



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

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support@SoldOutAfterCrisis.com

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
<i>Change in an Instant</i>	
<i>Sudden Disasters</i>	
<i>Not all are Sudden</i>	
Getting Started.....	4
<i>Start Small</i>	
<i>Building a Stockpile on a Budget</i>	
<i>Start NOW</i>	
37 Food Items You Need in a Crisis	8
<i>Short and Long Term Crises</i>	
<i>Why these Items</i>	
<i>List of 37 Items</i>	
<i>Food items NOT to Include</i>	
Perishables, Shelf Life, and Knowing Your Stock	16
<i>Should You Stock Perishables?</i>	
<i>Determining Shelf Life</i>	
<i>Factors That Affect Shelf Life</i>	
<i>Knowing Your Stock</i>	
Non-Food Essentials.....	20
<i>Different Reasons To Store Different Items</i>	
Other Important Lists.....	22
<i>Good For Barter</i>	
<i>Top 10 Must-Have Non-Food Essentials</i>	
<i>Comfort Items</i>	
Cooking In A Crisis.....	28
<i>Know How To Use Items In Storage</i>	
<i>Practice</i>	
<i>Survival Baking</i>	
<i>Survival Cookbooks</i>	
<i>Crisis Cooking Tools</i>	
Where To Look If You're Too Late	33
<i>Ebay/Craig's List</i>	
<i>Bartering</i>	
<i>Distribution Centers</i>	
<i>Emergency Aid Groups</i>	
Tips About Your Stockpile.....	37
<i>Where To Store Your Stockpile</i>	
<i>Avoiding Common Stockpile Problems</i>	
<i>Practice</i>	
<i>Secondary Locations</i>	
A Final Word	43
<i>It CAN Happen To You</i>	
<i>Disasters Happen Everyday</i>	
<i>Non-Disaster Food Shortages</i>	
<i>Don't Procrastinate</i>	
Resources.....	45



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

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INTRODUCTION

When you think about what is most important to you, what comes to mind? Your family? The home you have worked so hard to build? Many people, as they go about caring for their family and building their homes, forget the simple truth that in one moment, everything can change.

Many people don't like to think about situations that could potentially harm their family or disrupt their lives. While considering the consequences of hurricanes, earthquakes, famine, epidemics, war and civil unrest are certainly unpleasant, it is important not to ignore such possibilities but to instead plan for them.

It's not about living in fear. In fact, being prepared for such eventualities can bring about a sense of peace because you will know that, should disaster strike, you have done all that you can to be ready.





37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

Change in an Instant

Some are caught unaware by a sudden disaster or situation that immediately causes them to be in survival mode. Like a flash of lightning, the whole world changes in the blink of an eye.

In such situations, if you have not prepared ahead of time, it can be too late.

If your life were to change in an instant would you be prepared?

! IMPORTANT NOTE:

Grocery stores only keep about two to three day's worth of items on their shelves. When everyone is clamoring for the same emergency items at the same time, there is a good chance that you won't get what you need. The items that will sell out first are the ones that people know will help them get through a time of crisis.

Sudden Disasters

Sudden disasters happen every day, and there is usually very little that can be done to prevent them. Catastrophes such as earthquakes, floods and tornadoes can wreak havoc on your ability to get the things that you need.

You may be left without access to water, electricity and emergency aid for days or even weeks at a time.

Your first line of defense when it comes to surviving a sudden disaster is preparing ahead of time.

Not All Are Sudden

While many are caught without the things that they need when a sudden disaster strikes, there is a situation that is even sadder: When people are left unprepared after a not-so-sudden disaster or situation occurs.

Sometimes, there is plenty of warning that a disaster or situation that could cause supplies to become scarce is imminent. Still, some fail to prepare. Perhaps they think that it won't really happen or that they still have time. Whatever causes such procrastination can become problematic very quickly.

If you know that a hurricane is on the way or if there has been talk of possible civil unrest or warnings about any other situation, be sure that you have all of the items that you will need to get through the time of chaos that may follow.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

Don't make the mistake of thinking that the government or rescue organizations are going to swoop in during a time of trouble and take care of you and your family. There have been many instances when such aid was simply unavailable or took weeks to reach those who desperately needed it.

Instead, consider the possibilities and do what you can to prepare. Remember, YOU are the first point of help for yourself and your family. If you wait until disaster strikes to try and gather the items that you need it might be too late. You'll be forced to fight the crowd for what little supplies are available on the shelves of the grocery store. The most essential items will sell out quickly, leaving your family without the basics that they need.

Prepare today. It's not about fear. It's about being ready to face disasters and have the best chance for survival.



Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

GETTING STARTED

Many people know that they should prepare for various disasters, but they don't know where to begin, so they do nothing. One of the most important parts of survival is psychology. Improving the way you approach a survival situation, and changing the way you think about your surroundings, is an important part of the process.



For many, changing their thinking is the first step that is needed. Studies show that people who survive in difficult situations have certain traits that non-survivors do not. The good news is that most of these traits can be learned. One study found that during a crisis, 10% of people fell into a category of being a leader. They just seem to know what to do, and were able to handle the situation without becoming overly emotional or hysterical. The largest group of people, 80%, was left in disbelief at the situation. They were unsure what to do next and just sort

of wandered around waiting for direction. The final 10% were those that went off of the deep end, and were completely unable to deal with the situation.

Obviously, the ideal group to be in is the leadership group. People that fall into this category are the most likely to survive. Do you need to be a natural born leader to be in this category? No. You just need to be able to keep your own fear and emotions in check and have an idea of what to do in a survival situation.

The more preparations that you make for a variety of situations, the less overwhelmed you will feel when something happens.

Start Small

The problem that many people face when it comes to emergency preparedness and survival planning is that they do not know where to start. Others cite financial reasons for not being able to start building a stockpile of the items that they would need during an emergency.

While it would be great to be able to order every single thing that you would need all at once, very few people are in a position that allows that. Instead, start small. In fact, there are some steps that you can take that won't cost anything at all.

The 37 things that will sell out during a crisis will be discussed in the next chapter. First, here are some small steps that you can take to get started in your emergency preparedness planning.

One of the most important things that many forget during a time of crisis is important paperwork. Should you need to leave your home, you will need to bring these papers along with you. Below is a list of some such important papers.

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



- Birth certificate
- Insurance policies
- Passport
- Social security cards
- Medical records/copies of prescriptions
- Pet medical records
- Bank account information
- Deeds and titles to homes and cars
- Computer backup: This should be in the form of two memory sticks. One can be kept with you and the other should be kept in a secondary location.



Gather these documents and put them into a suitable container. Some use a safe, but remember that you need to be able to grab these items and go. For that reason, an ammunition case is a better choice. It is portable, yet still offers the needed protection for the documents.

Another step that you can take without spending a lot of money is assembling a short-term sustainability pack. This is a group of items that are packed and ready to go should you need to flee your home for a few days, such as to evacuate ahead of a fire or hurricane.

Below are some items to include in your pack.

- Toilet paper
- Cleansing wipes (great item to have when a bath or shower is not available)
- Cash (small bills and change is best)
- Whistle
- Tactical flashlight
- Batteries
- Hand crank emergency radio
- Multi-tool
- Compass
- Parachute cord (useful in building shelters)
- Duct tape
- Fishing lines and lures
- Saw
- Knife



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

- Folding shovel
- Ponchos
- Canteen
- Knit cap
- Small first aid kit
- Glow sticks
- Matches
- Medications
- Pet supply items
- Special items needed for elderly or babies
- Comfort items such as games, toys and books



Many of the items that you may want to include in your short-term sustainability pack may be things that you already have around your home, so completing your kit will not require much of an investment.

You should keep the pack where it is ready to go on a moment's notice. Many keep their packs in the trunk of their car. Keeping an extra one at the office is also a good idea.

See? Without spending hardly a dime you were able to check off two important items on your emergency to-do list.

Now it is time to start assembling the food and non-food items that you will need. Again, starting small is the key. You don't need to buy everything all at once. Instead, buy one or two extra items each time you go to the store. Before you know it, you will have built an impressive stockpile. The key is to **START NOW**.

Building a Stockpile on a Budget

One of the main reasons that many put off starting a stockpile is money. Already on a tight budget, some feel there is just no way to buy extra items to add to their stockpile. Keep in mind the advice from the section above: start small. Understand that it is much easier and less expensive to start building your stockpile than you might think. Below are a few tips for starting a stockpile on a tight budget.

Coupons

Watch your Sunday and online coupons for items that would work well in your stockpile. Clip those coupons and then try to match them up with sales at your local grocery store. With a bit of research, you will be able to find items that are free or nearly free that will make great additions to your stockpile.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



Also, use coupons for your regular weekly grocery shopping. The more money that you can trim from your weekly grocery bill is a bit more that you can spend developing your stockpile.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

During a time of crisis or when a crisis is imminent, the cost of food is very likely to go up. That is another reason that you should focus on building your stockpile now. It will save you from having to pay extra high prices during a crisis IF you can even find the needed items in stock.

Gardening/Canning

This is one of the least expensive ways to add to your stockpile. Grow your own vegetables and then set some aside to can and add to your stockpile. At planting time, plant enough to enjoy now with plenty of extra for canning. The more vegetables that you can, the less you'll have to buy for your stockpile.

A Couple Extra

When you do your grocery shopping, just buy one or two stockpile items per trip. Yes, it will add to your weekly grocery bill but, for most people, the cost of an extra can or two won't make that much difference.

If you do this every time you go to the grocery store, you'll soon have a nice selection of items that will make a great addition to your stockpile.

Food Banks/Churches

If you have absolutely no money to dedicate to starting a food storage, you may be able to get the top three crucial items, such as canned vegetables, from your local food bank and from local churches that have a food pantry program.

Start Now

Again, it cannot be stressed enough that the time to start collecting the items that you will need during an emergency is NOW. If you have ever tried to buy a gallon of milk, a loaf of bread or a bag of ice ahead of a storm then you already know how quickly stores sell out of the most popular items.

Imagine now if a disaster were to occur. Imagine the panic and the rush to clear the shelves of any items that may be helpful during the crisis. Also, as mentioned above, factor in the price gauging that, although it's illegal, takes place during many crisis situations.

If you are serious about keeping the safety and security of your family, you must START NOW. Don't wait until it is too late and you have to fight for what few items remain on the shelf. Take steps today to make sure your family will be taken care of during an emergency.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

37 FOOD ITEMS YOU NEED IN A CRISIS

Short and Long Term Crises

Some crisis situations will last a few days. Others can go on for months and years. While some aid may be available after a week or two during a longer crisis, you cannot count on this. Instead, you must understand that even though you are used to the grocery store shelves being full, that this is not something that is guaranteed to always be the case.

You need to make provisions for both short term and long term crisis situations, so that you don't have to worry about how quickly aid will be available. Unfortunately, there will be times when aid will be very slow in arriving to you – if it ever comes at all.

Why These Items?

As you look over the list, you might be surprised by some of the items that are included on the list. These items were chosen for several reasons including:

- **Quick to Sell Out:** The main reason for this guide was to inform you about which items will sell out first after a crisis. The items on the list below are those that will sell out first, however, as you can see in the resource link titled “What Your Grocery Store Will Look Like After an Emergency”; it doesn't take very long for grocery store shelves to be *completely* empty.
- **Shelf Life:** Another consideration is the shelf life of the items. When planning for an emergency, you must consider crisis situations that could last a few days and those that could last far longer. To be truly prepared, you will need to include items that have a long shelf life.
- **Nutrition:** During a crisis situation, it is extremely important that you get the proper nutrition. There is a good chance that you will be more active than normal. Additionally, you may have limited access to medical care, so maintaining good health is very important.
- **Ease of Storage:** Items that require refrigeration are not a good choice for obvious reasons. Instead, you want to select items that will do well on a shelf or even in the back of a car.
- **Comfort Items:** In addition to items that you need, such as meats, grains and vegetables, you will note that some items on the list, such as snack cakes and popcorn, are comfort items. Such items can act as stress relievers during times of crisis. They can add a sense of normalcy, which can go a long way in maintaining the psychological health of you and your family.





37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

- **Ease of Preparation:** Finally, most of the items on the list are very easy to prepare. During a crisis situation, you may not have access to your regular stove and oven, so it is important that the items are able to be prepared either with no cooking or on a simple stove or even over an open fire.

The food that your wife buys may be nutritious, delicious and nearly perfect. The problem is that the food coming into your home on a regular basis might be mostly perishable items. You need to store food items with a longer shelf life.

List of 37 Items

When a hurricane or storm is coming, what items do you usually see people grabbing at the grocery store? As mentioned above, many people want bread, milk and bags of ice. These items, however, are not always the best items to keep on hand during a crisis. Sure, it's a good idea to have some of these everyday staples on hand in case you can't make it to the store for a day or two, but should a real disaster strike, such items will often become useless very quickly, especially following a loss of power.

Of course, a storm warning isn't technically a crisis yet. Many people just blindly grab what

IMPORTANT NOTE:

A disaster does not have to directly affect your area in order to have an impact on your ability to buy the items that you need. For example, a terrorist attack that targets our nation's food supply can cripple the supply chain of the entire country.

they see others grabbing or think of the items that they will want to have on hand for the next few days. Many do not think much past that. When an actual crisis hits, however, things change very quickly. People begin to realize that milk and bread is not going to be enough to sustain them. As the reality of the situation sinks in, people will then try to stock up on items that will make more sense during a crisis.

It will be these 37 items that will sell out during a crisis. Some will sell out within the first few hours; others will sell out in the first few days. By preparing ahead of time, however, you will not have to navigate through potentially hazardous road situations, fight large crowds for a few items and then possibly overpay for the few items that are left on the shelves.

These 37 items should be part of your stockpile, so when disaster strikes, you'll be ready. Not only will these items be among the first to sell out, but they are easy to store and make sense during times when you have limited power and cooking resources.



FEMA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) suggests having enough food and water on hand to last for **two weeks**.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

- 1. Water:** Bottled water is obviously one of the first things that will sell out after a crisis. While some of the items on this list are not absolute necessities, water is something that is essential to survival. Water is one of the first items that will sell out after a crisis, so you want to keep water on hand. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) suggests having enough food and water on hand to last for two weeks. Water, however, is something that you will absolutely need. If the crisis lasts two weeks, you'll need two week's worth of water. If the crisis lasts two months, you'll need two months' worth of water. Storing enough water for a long term crisis can be difficult. For that reason it is important to have plans in place that allow you to collect water. As part of your emergency preparedness, you should consider rainwater and underground water collection systems. You should also purchase very high quality water filters. Making such plans could truly mean the difference between life and death should circumstances make it impossible to get drinkable water any other way.
- 
- 2. Pasta:** Pasta is filling, nutritious and has a long shelf life. It is easy to store and, if needed, can be taken with you should you need to leave your home. Another plus is that pasta is fairly inexpensive, so it is an item that is easy to add to your storage even if you are on a tight budget.
- 
- 3. Rice:** This grain, a staple of any good emergency food storage, has a variety of cooking uses, and steaming rice can be done on virtually any type of stove. Uncooked rice has a very long shelf-life when properly stored.
- 4. Canned soups:** Canned soups taste good, can be prepared on any type of stove and have a long shelf life. It is easy to store a variety of flavors and many of the soups are filling and provide a good amount of nutrition.
- 
- 5. Canned meats:** While canned meat might not be your first choice, it is a great option when you want to store meat for the long term. Canned roast beef, ham and chicken can be heated on any type of stove and then used in a variety of filling and nutritious dishes.

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



6. **Canned veggies:** You can purchase canned veggies or can your own. Either way, these are a staple in any good food storage. You need the nutrition that vegetables provide, yet getting fresh vegetables can be very difficult during a time of crisis. Remember, if you do not have a garden, now is a good time to start one. This will provide you with items that you will be able to use in canning and will also provide a renewable source of food.
7. **Canned fruit:** Coming by fresh fruits may be nearly impossible during certain types of crisis situations. Something as simple as a truck driver's strike could make it difficult to get fresh fruit in many parts of the country. Canned fruit has a good shelf life, is easy to store and requires no preparation.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

All manner of canned goods will be among the first items to sell out during a crisis. For that reason, you should stock up on all types of canned goods as you build your stockpile. Canned goods are relatively inexpensive, very easy to store and have a great shelf life.

8. **Popcorn:** Popcorn is a food that will sell out quickly during a crisis for a number of reasons. It is a tasty treat that is not only healthy, but is a comfort food for kids. Because it has a long shelf life and is very easy to store and prepare, it makes sense to include a supply of popcorn in your food storage.
9. **Salt:** Salt has an extremely long shelf life, is very easy to store and is an important part of baking and cooking most meals. Salt has other uses besides being a delicious addition to many foods. It can also increase the shelf life of vegetables and can be used to clean up spills without the need to use potentially harmful chemicals.
10. **Milk (condensed or powdered):** Milk is a staple in cooking and baking and you'll need it if you have cereal in your storage. Of course, you will not be able to keep a supply of fresh milk on hand, but condensed and powdered milk both store easily, have a long shelf life (powdered milk has a longer shelf life than condensed milk) and can be used for cooking, baking and drinking.
11. **Cereal:** Cereal is easy to prepare, has a fairly long shelf life and is a quick and easy meal that your kids will eat without a fuss. You will want to choose nutritious cereals rather than those that are heavy on the sugar.
12. **Beef jerky:** Beef jerky has an extremely long shelf life, is easy to store and carry, and tastes delicious. You can buy beef jerky or you can learn to make your own. This is one of the most survival-friendly foods around. For a healthier version, you can substitute turkey for beef.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

13. **Grains:** A variety of grains are an important part of any food storage. Barrels of wheat from ancient Greece were found that were still good. Of course, proper storage is key, but grains in general have a very long shelf life. They are very nutritious and can be used in baking, made into cereals and used in a variety of other ways. Shortly after a crisis, or anytime a potential crisis is looming, sellers of whole grains often sell out and/or the prices shoot up. Buy now before the rush is on.



14. **Cooking oil:** Cooking oil is necessary in cooking and you'll need it if you are cooking over an open flame to avoid scorching your food.
15. **Sports drinks:** Sports drinks are a great source of energy. If you are working outside, especially in the heat, your body loses electrolytes which can be replaced with sport's drinks.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Even if you do not typically spend time outside now, that could change during a crisis. For that reason, stocking up on sport's drinks is a good idea.

16. **Nuts:** Many nuts have a long shelf life and are a comfort food item as well as being nutritious. You can also use nuts along with grains and dried fruits to make a delicious trail mix.
17. **Pickles:** Pickled cucumbers are probably the first thing that comes to mind, but you can pickle just about anything including meat, vegetables and eggs. You can certainly buy pickled items at the grocery store, but it is also very easy to do it yourself. Experiment with different spices so that you can have a variety of flavors in your stockpile.
18. **Dried fruits:** Dried fruits have a long shelf life, are easy to store and they taste great. Dried fruits can be used in creating trail mixes and other snacks and are great on cereals as well.
19. **Spices:** Spices can help turn your emergency meals from bland to delicious. Spices typically store well and have a long shelf life. In addition to adding some flavor to your meals, some spices can help to keep your family healthy. For example, including some garlic in your diet each day can boost your immune system. Staying healthy during a

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



crisis is more important than ever, because getting medicine or seeing a doctor may be more difficult.

20. **Honey:** Honey never goes bad if properly stored. It can be used in baking and in sweetening cereals.
21. **Crackers:** Crackers are a great snack, store well and many types have a very long shelf life. Choose whole grain crackers whenever possible.

! **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

Foods that are very simple to store and each, such as crackers, are going to sell out very quickly after a crisis. Remember, as mentioned above, stores only keep a couple of days supply of most items. That is why stocking up on these items well before a crisis is looming is so important.

22. **Baking essentials:** Baking essentials, including flour, sugar, baking soda and baking powder, will sell out quickly after a crisis. These items are vital for preparing the basic foods, such as breads. When people realize there is a crisis, they will know that these basic staples will soon be hard to find and will quickly empty the shelves.
23. **Power Bars:** Many types of power bars have a long shelf and make a good, nutritious snack. It is best to avoid bars that are chocolate covered. These will not store well and, obviously, the chocolate will melt quickly in the heat.
24. **Instant rice:** While you should store regular rice, a supply of instant rice can be quite convenient. With a little boiling water and three to five minutes of time, your rice will be ready.
25. **Coffee:** Not only will coffee sell out quickly after a crisis but, since it is not considered essential by many, restocking it will not be a priority. If you are a coffee addict – or just enjoy a cup with breakfast – keep a supply on hand.
26. **Alcohol:** Many are surprised to see alcohol in the list, but you should include alcohol in your food storage even if you don't drink. Jack Daniels is a great choice. In addition to being a bit of a stress reliever, it can also be used for medicinal purposes, such as cauterizing wounds and relieving pain. It is also a wonderful bartering item.



“ . . . stores only keep a couple of days supply of most items.”



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

27. **Hard candies:** Hard candies have a good shelf life, are easy to store and can provide a quick burst of energy. They are also a nice treat to keep in your storage. Hard candy can easily be brought with you should you need to evacuate.
28. **Dehydrated canned entrees:** Dehydrated canned entrees are a good addition to your food storage, but should not make up the majority of your food storage. These are meals that have an extremely long shelf life and all you need to prepare them is some hot water.
29. **Juice powders:** Some juice powders contain vitamin C. Mix with water and you'll have a healthy and delicious drink.
30. **Protein drinks:** If you can't get a full meal, a protein drink can provide you with the nutrition that you need to get by. These drink mixes usually have a very long shelf life and come in a variety of flavors.
31. **Peanut butter:** Peanut butter is cheap, easy to store, has a long shelf life, is nutritious and filling and – and important bonus – most kids love it!
32. **Long lasting treats (Twinkies, Pop Tarts etc...):** Some snack foods have a long shelf life. While the myth that Twinkies will last for years is just that, a myth, they do last longer than most baked goods. Other snacks, such as Pop Tarts have a shelf life of several months or even a couple of years. While these items are not necessary to survival, including comfort items in your food storage is important. And, yes, such comfort items will sell out quickly after a crisis.
33. **Salsa:** Salsa is a great food storage addition because it has a long shelf life, and it is a nutritious food made from vegetables. Use salsa to give some flavor to powdered eggs or add to rice and canned chicken for a delicious meal.
34. **Ramen noodles:** Ramen noodles are lightweight, cheap, have a long shelf life and are quite filling. On the down side, they pack a LOT of sodium. Still, they are easy to prepare and will be one of the first foods to sell out after a crisis.
35. **Fresh Fruit:** You might be surprised to see fresh fruit on this list. Grocery stores get fresh produce delivered on a daily basis. If the supply line is interrupted, there will be none. While you cannot store fresh fruit for the long term, it will be nice to have some during the first few days of the crisis before you have to start using your dried and canned fruits.
36. **Baby food/special needs food items:** Within a few hours after a crisis, baby food and other specialty foods are likely to be gone from the shelves. This is of particular concern because, obviously, these items are very important. Having a good supply of such items is absolutely essential.
37. **Pet food:** If you don't have pet food on hand, you will have no other choice than to share your food supplies with your pet. Remember, after a crisis, everyone will be clamoring

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



to get the items that they feel are important, and pet food is high on the list. Many types of pet food have a long shelf life, so keep a good supply on hand.

Another great addition might not necessarily sell out quickly, but if the general population knew the benefits of this ancient seed it would likely fly off the shelf. The Amaranth seed can grow with very little water, is better for you nutritionally than most store bought cereals. It also has more amino acids than an egg. Consider adding a supply of Amaranth seed to your emergency stockpile.

Keep in mind that it is not necessary to buy name brands of food or other items. Very often, the generic brands are just as good as the name brands. In fact, in many cases they are made in the same factories using the same ingredients and the only difference is a label. Some of the top generic items that are just as good as the name brands are:

- Ibuprofen
- Cold medicines
- Peanut butter
- Bandages
- Baking essentials
- Popcorn
- Candy



Of course, you must decide which generic items are acceptable to you, but keep in mind they are often exactly the same as the name brand options.

Food Items NOT to Include

Almost as important as learning which foods will sell out after a crisis and that should be stored is learning which foods NOT to include in your emergency food storage.

- **Meals Ready to Eat (MREs):** Some think that MREs are the best possible addition to their food storage. It's easy to understand such thinking. MREs are loaded with calories, are very filling, have an extremely long shelf life and are easy to transport. The problem is that if you plan to feed these meals to your family over a long period, it could have a negative impact on their health. MREs are loaded with fat, sodium and preservatives. Also, they don't taste that great. It's fine to include a few MREs in your stockpile, but for the sake of your family's health, they should not make up the majority of your supplies.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

- **Frozen Items:** While frozen food will last for a long time, once it thaws the shelf life is very short. Even if you have a generator, there is no guarantee that you will be able to keep it going for the long term. It is fine to keep some frozen items, but do not put all of your hope in being able to keep your freezer going for several weeks or months.
- **Items that Require Complicated Preparation:** Another consideration when making a decision about what items to leave out is how much preparation is required. In general, you want to keep like as simple as possible during a crisis. There are plenty of healthy meals that do not require a huge amount of preparation. Such meals are a much better choice than items that will require more work than necessary.



Now that you have an idea about which foods will sell out quickly after a crisis, the next chapter will take a look at how to learn about the shelf life of different foods and how to be sure that you know that what items you have on hand at any given time.

PERISHABLES, SHELF LIFE AND KNOWING YOUR STOCK

Should You Stock Perishables?

After reading the section above, you learned that stocking some perishable items is fine, but that they should not make up the majority of your emergency food supply. Here is a recap of the reasons that you *should* stock some perishable items, such as milk, fresh fruit and vegetables and meat.

- **First Few Days:** Having such items on hand can bring you some comfort in the first few days following a crisis.
- **Bartering:** These items will make good items for bartering in the days immediately following a crisis.
- **Canning:** If you have a good amount of fresh fruit and vegetables on hand when a disaster strikes, you can take the time to can those items before they go bad.

A cool food cellar is ideal for stocking perishables. If you do not have a basement, you can build a cellar as a separate structure. If you have the room on your property, consider adding one.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



Determining Shelf Life

One of the first things that you will need to learn before selecting items for your food storage is how to determine shelf life. Most items at the grocery store will have a stamp. Often that date is a “best by” or “sell by” date rather than an expiration date. In ideal storage conditions, the food items will be good well after the “sell by” or “best by” dates.

Some foods, such as dehydrated foods, canned foods and specialty items, such as MREs will have a very long shelf life. If there are no dates stamped onto the cans or pouches, be sure to contact the company that you got them from to get a general idea of the shelf life of such foods.

Many survival supply sites include in depth information on the shelf life of the products that they sell. Here are some of the basics of understanding shelf life.

- A “best by” refers to the length of time that the food will retain all of its nutritional value and taste. It does not refer to the date that the food will become spoiled or no longer be edible.
- Some freeze dried and dehydrated foods have a shelf life of up to 25 or 30 years. To get the longest shelf-life, proper storage conditions are required.
- In general, minerals and carbohydrates will remain the same over a long period of time. Proteins are more likely to deteriorate. If not stored properly, vitamins in food can quickly lose their potency. Fat can acquire an unpleasant taste.
- Even if an expiration date has passed, the food could still be good. On the other hand, it is possible for food to become inedible well before the expiration date. For those reasons, you should learn to tell if food is bad. Look for mold or notice if there is any odd or foul odor. If there is, do not eat the food no matter what the expiration date says.
- The way that you store your food will have a huge impact on the shelf life. Learning proper storage can greatly increase the shelf life of the items in your food storage.

Factors That Effect Shelf Life

There are four main factors that will affect the shelf life of your food.

1. **Temperature:** The colder, the better. If you keep your food in a garage, it is best to try to make the space as temperature controlled as possible. You don’t need to keep it as cold as a freezer, but you should aim for room temperature or colder. If you cannot make a space cool enough, then you should NOT store your food there.
2. **Light:** Fats, proteins and vitamins are especially susceptible to light. You can keep light out in a number of ways. One is by the packaging. For example, if a food item is stored in a metal can, light is not much of an issue. The other way to keep light out is to place the food in a pantry or cabinet where it is not exposed to bright light on a regular basis.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

3. **Oxygen:** Oxygen can not only affect certain food components, such as fats, colors and vitamins, but it also greatly increases the chances of insects and microorganisms growing in your food.
4. **Moisture:** Moisture can cause food to spoil by increasing the chances of growth of microorganisms and causing a variety of chemical reactions that are harmful to the food items.

By controlling the temperature, amount of light, oxygen and moisture levels, you can greatly increase the shelf life of your food. When the grocery stores sell out of the essentials after a crisis, you will be able to turn to your own supply and have confidence that it is just as nutritious as the day you put it on the shelf.

Knowing Your Stock

As mentioned in the introduction, learning about the items that sell out after a crisis and then creating your own stockpile of those items can be a daunting task for a beginner. Knowing your stock is one of the keys not only to getting started but also to making sure that your stockpile is well-balanced and properly rotated. Here are some tips.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

There is no point in having food that will last 25 years until you have a good supply of food that will last one year. Many of the food items that you can buy at the grocery store – and that will sell out quickly after a crisis – have a shelf life of six months to a year. These are the items that you can include in your stockpile that your family may use on a regular basis. Once you have a year supply of these foods, you can then turn your efforts to foods with an even longer shelf life, such as freeze dried and dehydrated options.

- If you are brand new to the idea of trying to prepare for an emergency, do not buy anything until you spend a week or two writing down everything that your family normally eats. While you will probably not be able to maintain the exact same diet during a time of crisis, you can focus on storing items that your family likes and that you tend to use on a regular basis.
- Once you have a good idea of which items your family likes that will work well in your storage by learning about the shelf life of each food, make note of how much of each item you tend to eat in a given period of time. Track a short period, say two weeks. From there you will be able to figure out how much of each item you will need for longer periods of time.

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



- Add each item to your food storage until you have two weeks' worth. This is where balance comes into play. It won't do you a lot of good to have a year's worth of fruit but no meat or grains. Work on building a two week supply that includes all of the essentials. Once you have a two week supply, work on a month, then two months and so on.
- Keep track of exactly what you have by using a notebook or computer program. Some online survival supply businesses even have a free food storage calculator. You simply plug in what you have and how many people are in your family. The calculator, sometimes called a food storage analyzer, will tell you how long your supply will last, how many calories per day your storage will provide as well as areas in which your food storage may be weak.
- Rotate your stock. This is especially easy to do when you have followed the above advice and included many items that you use on a regular basis. While you could invest in food rotation shelving, this isn't necessary. Just be sure to put your newest items in the back to ensure that you use the oldest items first. Keep track of what you are using and then replace those items on your next trip to the store.
- To build your stock, you will need to purchase a few extras of each item that you plan to store. You will need to do this only until your stock is at the level that you want (i.e. two weeks, six months or whatever length of time that you choose). Once you have that supply, you will then only need to replace the items that you use without the need to buy extras.
- If you have some items stored separately, such as at a secondary location (this will be discussed later in the guide) or in your short-term sustainability pack, be sure that you make note of those items and be sure that they are also included in the food rotation.

By knowing exactly what you have on hand, you will not be caught without essential items when a disaster strikes.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

NON-FOOD ESSENTIALS

In addition to knowing which food items are most likely to sell out after a crisis, there are many non-food items that will also sell out quickly and that will be a great addition to your emergency and disaster supplies.

Different Reasons to Store Different Items

Food and water are needed for survival. Other items may serve a different purpose. Some of the non-food items that will be suggested in the next chapter could be considered necessary for survival. Others are not. Still, there are very compelling reasons to consider adding some of them to your emergency supplies. Below are some of the reasons that items could be useful or necessary.

- **Maintain good health:** Vitamins, exercise gear and a very well-stocked first aid kit are a few examples of items that will help you to maintain good health. Remember, you may have limited access to medical care, so taking care of yourself is more important than ever.

Including items that will allow you to maintain good health, as well as deal with minor wounds and illnesses, can make life after a crisis much more tolerable.



! IMPORTANT NOTE:

Do not forget what you read above: One of the most important factors in surviving a crisis is maintaining psychological health. Stress relief and times of fun and relaxation are important to keeping that healthy mindset.

- **Barter:** No matter how much you plan and how diligently you work to assemble a decent stockpile, at some point there will be something that you need or want that you don't have and that you can't find for purchase. That is where bartering can come in. If you have a hefty supply of certain items, such as alcohol, tobacco and health and beauty products, you will have the power to barter for some of those items that you lack in your own stockpile.
- **Relieve stress and boredom:** During and after a crisis, staying alive is the top priority. That doesn't mean, however, that you should ignore the emotional well-being of your family members and yourself. Some items, such as comfort foods, games, books and magazines, can help to relieve the stress that can be associated with boredom. There is

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



a good chance that you'll need to work hard after a crisis just in order to survive. That is all the more reason to include some items that can help you to relax in those rare moments of downtime.

- **Maintain a sense of normalcy:** In the same vein, you want to maintain a sense that some things stay the same. After a time of crisis, there is a chance that many things will be different in your day to day life. By having access to certain comforts, you can maintain some sense of familiarity.
- **Convenience:** Finally, you must consider, to a certain extent, convenience. For example, do you NEED a propane oven that will help make preparing meals easier? No, but it will certainly be convenient. That is just one of many examples. Of course, you will not be able to buy every possible item that could make your life a little easier after a crisis, but anything that you can do to make life a bit simpler will be well worth the effort.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

OTHER IMPORTANT LISTS

Food and water are not the only things that you will need to survive and maintain as normal and healthy a life as possible following a crisis. This chapter contains three additional lists of items that you should try to accumulate.

You don't necessarily need to have every single item on each list, but you should gather as many of the "Top 10" items as possible. From the other two lists, pick and choose which items you think would work best for your situation.

Top 10 Must-Have Non-Food Essentials

If you knew that you would have no ability to buy anything and that no aid would be coming your way for several months, what types of items would you want to have on hand? It is likely that many of the items that you list will be the same as what others would list. That means that should a serious crisis occur, these non-food items are going to sell out very quickly.

If you have prepared ahead of time, then you will already have what you need to sustain you for a time. This puts you in a much better position than those who will be desperately searching for these top 10 non-food essentials.

1. **Sources of Light:** You need to see. While a serious and long lasting crisis situation has the ability to cause you to revert back to a way of life that starts at sunrise and ends at sundown, you will still need sources of light. It is best to include a variety of light sources, such as candles, oil lamps and flashlights. Rather than only including battery operated flashlights, be sure to include some that are solar powered or run on the power generated by hand-cranking. Do keep some battery operated flashlights as well as a good supply of extra batteries.
2. **Means of Cooking:** Not every type of crisis will stop you from using your normal stove and cooking implements. Others, however, will force you to turn to alternative methods of cooking. Consider how you plan to prepare meals in a variety of situations. This may include cooking on a propane stove or even cooking over an open fire. You will also need to be sure that you have cookware that can be used with your cooking devices. Your typical household pots and pans may not be suitable, for example, for cooking over an open fire.
3. **First Aid Items:** Having a well-stocked first aid kit is a must. Just as the food items will sell out after a crisis, you can expect the same with first aid supplies. Within a day or two of the nuclear disaster in Japan in 2011, it became nearly impossible to buy IOSTAT, a pill that blocks the thyroid from absorbing harmful radiation, because all sellers of the product were completely



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



sold out. And that was in the United States, thousands of miles from where the crisis was occurring. Some sellers continued to take orders telling customers that it could take up to six months to be able to fill the orders.

The above is just one example of how a disaster can cause first aid items to become difficult, if not impossible to find. The few first aid items that can typically be found on grocery store shelves will sell out quickly followed by supplies at local drugstores and big box stores.

When shopping for a first aid kit, you can choose a preassembled kit or you can put your own kit together by purchasing items separately.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

Even the most well-stocked first aid kit will not do you any good if you do not know how to use it. Be sure to take a first aid course as part of your emergency planning. Also, keep a book with your medical supplies that explains how to handle a variety of first aid situations.

4. **Garden Seeds:** If you garden then keeping a supply of seeds is a no brainer. But even if you do not garden, you should keep some non-hybrid seeds in your stockpile. The reason garden seeds make the list of the top 10 non-food items is obvious: these seeds can provide you with a way to feed your family on an ongoing basis. In a long-term crisis situation, such renewable sources of food will be essential to your survival.

Because these are non-hybrid seeds, you will be able to collect and cultivate seeds from each crop. You can purchase garden seeds sealed in a #10 can. The seeds were processed and packaged with long-term storage in mind. One online seller of emergency preparedness products sells a can of non-hybrid seeds that includes 18 varieties of vegetables along with instructions. This makes a perfect item for a non-gardener.

During a time of crisis where the food supply chain is compromised for an extended period, having your own garden will be the only way to get fresh produce for your family. Again, even if you do not garden now, keeping these seeds on hand makes sense.

5. **Personal Hygiene Items:** Food and water are not the only items that are necessary to stay healthy. Maintaining good personal hygiene is an important part of maintaining good health. During a time of crisis, it may be impossible to get the items that you need such as toothpaste, soap and shampoo. When assembling person hygiene items, do not forget feminine hygiene products. These items are extremely important to the health, cleanliness and comfort of the women in your family.

During World War II, there was an extended period of time when factories in England that once produced such items were forbidden from doing so. All efforts of all factories had to be put towards the war effort. It was, in fact, illegal to produce shampoo and toothpaste.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

While it might be difficult to imagine that exact scenario repeating itself, the point is that at any time it could become impossible to get the products that you need. By keeping a supply of your favorite products, you will be able to maintain your personal hygiene, even if it becomes impossible to find the items on grocery store shelves.

- 6. Weapons and Ammunition:** Anytime there is talk of possibly tightening gun laws, or any hint of trouble on the horizon, gun sales go through the roof. Should an actual crisis occur, it is almost a certainty that guns and ammunition will go flying off the shelves.

There are a couple of reasons that it is important to keep a good supply of guns and ammunition. First, rifles can be used for hunting. Of course, if you live in the city this is not applicable to you, but for folks in rural areas, hunting for meat could become a source of food during a time when you have very limited options.



Secondly, you need weapons and ammunition so that you will be able to protect your family and your supplies during times of civil unrest. In the United States, people are used to having the luxury of being able to call the police for protection. During a time of serious crisis, however, this will not be an option. You will have to take on the responsibility of keeping your family safe from harm.

No one likes to think about being put in a situation where they would be forced to use a gun to protect themselves. But during a time of serious crisis, there will very likely be people who go from house to house seeing what they can take – even if that means harming the homeowners.

Just as you assemble a first aid kit with the hopes that you'll never have to use it, so should you view the purchase of guns and ammunition for protection. Hopefully, you will never have to use the gun in a defensive manner. But it's good to know that should the need arise, you will be ready.

- 7. Baby/Elder Care Items:** Imagine not being able to purchase diapers, formula, wipes, adult incontinence products and the other items that you need to properly care for babies or elderly members of your family.

These items will be among the first to sell out at stores once people realize that a disaster or serious crisis is at hand. Storing extra of most of these products is easy as they have no expiration date. Of course, this is not the case for formula, so be sure to check those dates carefully.

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



When storing diapers, be sure to take the baby's growth into consideration. For example, are you trying to have enough for six months? Then you need to buy diapers in more than one size to accommodate growth.

8. **Bleach:** Bleach is the ideal household cleanser, because it disinfects the surfaces as well. It can also be used to purify water and, of course, is useful when doing laundry.

Because there may be a lot of people who need to do much more cleaning than usual following a disaster, cleaning supplies will likely sell out very quickly.

! IMPORTANT NOTE:

While grocery store shelves will empty following a crisis that is not the only reason to try and keep all of the items that you need on hand. People will be very upset; there could be riots in the streets and other forms of civil unrest. If you have what you need at home, you will not have to leave your family alone to go out in search of items. Even if some of the needed items are available, you may be putting yourself in harm's way if you run into a crowd of people who are also trying to buy the items that you need.

9. **Water Filtration System:** As mentioned above, it is just not possible to store enough water to last for an extended period of time. Instead, you need a system in place that will allow you to collect and then filter water. There are very cheap filters available, but you need a high quality filter that will allow you to properly filter large quantities of water.

Quality water filtration systems cost from several hundred to a few thousand dollars. Yes, it is quite an investment, but it is an investment that could save your life.



10. **Energy Source:** While you do not NEED power to survive after a crisis, it sure will make life a lot easier. Imagine the difference between living with no source of energy and being able to power appliances and even entertainment items, such as a television.

After a serious crisis situation, you could be without power for an extended period of time. In Norfolk, Virginia, Hurricane Isabel rolled through in 2003. By the time it made landfall in Norfolk, it was at the high end of a category 1 hurricane, the weakest possible hurricane. Still, this storm left some people in Norfolk, a major city and home of the largest naval base in the entire world, without power for close to a month.

If the weakest hurricane can cripple parts of a major city in this way, imagine how long you may be left without power following a stronger storm or some other type of disaster or crisis.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

Solar energy is a good choice because it is renewable without you having to have anything on hand. Gas generators are better than nothing, but you will also need to keep a supply of gasoline. Since gas is an item that often becomes unavailable or prohibitively expensive following a crisis, a generator may not supply the power that you need for the long term.

There are other items that are great to have on hand following a crisis. These include comfort items and items that are great for bartering. Below is a list of some comfort items and a list of items that work well for bartering.

Goods for Barter

Bartering is one way that you may be able to get some of the items that you need and that you did store in a great enough quantity. Of course, the key to successful bartering is having items that others are going to want.

While it is not possible to know ahead of time which items are going to bring the greatest return, this list includes items that will sell out quickly from stores and that many people will want during a short or long term crisis.

The more of a variety of items that you have for bartering, the better the chances that you will be able to find someone who has what you want and also wants what you have.

The items on this list are in no particular order.

- Food items: The basics, such as sugar, flour and oil are good bets. Food with a long shelf life is another good choice. Cigarettes and chewing tobacco
- Potable water: If you have a renewable water source, this could be your ticket to getting all sorts of items in trade. Not everyone will have access to a constant supply of drinking water, and it is something that absolutely every person needs. For this reason, if you have such a supply, it will be one of your greatest bartering tools.
- Charcoal
- Alcohol
- Non-hybrid gardening seeds
- First aid items
- Over the counter medications
- Toilet paper
- Tools
- Lumber
- Firewood



IMPORTANT **NOTE:**

DO NOT *bring all of your bartering items at one time. You will need to hold some back for future use, especially if you foresee the crisis situation lasting for an extended period of time. You also do not want to reveal how much stock that you have. Doing so can make you a target for criminals. Be discreet about what you have and in what quantities. There is no reason to reveal what you have.*



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

- Propane gas
- Guns
- Ammunition
- Books/magazines
- Gasoline
- Fishing gear
- Baby items such as diapers, wipes and formula
- Cleaning supplies – especially bleach
- Feminine hygiene products
- Batteries
- Extra clothing
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent

Comfort Items

Another important, yet often overlooked, group of items are comfort items. Yes, survival is the most important thing following a crisis. That doesn't mean, however, that you should not try to include some comfort items in your stockpile as well.

This is important for everyone, but especially if you have kids. Comfort items can help to relieve stress, provide something to look forward to and help to keep morale up in general. Below are some ideas for some comfort items that you may want to keep on hand.

- Toys and games
- Books and magazines
- Certain foods, such as candy and popcorn
- Cigarettes and tobacco
- Alcohol
- Writing implements, such as pens, paper or journals
- Art supplies, such as crayons, markers, paint and paper
- Musical instruments
- Stuffed animals
- Extra pillows and blankets





37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

You know what items will bring the most comfort and joy to your family during a difficult time. If someone in your family enjoys a particular hobby, such as sewing, include items that will allow them to continue in that hobby.

If you have children and it seems that the crisis situation is going to be long term then hold back a few toys to be given as gifts on birthdays and for holidays.

No, comfort items are not the first priority, but they can help to make a terrible situation a bit more bearable.

COOKING IN A CRISIS

Even the best stocked emergency food storage is not going to do you a lot of good if you do not know how to cook and prepare the food during a crisis. In some situations, you will not be able to use your stove and oven to prepare meals. For that reason it is important to familiarize yourself with other cooking options.

Also, while some of the food in your storage will be familiar items that you use every day, some may be items that you have not cooked with on a regular basis. That is why practicing with unfamiliar items is an important part of your emergency planning.

Know How to Use Items in Storage

Dehydrated onions. White soup base. Powdered milk. Those are a few examples of items that you may have in your emergency food storage that you don't use on a regular basis. Of course, you will also have plenty of items that you are used to using, but it is important to know how to use all of the items that you have in your food storage.

When you choose items for your emergency food storage, you should also have a plan about how you plan to use them. You don't necessarily need to map out exact meals, but you should have a basic idea of how the items will come in handy.

Some are surprised when they buy long-term storage food items for the first time and realize that there are often no instructions on the can. Instead, you have to find other sources of information as to how to use each product.

Obviously, the time to do this is BEFORE a crisis occurs. You don't want the added stress of having to learn how to cook with strange ingredients while you are in the middle of dealing with a crisis situation.

Instead, become familiar with how to use each item in your food storage now. Then, should a disaster or crisis occur, you will have all the knowledge that you need to be able to continue to feed your family.

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



Practice

Some who keep long-term food storage items in their stockpile are a little reluctant to make practice meals with them. One reason is that the items tend to cost more than what you would normally buy at the grocery store. Still, it is best to practice with each item at least once for a couple of reasons.

1. You can learn if your family likes the food. If your family absolutely refuses to eat a certain meal then there is very little point in including it in your stockpile. Sure, when food is scarce they will surely be more open minded about what they eat, but it is just as easy to stock foods that they will enjoy as it is to stock foods that your family will have to force themselves to eat.
2. You can make mistakes without serious consequences. If you are nervous about cooking with long-term storage foods for the first time, it makes more sense to get some practice in during a time when you can afford to make some mistakes. During a crisis situation, it would be heartbreaking to waste some of your precious storage supplies by burning or otherwise ruining them during cooking. If you practice now, a mistake won't hurt nearly as much and you'll have time to perfect your skills before a real crisis occurs.

Practice can actually be fun. For some families, practicing for a crisis is a serious matter. Again, having all of the supplies in the world won't mean a lot if you don't know how to use them. Some families have drills during which they cook with nothing but items from their storage for an entire week.

To be sure they are truly ready for a crisis, some shun the use of their oven and stove and rely solely on their alternative means of cooking. This might sound extreme, but by doing such drills, your family will not be the least bit intimidated by having to rely on alternative cooking methods during a crisis.

This will make the situation much less stressful and allow the needed kitchen related chores to get done with ease when a crisis occurs.

Survival Baking

Survival baking is a bit trickier than survival cooking. How do you make bread without an oven? Is it even possible? Those who are newer to emergency and survival planning might be surprised to learn that you can actually bake bread and other items over an open flame. This is a skill that you definitely want to practice and perfect before you need it.

There are two options for survival baking.

- **From Scratch Baking:** This is where you take all of the basic ingredients and whip up everything from pancakes to rolls. You can also make stuffing, loaves of a variety of breads and much more. Ingredients that you need to keep on hand for from scratch baking are already included on the 37 things, but are listed here as well for easy referencing.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

- Flour or grain (if you choose to store grain, be sure that you have a grain mill with which to grind the wheat to flour)
 - Baking powder
 - Sugar
 - Baking soda
 - Oil
 - Shortening
 - Honey
 - Dehydrated eggs
- **Baking Mixes:** Baking mixes are available for both short term and long term storage. The baking mixes intended for longer term storage typically only require that you add water. Some of the mixes sold in grocery stores, which are fine for shorter storage needs of up to six months or a year, may require additional ingredients. Be sure to look to see what ingredients you will have to add.



As a general rule, you want to choose baking mixes that are as simple to use as possible. That means the fewer additional ingredients that you will have to add to the mix, the better.

A Dutch oven will allow you to bake over an open flame. You may want to keep two different sizes of Dutch ovens; a smaller one for making certain baked goods and a larger one for soups and stews.

Here are some tips for seasoning and cleaning your Dutch oven.



- **Seasoning:** You will need to properly season the Dutch oven before use. Seasoning is a process by which you bake oil into the inside surface of the oven. You should do this before a crisis as the process will be easier.

To season the Dutch oven, wash and dry thoroughly and then spread vegetable shortening all over the inside of the oven. A thin layer of vegetable shortening is fine, you don't need too much.

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



Next, place the Dutch oven in an oven set at about 300° for one hour.

Once cool, wipe off any excess grease. You want to see a smooth surface over the entire interior of the oven. If you do not, repeat the seasoning process.

- **Cleaning:** Never use soap or dish detergent to clean your Dutch oven. Instead, follow these simple steps:
 - Scrape any excess food out of the inside of the oven using a plastic instrument. Using a metal scraper can damage the oven.
 - Using nothing more than hot water and a non-abrasive sponge, clean the oven.
 - Dry thoroughly
 - Using a soft cloth, add a thin layer of oil to the inside of the oven
 - Wipe off excess oil
- **Heating:** Getting the proper temperature in a Dutch oven is not difficult, but it does require some practice. You can use charcoal or wood over an open fire to heat your oven. Take the time to watch one of the many videos on YouTube that demonstrate cooking with a Dutch oven. Watching a video will show you just how easy it is.

Learning survival baking will allow you to bake warm, comforting breads and other items that can make dealing with a crisis situation a little more palatable.

Survival Cookbooks

Another important item to keep with your food storage is a survival cookbook. These cookbooks provide recipes and cooking tips specifically geared to long term storage items. Buy a couple of these books now and browse through them.

The recipes found in survival cookbooks are perfect choices for when you practice your survival cooking.

Crisis Cooking Tools

In addition to a Dutch oven for survival baking, there are some other crisis cooking tools that you may want to consider adding to your emergency supplies.

- **Camp stove:** A camp stove is a small, portable stove that uses small propane cylinders as the heat source. A camp stove is a good addition to your emergency supplies because you can easily take it along with you should you need to evacuate. Of course, you'll want to keep extra propane cylinders on hand as well.
- **Charcoal grill:** A charcoal grill is a decent option for emergency cooking. If you plan to rely on this method for a longer period of time, you will need a place to store large quantities of charcoal where the charcoal will not get wet.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

- **Gas grill:** Many people already have a gas grill that they use on a regular basis. While you cannot take this with you if you need to evacuate, it is great for cooking during an emergency while at home. Always have at least two tanks on hand. This way you'll always have a full tank which is great during an emergency but can also prevent you from running out of gas during a party.
- **Candle Heat Cookers:** With a few items, including a few small pieces of cardboard, a small can, an empty #10 can and some wax and you can make a small stove capable of boiling water and handling other small cooking tasks.
 - Wash out an old tuna can or other small can
 - Cut cardboard into strips and coil them inside the can
 - Melt the candle and pour the wax inside the can, leaving the top of the cardboard uncovered and allow to solidify
 - Poke holes in the sides of the empty #10 can to allow for ventilation
 - Light the cardboard and place the small can under the #10 can

Within a few minutes, the top of the #10 will be hot enough to perform small cooking tasks.

- **Flameless Heaters:** As mentioned above, MREs should not be the bulk of your emergency food supply. If you do keep some then flameless heaters are a quick and easy way to heat those meals. Flameless heaters are a small pouch that you simply add to water. A chemical reaction causes the water to heat up. Place the MRE pouch in the water, and you'll have a hot meal.
- **Collapsible Stoves and Stove in a Can:** These items are both readily available from businesses that sell emergency supplies. They are both compact and easy to use. They are great for camping as well as for emergencies.
- **Solar Oven:** You can buy a solar oven or even use simple plans to build one yourself. A solar oven is a fabulous option for crisis cooking because you do not need to keep any other supplies, such as propane, charcoal or even wood, on hand.

The downside is that it can be challenging to learn to regulate the heat. You may need to move the oven around in your yard to find the best spot, which will vary based on the time of day. Still, you should definitely include a solar oven in your arsenal of crisis cooking tools.

It is best to have more than one option when it comes to cooking during a crisis. That way, if one won't work for some reason, you will have other means by which to prepare meals for your family.



WHERE TO LOOK IF YOU'RE TOO LATE

So far, this guide has discussed what items to get ahead of a crisis because they sell out quickly after a crisis. But what if you waited too long? What if a crisis has occurred or is imminent and now the grocery store has sold out of the items that you most need?

This can be a scary situation, and if it happens to you once, you will likely take the necessary steps to be prepared for the next crisis.

Below are some options to explore if you did not adequately prepare and now find that you need items that you cannot find.

EBay or Craig's List

Once the stores sell out of items, auction sites, such as EBay (www.ebay.com) and classified sites, such as Craig's List (www.craigslist.org), can be a good source of finding certain items. This is especially true if the crisis is local to your area. In that case, it is very likely that people in other parts of the country will not only have what you need, but will be willing to sell it for a fair price.



When buying items from Craig's List, you will more than likely be dealing with an individual rather than a business. There are some businesses that operate on EBay, but there are also millions of individual who use the site to auction items as well.

Here are some things to keep in mind when trying to buy items from EBay or Craig's List.

- **Pricing:** When you buy items from an individual through an auction or classified site, understand that the seller can set whatever price he or she wants. A generator that may sell for \$500 in a store could be listed for \$1000 or even more if the seller thinks someone will pay it. It is the simple concept of supply and demand. For that reason, expect to pay much more for such items during a crisis.

That being said, you should not settle for the first price that you see. Be sure to explore similar listings to learn the average cost of the item.

On EBay you can bid as low as the starting bid. Just enter the highest amount that you are willing to pay and EBay will automatically submit your higher bid as the price of the auction increases.

With Craig's List and other classified sites, you will have the opportunity to negotiate with the seller. Some items will be listed with a price and the words "or best offer". That is an indication that the seller is very open to negotiations. Other listings will say that the price is firm.

Even in cases where the seller does not say "or best offer", and even in some cases where the seller states the price is firm, there is often still some room for negotiation.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

Of course, the price that you are willing to pay is directly impacted by how badly you need or want the item. The seller knows this, so you'll need to keep a bit of a poker face when trying to make a deal.

- **Expired Items:** When you are buying food items, such as MREs or food canned for long term storage, you must be very aware of the expiration dates. One big problem when buying such items in this manner is that you have no way of knowing how the items were stored.

As you learned in the section “Factors That Affect Shelf Life”, the way an item was kept has an impact on whether or not the item will still be nutritious and even whether or not it will be edible.

You could buy MREs that were kept in a garage where the temperatures got up to over 100°. In that case, even if the product was only a year or two old, they could be inedible.

- **Broken or Defective Items:** When buying something second hand, there is always a chance that the item could be broken or defective. With EBay, you have the safety net of being able to review the seller's ratings. While not foolproof, if a seller has a history of positive feedback then that is a good indication that they make good on their word and will be likely to want to work with you on any issues so as to keep their good online reputation. Also, EBay has some built in buyer protection programs. These vary based on the specific item, so be sure that you understand the details of any possible guarantee before you purchase an item.

With classified sites, you will have no such assurances. For that reason, you should not buy something through a classified site that must be sent via the mail. Instead, you should see and test the product in person before handing over any money.

- **Payment Methods:** There are many payments when buying some from EBay, which is helpful in an emergency when you're short on cash. You will be able to pay via PayPal, which allows you to use a credit card.

When buying items from someone on Craig's List, or a similar classified site, you will almost always be limited to paying with cash. In some cases, the person might be willing to take a PayPal payment, but you only do this AFTER you have met the person and have the item in your possession.

- **Meetup Location:** When buying from Craig's List, it is best not to meet at your home. The reason is that you do not want the person to see your stockpile. Remember, parents will do just about anything to feed their hungry children. Inviting a stranger into your home – even if he seems safe – is a bad idea. If he so much as mentions what you have to someone that he knows then your family could be at risk.



IMPORTANT NOTE:

Inviting a stranger into your home – even if he seems safe – is a bad idea. If he so much as mentions what you have to someone that he knows then your family could be at risk.

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



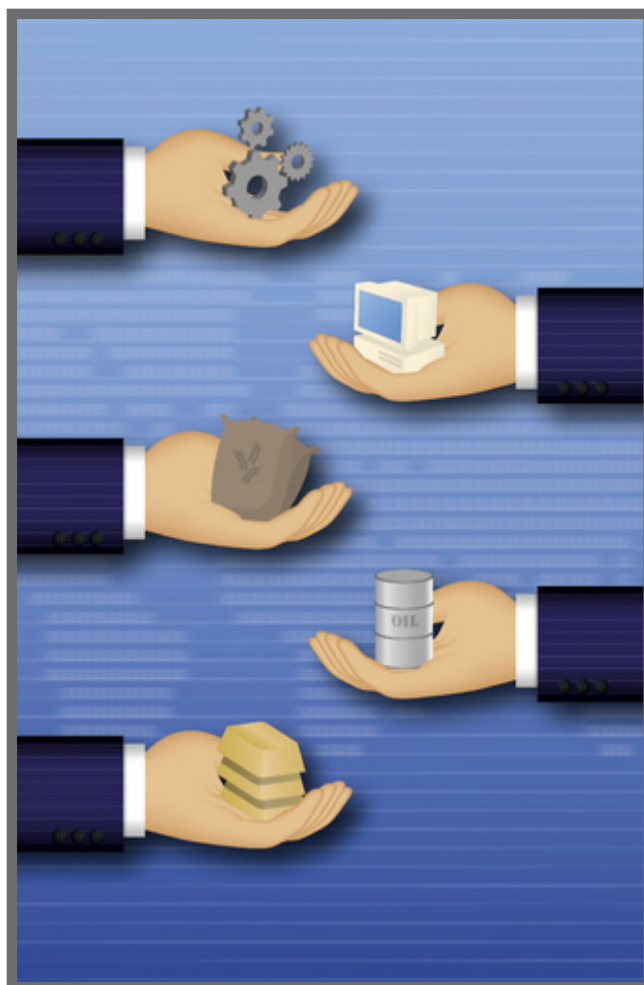
EBay and Craig's List can be a good way of buying some of the items that are sold out in the stores. Just be very careful that you get what you pay for and that you don't pay more than necessary.

Bartering

Bartering has already been mentioned in this guide, and it is another good way of getting some of the things that are missing from your own stockpile. It is very likely that someone has what you need, and that they will be willing to part with it if you have something that they need.

Here are some tips when bartering after a crisis.

- **Have a good supply:** The obvious key to being able to get the most from bartering is having desirable items that you can trade. The best bartering items were discussed in a previous chapter. How many of each item that you choose to keep on hand will have to be determined by your budget and, to some extent, how much space you have in which to store the items.
- **Don't overpay:** While it is easy to see when you are paying too much cash for an item, some people "overpay" in what they agree to trade. You should be making trades that are fair and beneficial to both parties. If someone is asking you to trade a generator for a box of candy bars, you probably need to end your bartering with that person and find someone who is willing to be fair in their negotiations.
- **Poker face:** When you go to buy a house or a car, you know that you shouldn't show the seller or the seller's representative how much you want it. When you act overly enthusiastic about an item, you give the other person the advantage when it comes to the negotiations.



On the other hand, you should never insult the items that the other person is using to barter. Be polite, but keep that poker face. Remember, the trade should be fair to both parties. If you show how desperately you want something, you are handing off the advantage to the other person.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

- **Don't Bring Everything:** When you go to barter, do not bring everything that you have. You should have some idea what you are looking for, so bring enough that you think would make a fair trade, plus a little extra. You don't want to advertise how rich you are with goods. Be discreet and bring only what you think you will need for that day's trading.

Should the economy collapse, bartering will be the main form of buying and selling. That is why having some sort of renewable resource, such as a water filtration system or a thriving garden, is a good way to guarantee that you will have plenty of "currency" when paper money no longer has any value.

Another situation that could cause goods to have more value than currency is the very one being discussed in this book: empty grocery store shelves.

During World War II when important kitchen staples were being rationed, you could get more with a dozen eggs and a few sticks of butter than you could with money. When the shelves were empty, it didn't matter how much money you had. That is the situation that you will be facing during a crisis that endures for any length of time.

Distribution Centers

Distribution centers are where the goods go before they are shipped to the stores where you shop. Learn where distributions centers are in your area. Learn what kind of products each distribution center handles. That way, should you need a specific item, you will know which distribution center will be most likely to have it.

If your store is out of a certain item, you still might be able to find it by visiting the distribution centers. Of course, even distribution centers will have a limited supply of each item, so it is a good idea not to share this tip with too many people.

Some distribution centers might not sell to the public, but in an emergency or crisis situation, there is a chance that – even if they do not normally sell to the public – that they will make an exception based on the circumstances.

Emergency Aid Groups

A final option for finding the items that you need is emergency aid groups. Keep in mind that if this were an ideal option, there would not be much need for this guide. Emergency aid groups often have very limited resources. They may require that you do not exceed a certain income or that you have already suffered great loss due to a crisis before they will help you.

It is a good idea to become familiar with various emergency aid groups near you and learn their policies. If you find that a crisis situation has left you without the items that you need and the grocery store shelves are empty, these emergency aid groups are one more resource that you can try in an attempt to get the goods that you need.

Of course, proper preparation will eliminate the need for last minute, desperate searches for those last few items. That is why the best line of defense against the possibility of empty grocery store shelves tomorrow is proper preparation today.



TIPS ABOUT YOUR STOCKPILE

Now that you have learned which items will sell out first after a crisis, and how important these items will be in a survival situation, you probably want to get started on developing your own stockpile of goods.

As mentioned above, the first tip is this: Start now. It may seem like a daunting task, and you probably have a lot to learn. Here are some tips about your stockpile to help you get the basic knowledge that you need to be sure that when the store shelves are empty, you will still be able to take care of your family.

Where to Store Your Stockpile

Some people say that the reason that they cannot build a stockpile of emergency goods is because they simply do not have the room. The fact is that there are people who live in a one bedroom apartment that have found a way to maintain a decent sized stockpile.

Sure, it will be more challenging if you are working with very limited space, but there are ways that you can make room for your stockpile without giving over a big chunk of your home's square footage.

- **Under Beds:** One great place to keep some items when you are short on space is under the bed. Simply put some risers under the legs of the beds in your home and, presto, you have lots of valuable storage space without giving up one inch of your floor space.



- **Coffee table tricks:** Instead of a coffee table, use a piece of furniture that is similar to a hope chest. You can then fill the chest with items from your stockpile. Again, you will not be giving up any room in your home.

You can also use your end tables for storage. Just buy those cheap pressed wood tables with the legs that screw on. That type of table is used with a table cloth that goes all the way to the floor. You can then use the hidden space beneath the end table to store items.

One creative man skipped the end tables altogether. He placed some of his large buckets of wheat in the spots where an end table should go. He cut a square round to place on top of the bucket and covered the whole thing with a floor length table cloth.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

When his guests set their drinks down on the end table, none of them ever guessed that they were actually setting their drink down on part of the homeowner's emergency stockpile.

- **Steal a foot:** While ideally you would not have to sacrifice any of your floor space for your stockpile, sometimes it is necessary to do so. Instead of giving up an entire room, however, you can just steal one or two feet.

Simply measure out one to two feet from a wall. Next, run a curtain along the ceiling in a manner that will hide that space from the rest of the room and you will have an instant "storage closet". Some people steal a foot from each bedroom and are able to have room for a very good size stockpile with only a small sacrifice of space. By stealing a very small amount of space from several rooms, rather than taking it all from one room, you may not even miss the space.

- **Unused spaces:** If you are lucky enough to have an attic or basement you can turn it into storage space – even if the space is in very rough condition or is not climate controlled.

If you have an attic that gets very warm during the summer, you will not be able to store food there, but you can certainly use the space to store other items, such as some of those on the bartering or comfort lists.

Basement spaces can be ideal for storage as they tend to be quite easy to keep cool. You will have to be mindful of moisture, however. As you read above, moisture can do as much harm to the items in your emergency stockpile as heat.

- **Build a storage section:** Whether you are fortunate enough to have an attic or basement or are just going to steal a foot or two, you will need to build a storage section.

Whether you have all of the space in the world, or are working with very limited space, you want to make the most of the room that you have. One way that you can do that is by making sure that your shelves go from the floor to the ceiling. It doesn't matter if you can reach the top shelf with great ease. Just use the very top shelves for the items that



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



do not need to be rotated very often or at all, such as candles or extra pillows.

When you are stealing a foot, you can still build floor to ceiling shelves, but they will have to be narrow. The good news is that those shelves will be perfect for storing canned goods. You will even be able to fit #10 cans two deep. Consider leaving enough room on the bottom shelf to store large buckets or cases of water.

Once you decided where to start storing the items for your stockpile, you are ready to begin your emergency planning in earnest. There are some things that you should keep in mind that will help you to avoid some of the most common stockpile problems.

Avoiding Common Stockpile Problems

All of your planning could be for nothing if you do not work to avoid some of the most common stockpile problems such as spoilage. Below are four sections of tips to help you avoid some of the common issues that many have with their emergency preparedness stockpiles.

- **Spoilage:** The most common problem with stockpiles is spoilage. Some people buy items, toss them on the shelf and never think about them again. Fast forward a few years and they have shelves full of items that need to be thrown away.

That is not only a huge waste of money, but it will leave them empty handed should a crisis situation arise and all that they have on their shelves are spoiled food items. There are some steps that you can take to avoid wasting any of the items that you stored.

- **Proper storage:** As you read above in the section titled “factors that affect shelf life”, how you store your food items has a direct impact on how long they will last. In general, you should store your items out of direct light, at room temperature or below and away from moisture. Proper storage is the number one way to extend the shelf life of your items and ensure that they will be there when you need to use them in an emergency.
- **Watch expiration dates:** While some items are good for decades, items that come from the grocery store typically have a shelf life of one year or less. For this reason, it is important





37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

to pay close attention to expiration dates. One trick is to write the expiration on the front of the can or package using a black Sharpie.

That will make it very easy to see the date, and you will be able to tell at a glance when a certain item is going to expire.

- **Rotate:** When stocking your shelves, take the time to move the older items to the front and place the newer items behind.

When an item is close to reaching the expiration date, remove it from your storage and place it with your general use items in the kitchen. Make a note of what items you remove from the stockpile so that you can replace them.

- **Use it once open:** Some people like to try items in their stockpile, such as a new brand of powdered milk or a certain type of dehydrated entrée. While it is fine to test out new products to see if your family enjoys them, once an item has been opened, do not return it to the stockpile. Instead, just continue to use it.

Items that were intended for long term storage are packaged very carefully. Care is taken to remove oxygen so that microorganisms cannot grow and the cans are sealed to keep out all moisture and light.

Once a can is opened, it is no longer suitable for long term storage. Once an item is open, enjoy it and replace it with a new product.

- **Keep it a Secret:** Another common stockpile problem may not seem like a problem until AFTER a crisis occurs. Just imagine that you have done everything right. You learned which items sell out first after a crisis and through careful budgeting and planning, assembled an impressive stockpile.



Let's say that you have amassed enough goods to sustain your family for well over a year. So you did everything right except for one thing: You told too many people what you were doing.

Perhaps you just wanted to inspire others to start their own stockpiles. Maybe you were quite proud of your accomplishment so you'd show off your storage area anytime you had company over to your home.

You didn't think it was a problem, because they were all your friends. It not as though you were telling strangers. But the problem is that during a time of crisis, all bets are off. People will do almost anything if they think it will allow them to feed their families. The people who know about your stockpile will show up at your house, begging for some of your food and other items. Some may even take more drastic steps and try to steal from you.

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



While you would want to help as many people as you could in a time of crisis, if you give away a lot of what you have stored, then you won't be able to feed your own family. A stockpile that would last your family for a year is only going to be able to feed your entire neighborhood for a few days.

To avoid this issue, you should keep your stockpile a secret. You should tell as few people as possible. You should also make sure that other members of your household understand that they should not be discussing your stockpile.

If you have a survival garden, or any other survival components that are kept on the outside of your home, try to place them somewhere that they cannot be seen by visitors or passerby.

Many people who develop a stockpile purposely store extra so that they will be able to share with their neighbors and friends. Even in this situation, you should never reveal exactly what or how much you have.

Even if you completely trust the people that you are telling, you never know who they might tell. In a time of civil unrest and when all of the grocery store shelves are empty, the very last thing that you want is outsiders knowing about your stockpile.

This could not only mean losing some of your items, but it could also put your family in harm's way.

Practice

This has been mentioned already, but this bit of advice belongs in the section about common stockpile problems. If you only store items that you use on a regular basis then, obviously, practice is not needed.

If, however, your stockpile also includes unfamiliar items, then you should practice cooking with these items. If you do not, then you may be unprepared to use the items during a time of crisis.

Secondary Locations

During World War II, it was common for housewives to go to the store every single day rather than risk losing a week's worth of groceries should their home be destroyed by enemy bombs.

Imagine if, after all of the time and expense of building a good stockpile, every bit of it was wiped out by a storm, flooding or fire. This is a very real possibility, and one that has happened to many well-prepared people.

The answer is not to avoid building a stockpile. Instead, you should divide your stockpile between your home and at least one other secondary location.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

A few ideas for a secondary location are:

- A second home that you own
- A home of a friend or family member
- A climate controlled storage unit

If you partner with a friend or family member, there are some things that you should keep in mind.

- Be sure that your survival partner understands the importance of not telling anyone about the stockpile
- When you have a survival partner, you can each split your stockpile between your two homes.
- Be sure that the home is far enough away that it would not be affected by storms, flooding or fire that could destroy your home yet close enough that you would be able to get to the home if needed.
- It is easy for the half of your stockpile that is kept at a second location to be sort of “out of sight out of mind.” You must be sure to keep track of your stock being kept at a secondary location and rotate as necessary.
- Be wise in how you divide your stockpile and keep a good mix of items at both locations. For example, do not keep all of your meat and protein at one location and all of the vegetables and fruit at another.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The point of keeping some of your stockpile at a secondary location is so that if your home is destroyed, you still have some goods to help you get through the time of crisis. Pick your partner very carefully and discuss how you will handle it if one of you were to lose the stock kept at the other house. It is a good idea to become true partners, where you “own” the entirety of both stockpiles together. That way, should one of you lose yours, there is no question that all that is left is to be shared.



A FINAL WORD

It CAN Happen to You

There's a story of a farmer who lived in an area that was technically a flood zone, but that had not seen serious flooding in at least 50 years. Every day after his normal duties, he would spend an hour or two adding sandbags to the perimeter of his farm. This was no small task as he had a pretty good sized farm, so for twenty years, every day he added sandbags.

His neighbors laughed at him, and told him he was wasting his time. Since the area hadn't flooded in so many years, surely such precautions were overkill. He ignored their mocking and continued sandbagging.



One day, the river swelled and flooded the entire area. All of the farmers watched helplessly as their entire crops went underwater. All except one farmer. The efforts of the one who had spent decades sandbagging his land paid off, and the water flowed right around his property.

The point is twofold: First, don't ever think that a disaster cannot visit you. It doesn't matter if it's never happened before. It doesn't matter if you happen to be living a charmed life and ill never befalls you. It CAN happen. Secondly, don't let the mocking of others stop you from doing what you feel is best.

Many people think that accumulating a stockpile and having any type of emergency plan means that you are an alarmist or paranoid, but quite the opposite is true. When you are prepared, you have no reason to fear.

You are not being an alarmist; you are simply being wise and preparing for the possibilities of tomorrow.

Disasters Happen Everyday

If you live in an area that is prone to hurricanes, tornadoes or other disasters, then you already understand that disasters happen every single day. Some come without warning while others may give you a few hours or days to prepare.

Today, tomorrow and every day after that, a disaster will take place somewhere in the world. It may be a "small" disaster, such as a hurricane that only impacts a small area and barely makes the national news.

It may be a huge disaster, such as the Asian tsunami or Hurricane Ike or Katrina that becomes the top story for weeks and changes the face of emergency preparedness.



37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS

In either case, someone will be unable to get the food and other supplies they need. In many cases, no aid will be available to them for days or weeks.

Their best line of defense would have been preparation. Will you be prepared when a disaster hits close to home?

Non-Disaster Food Shortages

A disaster is not the only reason that grocery stores will sell out of certain items. Something as simple as truck driver's strike can cripple the food supply chain and leave shelves empty in locations all over the country.

A Fox News story mentions that a lack of acreage has already caused food prices to rise, but could soon cause a worldwide food shortage.

In fact, one of the best ways to smell a food shortage disaster before it happens is to watch the supply lines. When you watch the evening news, listen for any talk of supply lines being interrupted. If such activity is making the news then there is a good chance a food shortage is coming, and it's time to stock up.

Don't Procrastinate

It is impossible to know when a disaster or other event will cause grocery stores to sell out of the items that you need. If you start today then you have the best possible chance of being prepared.

37 FOOD ITEMS SOLD OUT AFTER CRISIS



RESOURCES

Newsweek article, “What it Takes to Survive” <http://www.newsweek.com/2009/01/23/what-it-takes-to-survive.html>

FEMA Guide, “Food and Water in an Emergency” <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/f&web.pdf>

“What Your Grocery Store Will Look Like in an Emergency” http://www.shtfplan.com/emergency-preparedness/what-your-grocery-store-will-look-like-in-an-emergency_03152011

Be Prepared, “Food Storage Shelf Life” <http://beprepared.com/article.asp?ai=579&name=Food%20Storage%20Shelf%20Life>

Be Prepared, “Food Storage Analyzer” <http://beprepared.com/article.asp?ai=903>

FEMA, “First Aid Kit” <http://www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/firstaid.shtm>

Be Prepared, “Garden Seeds” http://beprepared.com/product.asp_Q_pn_E_FG%20S200_A_name_E_Garden%20Seeds

Solar Power at Home, “Emergency Solar Power” <http://www.solarpowerathome.com/emergency-solar-power.html>

Cowboy Showcase, “Dutch Oven Cooking” http://www.cowboyshowcase.com/Dutch_oven_cooking.htm

YouTube, Texas Park and Wildlife, “Dutch Oven Cooking Intro 1” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2iG4aMKBCQ>

Solar Cooking, “Build a Solar Oven” <http://solarcooking.org/plans/>

The Ready Store, “Cooking and Fuel” <http://www.thereadystore.com/emergency-preparedness-basics/emergency-need/cooking-and-fuel>

Daily Planet, “How to Survive in a Crisis? Insider Tips Offered at Preparedness Seminar.” <http://www.ashevilledailyplanet.com/index.php/News/How-to-survive-in-a-crisis-Insider-tips-offered-at-preparedness-seminar.html>

Fox News, “Puerto Rican Farmers Warn of Coming Food Shortages” <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/money/2011/02/03/puerto-rican-farmers-warn-coming-food-shortages/>



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