

Natural Disasters - Terrorist Attacks - Food Shortages
Pandemic - Economic Collapse - Social Unrest
SurvivalistsSite.com
and many other situations threaten us

Food & Water Storage

Food

Much has been written on food and water storage, especially food. Water is fairly straight forward and will be dealt with second.

On the topic of food there are a variety of ideas, from 50 pound bags of wheat and dried beans, to MRE (Meals Ready to Eat) rations that the US military eats when in the field, to commercially packaged retort pouches, to freeze dried or dehydrated, and finally to what you eat on a regular basis. Each idea has its merits and its drawbacks.

Wheat and dried beans (includes bulk rice, flour, etc) are great due to their inexpensive cost, but if you don't like wheat or dried beans or won't eat them then there is no sense in spending the money. Wheat and dried beans can be used as a supplement, or for trading, in addition to your primary food source. Keep in mind that any radical change in diet or foods eaten can have negative side effects on your body... you had better have a lot of toilet paper and Pepto.

MREs are relatively lightweight, come in many choices and can be eaten hot or cold. They are high in sodium, heavier than freeze dried/dehydrated and can be expensive and hard to find. They are great to have in your pack, BOV or pantry when you need something quick.

Freeze dried/dehydrated foods are very lightweight, have a fairly long shelf life, come in many choices and are great when weight and space are at a premium. Some meals are better than others, so try one before you buy a case. They also require water, which means you will have to have more water than the basics of 3-5 gallons per person per day. They are also more expensive than regular canned goods.

This brings us to "what you eat on a regular basis". This is my preferred primary storage food. Being in the middle of an emergency or crisis situation is no time to be experimenting with foods you are not use to. It is also the cheapest way to buy food. I know how much of a given item we use on average in a week. If that happens to be 3 cans of kernel corn then I know that I need 12 cans for four weeks or 156 cans for a year. Nice and basic.

The first thing to do is keep a small notebook with you when you go shopping. For a month you will write down every item you buy or use and how much. If you are buying or using fresh produce estimate how many cans it would equal. If you are buying or using meat estimate how many pounds it would equal.

When you have your list for the month go through your cupboards and pantry and write down the spices, baking items and condiments you use. Sit down with your family and go over the list to see if anything was missed. This is the time when those items you rarely use are added to the list, figure out how much of that item you will need for the period of time you are planning on storing food for.

Once you have a list of everything it is time to figure out the amounts for each item on your list. You want numbers for a week, a month (4 weeks) and a year (52 weeks). This allows you to be flexible in your purchasing, you can buy items in one week increments or if in multi-packs you easily know how many weeks it supplies.

Comfort foods and snacks should also be included in your food storage. In times of high stress a Twinkie or cookie can often help calm you down, make things seem more normal, and lets face it... it is nice to have a little treat every now and then.

Water

It is a little easier to figure out how much water you need. Government generally suggests 1 gallon of water per person per day. This is a MINIMUM amount. More realistic numbers are 3 gallons per person per day for food, bathing, cleaning, etc. Three is a bit of an odd number though. Most water containers come in increments of five, 5 gallon water cooler jugs, 5 gallon water jugs, 10 gallon water cooler jugs, etc. Because of the five gallon increment in most water containers I suggest 5 gallons per person per day, or 35 gallons per person per week, for ease of calculating amounts and it allows an extra margin for the unseen things that always come up.

What you store your water in offers a wide variety of choices. Water cooler jugs stack well, and you can buy hand pumps to get the water out. Cases of bottled water also stack well, but mean smaller containers. One gallon water jugs can be placed on shelves, stay away from some of the cheaper brands that have poor sealing (Wal-Mart brand is one example) or thin jugs. Most commercial water bottlers say that once sealed their water has an indefinite shelf life, despite the "best before date" mandated by law.

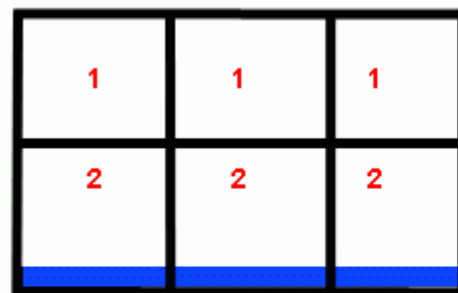
Many people choose to store their own water, some in 55 gallon water barrels, some in 2 litre pop/soda bottles. To do this you need to add some plain chlorinated bleach to each container before sealing. Because chlorinated bleach loses its effectiveness over time some people use granulated chlorine available from pool supply stores which has a longer shelf or effective life. You should check the quality of the water every 6 to 12 months if you choose to store your own and use bleach.

If you do not have a lot of room to store all the water you want (1092 to 1820 gallons per person per year - 3 to 5 gallons per day) in your house or garage then you need to have other options. Some people build water cisterns on their property and then filter drinking and cooking water from that. Others may choose to use a large water storage tank such as the 1500 gallon one available from Northern Tool and other supply companies such as www.watertanks.com. The other option is to have a good gravity based water purifier. The Berkey series and the Base Camp by Katadyn are two of the many options out there to purify your water before use.

Having a gravity based water purifier allows you to store less drinking and cooking water and allows you to use whatever water is available from your surroundings. Extra filters for the water purifier should be stored per manufacturer's guidelines and can be sealed with a vacuum sealer.

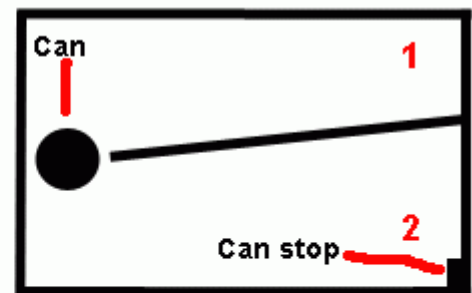
Logistics of Food Storage

Storing food can take up a lot of room depending on what type of food you choose to store. Bulk items like grains can be placed in metal or heavy plastic 55 gallon barrels or drums to keep pests out. They can also be stored in 5 or 6 gallon pails. In either case make sure that the container is food grade or you run the risk of pesticide or other toxic substance residue left over from previous use. There are also stackable plastic containers available made from food grade plastic from Gamma Plastics, don't let the pet food label scare you... food grade is food grade. I have a couple of the large 60 gallon stackable ones (holds 100-125 pounds of sugar).



Front View

The blue line denotes the can stop.
Cans are loaded from the top (1) and removed from the bottom (2).



Side View

Make sure that the can can fall through the space in the back and will pass over the can stop.

1 Load cans 2 Remove cans

Keep in mind when storing food that not all foods are temperature insensitive, extremes of heat and cold can reduce the shelf life of foods. Moderate cold temperatures, 40 to 50 degrees F or 5 to 10 degrees C can actually extend the shelf life of foods.

When storing food you should mark the month and year of purchase on the container with a permanent marker or grease pencil. This allows you to know when the food is at its best, many foods are still good past "best before" dates but may lose nutrients or have a bland taste.

If you are storing cans you can stack them on shelves, but this makes rotating your food more difficult. You can build can dispensers, like those sold for keeping soda/pop cans in refrigerators, that will allow you to easily add and remove cans. The oldest cans are always closest to the bottom and the newest close to the top. You can size the dispenser for different diameters of cans easily once a few measurements are taken. If you are storing lots of similar diameter cans you can make wide dispensers with adjustable dividers. To the left are a couple of rough pictures of a can dispenser.

Other Thoughts

Make sure that you have a few manual can openers with your canned foods. You may also want to store multi-vitamins to make up for any loss of nutrients from older food and to make sure that you and your family are getting the right vitamins and minerals. If you are going to store powdered milk you will find that most of available brands use no-fat, low-fat or 2%, in the Mexican food aisle you can find powdered milk that is whole or approximately 4%. You may also want to consider Coast Guard approved survival rations such as the Datrex or Mainstay available from Nitro Pak and other suppliers.

There are a number of traditional and web based retailers and direct suppliers of MREs and freeze dried/dehydrated products. Two of the largest web based companies are Nitro Pak and Ready Reserve Foods. Brands such as Mountain House and AlpineAire being the most common online and in traditional stores.

Summary of Food Storage Options

MRE's - Shelf life of up to 10 years, relatively light weight, complete meals. Great for short term (2-4 weeks), for backpacks or BOBs and whenever you want a quick meal. Can be expensive.

Freeze dried/dehydrated - Light weight, long shelf life. Great for backpacks or BOBs. Can be expensive, requires extra water.

Store what you eat - Easiest on your system, inexpensive, easy to get. Heavy, shorter shelf life.

Wheat and beans - Great basics, cheap. Can have a long shelf life. Requires you to get containers, may cause problems due to diet change, more work.

In the end a combination of the four main categories is probably best. MREs and freeze dried/dehydrated are great for when on the go or you want something quick. Canned foods that you already use the most common, easiest to get and cheapest make the best overall choice/primary source. Bulk wheat and beans will last for a long time, Egyptian tombs have shown shelf life of thousands of years, are very cheap, and can be used to trade with other people.

Links to Manufacturers and Suppliers

Mountain House	www.mountainhouse.com
AlpineAire	www.alpineaire.com
Ready Reserve Foods	www.readyreservefoods.com
Freeze-Dry Foods	www.freeze-dry.com
HeaterMeals	www.heatermeals.com
Long Life Food Depot	www.longlifefood.com
Nitro Pak	www.nitro-pak.com
Sopakco	www.sopakco.com
Walton Feed	www.waltonfeed.com
Wornick	www.wornick.com
Ameriqua	www.ameriqua.com
Northern Tool	www.northerntool.com
WaterTanks.Com	www.watertanks.com
Berkey	www.berkeywater.com
Katadyn	www.katadyn.com

SurvivalistsSite.com

www.survivalistssite.com

Message Forums - Blogs - Community Pages - Chat - RSS & Atom Syndication