Preparedness**.

*Steps to Preparedness* will be a series of posts covering a wide range of topics that are important to survival & preparedness in the event of a long-term TSHTF situation. My hope is that once this series is complete - all *Steps to Preparedness* posts could be printed, placed into a binder - and you will have a "Preparedness Guide" for reference.

This installment will focus on **Food Storage**.

First - **Why store food?** There are many reasons why it is beneficial to store extra food. Numerous life events can impact the ability to provide for your family. These events can include unemployment, inflation, sudden unexpected expenses, and of course some catastrophic disaster (man-made or natural). The bottom line is - you will always need food. Period.

This post will focus on short-term, medium-to-long term, and long-term food storage options.

## **Getting started: Short-term food storage**

Much of what sits in your cupboards and pantry right now are foods that can be stored for the short-term (3 months to 2 years). If you are beginning a food storage program - the bulk of your food should sit in this category. There is a saying - "*Store what you eat and eat what you store*." I am a big believer in this as common everyday foods - compared to many specialty long-term foods - are relatively inexpensive and readily available at your local grocery store.



**Virtual grocery store trip** - Since I can't go to your local grocery store with you - I went to mine and snapped a few photo's (and received some very strange looks!). The purpose of this was to show you some food storage items that are available and inexpensive.

**One note on shelf life:** *I will be discussing shelf life in terms seen on the packaging of the food.*

*My experience as well as numerous others is that the actual shelf life of most food is MUCH longer than that indicated on the packaging. With today's lawsuit friendly environment as well as to increase sales - expiration dates are very conservative.*



Soup

**Soup.** *Does the body good.* Right?

Canned soup has been a mainstay of family pantries for decades. Relatively inexpensive and having a pretty good shelf life (2-3 or more years). One great thing about soups is the huge variety of flavors. Bean & Bacon is my personal favorite from Campbell's - but there are probably more than 50 varieties to choose from.

I typically stock up on Campbell's Chicken Noodle and Tomato for as little as .20 cents a can when bought on sale and also using coupons.

This is an excellent place to take your shopping cart first during our *virtual shopping trip*.



Stuffing.....great side dish and decent shelf life

**Side Dish.** Stuffing isn't just for Thanksgiving! These dry boxes of stuffing store well as long as they are kept in a location where critters cannot reach them. Shelf life is usually around 1 year. Dry stuffing requires the addition of a little water to prepare and then heating. Excellent to add variety to your "*Store what you eat and eat what you store*" program.

*Next.*



Coffee!!!!!!A great morale booster and barter item

**Coffee.**Who could forget coffee. I could because I hate the stuff but I know that most everyone can't get their day started without it. Excellent barter item and morale booster. Coffee can be purchased on sale and using coupons very inexpensively. Shelf life should be literally forever.

*Throw a few in your shopping cart.*



Canned Pasta

**Pasta.** Pasta is a great source of carbohydrates which provide energy. Canned pasta comes ready to eat right out of the can. Like other canned foods - shelf life is around a couple of years. Often can be bought on sale and using coupons to maximize savings.

*Moving on.*



Beef Stew, SPAM, and canned Ham.....oh my!

**Beef Stew, SPAM, and Canned HAM!!**

Solid ingredients to a well rounded food storage program right here on these shelves. These items are a little pricier however this is where protein comes in (and a whole lot of salt with the SPAM). Beef stew contains a many ingredients to add variety to your post-SHTF diet. Shelf life similar to soup. SPAM is one "kinda-meat-like" substance that can store for many years. Of course a canned ham would be a welcome addition to the dinner table deep into a grid-down situation. Shelf life for canned ham is several years - minimum.

Just imagine - many people struggling to figure out what they will be eating after TSHTF, and pop open a canned ham. Feel bad for them.....don't be one of them.

*Start filling that cart up here.....*



More soup - such a huge variety.....

**More soup.** Ok.....I got lost and ended up back at the soup. Just look at this.....more and more soup of all kinds of flavors and varieties. Especially in colder climates - soup is a welcome meal when it is cold out.

*Go ahead.....you know you want to....throw a few more cans in the cart. (Don't dent them!)*



Hormel Compleats Meals.....poor man's MRE

**Hormel Compleats.** These are great as they are all pre-cooked and taste very good. These meals come in a plastic tray with some type of thick Mylar top. Often referred to as a poor-man's MRE as it does come Ready to Eat. These cost around \$2.00 each - cheaper with coupons.

*Stack 'em up.....*



Canned Chicken

**Canned Chicken.** There are not that many sources for storage-grade meat from the grocery store. Canned chicken (as well as tuna) is one of them. Not very cheap - but stores well and would be very valuable when food sources are scarce.

*Add some to your cart.....*



Beans, beans.....and more beans

**Dried Beans.** Dried beans are super cheap and very versatile. There are so many things you can do with beans. Years ago beans used to be called the "poor mans meat". They are high in carbohydrates, low in fat, and contains protein as well. Do some research on bean storage and recipes - you will be happy.

*Stack 'em high!!*



Rice.....a food storage basic

**Rice.** Combining rice and beans in a meal provide a "complete protein". Rice, like beans, is very inexpensive. Buy it and store it in bulk. There is a tremendous amount of ways that rice can be prepared. This one food can and should be a major part of your food storage program. Shelf life? If properly stored - forever.

*Load up about 20 pounds right now in your shopping cart.....*



Canned Beans

**Canned beans.** One of my favorite foods. I love to open up a can of Bush's Baked Beans. Good shelf life (2+ years) and inexpensive considering the amount you receive in a can.

*Stock up.....you can't have too much.*



Ramen Noodles.....gotta have 'em

**Ramen Noodles.** A common food item discussed in preparedness forums. Ramen Noodles are popular due to their lightweight, decent taste, and very very inexpensive. These do require a decent amount of water to prepare. Cost runs less than .25 cents per serving. Shelf Life? If properly stored more than 2 years.

*Get another shopping cart and fill it up with just Ramen Noodles.*



Instant Potatoes

**Instant Potatoes.** Potatoes have to be one of the most used and consumed foods - next to corn. Instant potatoes which are prepared generally with water, milk and butter is very inexpensive. Coupons are often available. Shelf life on the package is usually a little over 1 year.

*Buy a bunch - along with some powdered milk.*



Oatmeal & Grits

**Oatmeal & Grits.** If you like this stuff (I don't) stock up on it. Inexpensive - you can get a lot for your money. Another good candidate for storing what you eat and eating what you store.

There is a lot you can do with both of these as far as preparing them in different ways.

*Grab a few.....*





Peanuts

**Peanuts.** An all-time favorite snack. As a survival food - peanuts contain a high amount of energy in a small amount of food. After TSHTF - calories will be valuable. Peanuts are high in calories. Shelf life is a couple of years.

*Throw a few varieties in your shopping cart.....*



Pancake Mix & Syrup

**Pancake Mix & Syrup.** Obviously these go together. There are several varieties of pancake mix available that need only water to make. This would be the best kind for storage. Easy to prepare and a great morale booster. Shelf life.....like many others - up to 2 years or more.

*These are cheap.....go ahead and get a few boxes and a couple bottles.*



Hot Cocoa Mix.....cheap "smiles in a cup"  
**Cocoa Mix.** Got kids? Being able to make hot chocolate....especially in the cold....will be of great comfort when things are not the best. Shelf life is a good couple of years.

*Get at least 3 boxes.....get the ones on sale.*

That's it.....that's the tour.

**Summary:** Buy lots of your favorite foods on sale and using coupons when you can.

From there.....store what you eat and eat what you store.

---

**Medium - Long Term Food Storage:** This food category is often stored in larger quantities in easy to stack pails. Military MRE's are generally stored in boxes by the case.



Here are a few examples of typical bulk-packed food items in this category:

- Wheat
- Rice
- Beans/Legumes
- Oats
- Honey
- Sugar

- Instant Milk



Many when considering these types of foods for storage think of wheat, milk, honey and salt (Mormon basics). For variation and to reduce monotony - additional items need to be included.

What is critical for proper preparation of these bulk foods are additional supplies/equipment such as grain mills, spices/seasoning, and oil. Eating bowls of boiled beans and rice will not be very satisfying day after day.

Properly stored foods from this category can have a shelf life from 7 to 20 years. Several of my sponsors carry these products so take a look around.



This is one subject that I must pass the torch to the experts. Here are a few links with relevant information:

- Wheat - <http://beprepared.com/article.asp?ai=67&name=All%20About%20Wheat>
- Honey- <http://beprepared.com/article.asp?ai=81&name=The%20Natural%20Sweetness%20Of%20Honey>
- Breads and Cereals - <http://beprepared.com/article.asp?ai=69&name=Breads%20And%20Cereals>
- Beans - <http://beprepared.com/article.asp?ai=70&name=Bean%20Cuisine>

One significant advantage of these foods is the cost. It is possible to establish a years supply of bulk packed food for one person for less than \$500. Not bad at all.

**MRE's (Meal, Ready to Eat):**The MRE was developed for the military for use in a combat environment where full cooking facilities may not be available. These meals come fully cooked and are - as the name suggests - ready to eat right out right out of the package. Each bagged meal contains approx 1200 calories which come from the main entree as well as snacks, a side dish, and a dessert.



Typical contents of a Meal, Ready to Eat

MRE's are a very popular food storage item due to their dense caloric content, ease of preparing, cost, and decent taste. MRE's made specifically for the military are not easy to find and in my opinion the least desirable type of MRE. I prefer MRE's made for the civilian market which is often manufactured by the same companies that make them for the military. The advantage of civilian MRE's is you have better knowledge over how they have been stored. You never know if the case of military MRE's that you just purchased might have sat in the 120 degree sun in Iraq.

Shelf-life is reported to be in the neighborhood of 7 years - more if stored in cool conditions.

Cases of MRE's are available through several of my sponsors - so check them out.

---

### Long-term food storage - 25+ years



Freeze Dried Food known for being lightweight, have a very long shelf life, and are great

for activities like backpacking and hunting. Freeze dried foods are easy to prepare - generally needing only water and a heat source to warm. Due to this these foods are often used for survival kits, bug out bags, and of course as an ingredient in long-term survival preps.



This category is exciting to me due to the incredible shelf life and variety of foods available. Many of my sponsors carry a variety of freeze dried foods in multiple packaging methods. One very important factor with freeze dried foods - is taste. I have tried quite a few varieties and for me - taste is hit or miss. Some are great - some are not. I must admit I am a picky eater so for you this may not be much of an issue. Small foil packs can be purchased for taste tests.



Bottom line - freeze dried food is an excellent food storage solution for pretty much any disaster situation. They are more expensive than every day grocery store foods - but of course they have several advantages over them to justify the cost.

---

Well, this ends **Steps to Preparedness #1 - Food Storage.**

Just to summarize:

- Start off with "storing what you eat and eating what you store". Stock up on every day foods bein smart about shelf life considerations and expense.
- Once a few months worth of "regular" food has been stockpiled, go to bulk backed foods such as beans and wheat.
- Lastly - for long-term food storage solutions - stock up on freeze dried foods.

That's it. Bottom line is **get more food**.

Take care all -

Rourke