

Stockpiling For Survival

What and How to Eat In a Time of Crisis



A Handbook to Help Get You Started in Your
Preparations for an Emergency Situation

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When Disaster Strikes

It doesn't take long for grocery store shelves to empty soon after a disaster. Or even before, if there's enough warning. Within hours, basic items such as water, bread, and milk literally "disappear". Think about it: as Americans, we are spoiled. Typically, we come home from an ordinary trip to the supermarket with everything we need and almost anything we want. Regardless of the season, we have fresh fruits such as strawberries, oranges, and peppers (among others) at our fingertips year round.

Have you ever wondered how it's possible that someone in Illinois can enjoy strawberries throughout winter, or how a family in Alabama can bake delicious homemade bread with wheat from out west? Rarely do we consider the transportation and delivery systems that make such things possible. We have gotten so used to having an enormous variety of food at our fingertips that it's hard to imagine anything less. But what if, for some reason, those delivery trucks never made it to our stores?

Have you ever gone for groceries the night before Thanksgiving? Were you able to find everything you needed? Probably not! Certain items simply are not there—not even one. It appears everyone had planned to enjoy the same dish that is a favorite in your house and have beaten you to those ingredients. Even a day or two after the holiday the inventory isn't replenished. Do you know why?

The average grocery store has only a three day supply of food. If for any reason the trucker was delayed and couldn't replenish the grocer's shelves, the store would run out of inventory within three days. It's likely to be even less than that, especially if everyone was in panic mode!

Are You Prepared?

People who live in hurricane prone areas know that stores can be wiped out in hours if a landfall is predicted—and it's not just food that disappears. When a disaster occurs—or even predicted—people swarm to the local supermarket, hardware store, gas station, and ATMs to "stock up" at the last minute.

In many cases, items that were fully stocked on Monday vanish by Tuesday if a storm has been forecast, even if the storm is out to sea.

This last minute panic-shopping doesn't happen only when a hurricane is expected. Any time supply lines are interrupted, there can be a "run" on important items, and some of the things you need for convenience, or even survival, may be unavailable to you. The only way to protect yourself and your loved ones from this type of panic or disruption is to prepare in advance.

There has recently been mention of a possible food shortage—right here in the good ol' USA! How long will it be before the average American consumer starts to think more about this? Is it possible that people will begin panicking and hoarding basic grocery items? Without strategic planning, we could very well see food supplies disappear within hours if there ever was a panic.

Possible Reasons for Supply Chain Disruption

There are many reasons the chain of supplies may be disrupted. Some can affect you for a few days...and some will disrupt things for a much longer time. A few of the reasons are listed below:

- ☐ Weather related events (hurricanes, snow storms, etc)
- ☐ Loss of power for an extended period of time
- ☐ Disruption of the supply chain
- ☐ Inability to get to the store for an extended period of time (how often will you make a grocery run if gas hits 7, 8, or 10 bucks a gallon?)
- ☐ Food or gas rationing
- ☐ Personal reasons: job loss, illness, etc.
- ☐ Disruption of the banking or financial systems.
- ☐ Rampant inflation

2 Minute Preparation Test

Put this book down for a moment for a quick readiness test. It is self scoring. You should be able to get an idea of how prepared you are simply by looking and evaluating what you see.

Ready?

Take a good look in your cupboards or pantry. Check the freezer and refrigerator as well, keeping in mind that if the electricity goes out, most items in these areas won't keep for long.

So, if today brought food shortages...and you couldn't get to the grocery store...how long could you get by? For a few days? A few weeks or longer? What about a month or two? Again, we tend to take for granted our ability to run up to the store to "get a few things" when we need them. But what if we couldn't do that? What if what we needed wasn't there?

Worried yet? You should be!

If you just laid down this book and searched your pantry the day after your weekly shopping trip, you may have found enough food to get you through a few days...but what about water? Are there any medications you take regularly? Will you be able to wash your hands with soap (important to halt the spread of germs, especially if medical help is scarce for a while)? Can you treat simple injuries at home?

Once you review your kitchen, take a look a little further out. Does your car have a full or nearly full tank of gas? One of the initial responses to threat of any type is to go fill up the tank just in case. If you make it a habit to keep the car full (or at least not hovering near empty), you will be that much further ahead.

Do you have cash on hand? Stockpiling cash sounds silly, but in the event of an electrical failure (which can happen for any number of reasons: storms, snow, flooding, and simple mechanical failure), ATMs won't work, banks will be closed, and if you were able to find an open store, processing your credit card would be impossible.

So, if you had to switch to cash today, how would you manage? Would you simply head to the emergency fund, and use what you've set aside, or would you be shaking down the couch for spare change?

Imagine, now, what would happen if grocery store shelves across the nation were bare. The average family probably wouldn't have enough food on hand to last more than a week. If you live where hurricanes are common, you might have learned to prepare for scenarios that cause a shortage of food. And you've probably witnessed how rapidly certain items vanish when people are worried.

So, how do you score on preparedness? If such a food crisis were to occur, would you be able to feed your family for indefinite amounts of time until the problems were resolved? What if it lasted longer than a few weeks? Don't think such a thing could happen? Well, we are currently facing the biggest economic disaster our country has ever seen. Anything seems possible at this point.

One more thing to consider: another disadvantage with disaster on the horizon, even after it strikes, is the significant increase in prices. Even in the absence of a crisis and sizeable financial bailouts being handed out, inflation brings about rising costs all on its own. So, you want to stock up before prices skyrocket.

The ball is in your court. It's up to you to take responsibility and provide for your family if such a situation does arise. You can't control what other people do, and you can't prevent bad disaster. But you can prepare, protecting your loved ones and yourself in the event something did occur. Knowing that you have a plan and that you are prepared will help you sleep better at night. If something did happen, you would be ready to meet any challenge.

Strategic Planning

Hurricanes...blizzards...shortages...they sound terrible, but don't lose hope! The purpose of this handbook is to help you plan for such an occasion. You can take the advice in these pages, act upon it, and keep your family safe—and fed! You might even have enough to share with others in your neighborhood. Don't worry—it doesn't have to empty your bank account! You'll be surprised at how far you can stretch your dollars (even in a time of economic disaster).

The time to start planning is NOW! The secret to successful preparation is to stock your pantry while the store shelves are full. It's important to purchase the items you'll need before panic strikes. Otherwise it's too late. You'll be in the same boat as everyone else, rushing to get whatever you can.

One of the nice things about planning ahead is the luxury of stocking your own personal shelves with food and supplies bought on sale. Grocery stores and shopping clubs often offer specials. If you have some time to prepare, you can buy things when they are on sale, and get the maximum amount of return on your investment. Take the time to stock up on seasonal specials. For instance, canned pumpkin at Thanksgiving can be purchased for a few cents a can if you spot it on sale. Those same cans will cost double or triple the amount just two months later! Learn more about how to shop sales and stock up wisely on page 26.

If you start now, you also have time to begin planting crops that can sustain you with fresh produce and flavorful herbs. This is great, not only for your stockpile, but for your health as well. Stockpiling naturally includes an abundance of canned goods and dried grains. Having fresh food growing nearby is a huge asset. With fresh fruits and vegetables on hand, you won't have to worry about the health concerns that tend to arise from vitamin deficiency.

Not a farmer? That's alright. There are plants that are virtually worry free once planted, and perennials like asparagus or strawberries that will produce spears or fruit every year.

Ready to start planting and preparing your “fresh from the vine” stockpile? See page 31 for some great ideas to get you started.

It would also be wise to have an awareness of how or where to get additional food in case the problems are not fixed after a few days. Can you imagine the widespread panic that would result if stores throughout America were unable to provide even the basic foods to hundreds of thousands of people? Are you familiar with the local edible vegetation and wildlife? Even if you don't currently hunt or fish, it is a good idea to be aware of the natural resources—and food sources—in your area. Learn about taking stock of the natural resources in your area on page 46.

Stockpiling isn't just about food. Do you take medication for a chronic condition or ailment? Do you have enough extra set aside to last through a disaster and the aftermath? Don't forget more common medications like aspirin and other over-the-counter remedies. It is useful to have some vitamins on hand as well.

Items to consider when you begin stockpiling:

- ☐ Water
- ☐ Food
- ☐ Cash
- ☐ Prescription medications
- ☐ Over-the-counter medications
- ☐ Soap and/or hand sanitizer
- ☐ Daily hygiene items (toilet paper, tooth brushes, toothpaste, feminine hygiene products)
- ☐ Pet food and supplies
- ☐ Items for bartering for goods or services
- ☐ “How to” and recipe books
- ☐ Electricity-free cooking methods
- ☐ Manual can openers
- ☐ Plug in, traditional (not cordless) phone

Some of these items are more essential than others, and you may have specific needs not covered on this list.

How long should you prepare for? Deciding to create a stockpile and actually putting your plan into action are two different things. Unless you have a lot of disposable cash and a lot of free time, you will not be able to fully prepare a stockpile overnight. You will have to prioritize, but where should you start? Simply buying things at random and tossing them in a cabinet is a start, but how will you know what to buy and where to keep it?

How to Use this Book

This book is designed to guide you, step by step, through the process of preparing your own emergency stockpile. Some steps you will be able to complete immediately; others may take a little longer.

The first part of this book is designed to inform you what types of crises you should be prepared for, why preparation is important, and give you an overview of the many things you can do to prepare.

Topics are designed to give an overview, and help you decide if a particular approach will suit your needs and lifestyle. There are sections on hunting, fishing, gardening, and animal husbandry. Each section is designed to provide information you may need in one convenient handbook.

There is enough on each topic to inform you, and perhaps spark in you an interest to learn more about the subject. This approach allows you to see if it is worth your time and money to learn more.

If, for example, after reading the section on fishing, you think fishing sounds gross—or you aren't really around a body of water, you won't need to explore that option further. If you want some simple ways to feed your family in the face of inflation and steep price increases, then check out the section on chickens, bees, and gardening for some basic information on each of these topics.

If one of them seems like it would suit you, you can get more detailed books, and do more research on the topic.

Part One also gives you some tips on growing your stockpile, from bargain hunting and buying in bulk, to processing your own grains. You will also learn how and why to rotate your stock, and why it is a good idea to actually live off of your stockpile once in a while.

Part Two will show you how to become better prepared, and how to set aside a stockpile that will keep your family fed in the face of disaster. The plan on page 80 lays out the process one step at a time. Each time you complete a step, you are ready to move on to the next—and each step you complete means you are a little more prepared to handle anything that comes your way.

The most important, short-term survival items are first. By the time you complete the third step, you are ready to deal with an overnight outage of electricity, or a storm that leaves you unable to get to the store for several days. As you work your way through the list, your position will become stronger. By the time you are done, you will be prepared to live off of your stockpile for several months or longer, depending on your needs and level of comfort.

Both parts of the book contain useful information, and you may find yourself skipping around a bit. It is a good idea to print this book out if you have it in digital form. Without power, you will not be able to access the information here when you need it most!

Always Messing Things Up

You have to admit, whether it's responding to hurricane damage or trying to fix our economy, the government is always messing things up. Yet, regardless of previous failures, they can't resist an opportunity to try to "save" us. Those elite and elected (and appointed) few know what's good for the rest of us. Trust us, they say. We're acting in your best interest. (And they continue to pour buckets of water over our drowning nation).

Seriously though, we need only take a look at Hurricane Katrina. It is an embarrassing reminder of what's wrong with the "government-as-savior" mentality. It seems as if the only people they are interested in saving are themselves (along with those who "pay to play".) They are slow and inefficient. Do you honestly think that if our country experienced a food crisis that government intervention would result in a speedy recovery?

What if, in a possible crisis, the government actually makes the situation worse? You might be thinking, "Yeah, I agree with their bumbling inability to help when it's needed the most, but to actually worsen things? How can that be?" With more and more attention drawn to corrupt government officials, wouldn't it be possible for them to take what they wanted and, in turn, give it those who "need" it. Or what if they decide to warehouse supplies—again, acting in the best interest of the people?

Let's look at what happened during the Great Depression. They were killing livestock and destroying crops—while people were STARVING! What madness! That's government intervention for us. And there's no reason to believe that if something happened right now it would be any better.

Still not convinced? Take a look at existing presidential executive orders. Regardless of the fact that it's unconstitutional, the government can confiscate any "excess and surplus real and personal property." (Executive Order 12919) Personal property? Anything of yours could be legally taken: food, gold, guns, and ammunition (and whatever else would benefit those in authority).

Of course, we hope it doesn't come to this. But it doesn't hurt to have these kinds of possibilities in the back of your mind. You have to be able to protect your family from officials who, unconstitutionally, make laws that do more harm than good. You don't have to outright disobey, but you can play smart.

The only thing you can do is work to become prepared for these types of situations. The more items you have set aside, the longer you will be able to manage under government intervention or management of any type. Giving yourself the gift of three to six months' supply on hand gives you time to think and plan rationally if something did occur. Instead of scrambling at the last minute, or fighting at the grocery store over the last bag of apples, you can be living off of your stockpile and planting the seeds that will get you through the winter and beyond.

And Then More Intervention

Just when you think the government can't mess things up anymore than they already have, they somehow manage to do just that. They can't help it. It's like the touch of Midas, but instead of gold, we get ruin. So, what does more intervention look like in the event of a food crisis? Well, here they come to save the day. They attempt to control what's made available and at what price. With a government that is becoming more and more controlling, it wouldn't be surprising to have homes searched and excess food (or whatever else they think would be for the "greater good") confiscated. You need to be prepared for this type of situation.

Don't advertise to those in your neighborhood what you're doing or about to do. It's better to share later than have someone steal or alert authorities regarding your stockpile. Make plans for safe and secure storage spaces (possibly out of sight in case home inspections become the norm). It's always better to prepare for the worst than to be unprepared. (Need some extra ideas on secret storage? There are books available offering information on creating and using hiding places throughout your home.)

Realize that many people are simply clueless when it comes to recognizing edible items. There is no set rule that says food plants have to be grown in a garden.

Plants like herbs, onions, garlic, lettuce, squash, and even potatoes can be grown in ornamental plantings, as landscaping or in containers, and most people will overlook them as “flowers” or “decoration”. Potato plants in particular are great “stealth” plants. They look like plain ornamentals, but dig them up and each plant can yield over a dozen good sized potatoes. Not all food needs to be stored in your home. Simply maintaining a beehive nearby will give you a source of honey that will last you the entire year, as well as wax for candles, soap, or preserving.

Knowledge of your surroundings is a big help too. If you know the pond nearby is full of fish, or the woods are teeming with turkey or deer, then you know where to get some meat “on the hoof” when you need it.

Sometimes, hiding things in plain sight works best. You can even use some of your stockpile as decoration, or as the base of a table or other structure. No one will question if you plant things now, and your neighbors will not notice any huge, sudden difference like a gigantic garden. Some HOA (Home Owners Associations) already do not allow gardens—people who live in planned developments already have to be a bit stealthy about food crops—and so can you.

What’s the Shelf Life?

When people are thinking, for the first time, of stockpiling, they usually wonder about shelf life—how long foods will last in their pantry. Nothing lasts forever, and food is no exception. Some people aren’t fazed by the “expiration date,” provided there aren’t living things crawling around (and there are people out there who wouldn’t be bothered by that either). It’s important, however, to remember that the older something is means that the nutritional value might not be as great as it used to be.

The advantage of longer shelf life on foods is that you’ll spend less time replacing them. You can put them on the shelf and not have to worry about them until it’s time to use them. Fortunately, the foods that last longer cost less. You don’t have to spend a fortune to establish a decent sized stockpile. And you can probably afford to spend a little more—just in case you have to share with your neighbors.

Here are some common pantry items and their shelf life:

Food Item	Shelf Life
Baking	
All purpose flour	12 months unopened, 6 – 8 months opened
Whole wheat flour	12 months unopened, 6 months opened (if refrigerated)
Granulated sugar	2 years unopened, 6 months opened
Brown sugar	4 months unopened, 4 months opened
Confectioner's sugar	18 months unopened
Solid shortening	8 months unopened, 3 months opened
Cocoa	2 years unopened, 1 year opened
Baking soda	18 months unopened, 6 months opened
Baking powder	6 months unopened, 3 months opened
Cornstarch	18 months
Spices	
Whole spices	2 – 4 years
Ground spices	2 – 3 years
Paprika	2 – 3 years (if refrigerated)
Cayenne pepper	2 - 3 years (if refrigerated)
Canned Goods (lower acid foods have a longer shelf life)	
Tomato products	1 – 2 years unopened
Fruit juices	1 – 2 years unopened
Soups	3 – 5 years unopened
Meats	2 – 4 years unopened
Gravy	3 – 5 years unopened
Vegetables	3 – 4 years unopened
Other Items	
Pasta dried (no eggs)	2 years unopened, 1 year opened
Pasta dried (with eggs)	2 years unopened, 1 – 2 months opened
Salad dressings	1 year unopened, 3 months opened (in refrigerator)
Honey	1 year
Ground coffee	1 year unopened, 2 weeks opened (in refrigerator)
Instant coffee	1 year unopened, 3 months opened
Bottled water	2 years unopened, 3 months opened
Jams and Jellies	1 year unopened, 6 months opened (in refrigerator)
Peanut butter	6 – 9 months unopened, 2 – 3 months opened

Remember, these are suggested shelf-lives. Common sense, and a good nose, will tell you when something needs to be thrown out!

Rotating your Stock

Rotating your stockpile of pantry goods (those with less shelf life) is a good habit to get into. That way you replace the items that have been sitting there the longest with newer items and there's less waste of food gone bad. However, you may decide to invest in foods that have longer shelf lives so you won't have to worry so much about periodic rotating. (One suggestion for rotating is to write the purchase date somewhere on the can or box so you know when it's time to rotate.)

Rotating doesn't mean "throwing away". There are a few very good reasons for rotating and using your stockpile.

For starters, rotating means you will know that the food in your stockpile is always up to date. It is a good idea to check expiration dates periodically. If you notice an item is getting close to its expiration date, pull that item, and make a note to replace it.

What do you do with the items you've removed? Eat them, of course! When you actually eat from your stockpile, your family will become used to the items you may one day have to rely on for survival. The first time you introduce quinoa or barley to be eaten shouldn't be in the face of a food shortage. It should already be something your family is familiar with.

Dining from, and rotating, your stockpile allows you to determine what works for your family and what doesn't. The best time to find out that everyone hates chick peas is when you can drive to the store and choose a different dried legume, not when the only thing on the plate for supper is chickpeas!

Rotating your stock and consuming foods from your stockpile also helps you to determine if something has gone bad, regardless of the expiration date. If you home-can twenty-four jars of peaches and never try them, you won't know if it worked or not. Better to find out something is wrong before you actually have to rely on the food to survive. You may discover weevils in the flour or bugs in the barley, and stop these pests in their tracks simply by rotating and using your stockpile.

Importance of Water

Most people are on city water. Turning on your faucet for bathing, cooking, washing clothes or dishes are activities we take for granted. But in a time of emergency, or if the water plant in your area goes down, where are you going to get your water? Have you considered that?

You might want to get your family in the habit of conserving water. Maybe have periodic days where everyone takes super-short showers or bathes with minimal water. Coming up with a short-term plan, such as using paper plates, can be helpful as well.

The easiest way to prepare for a short-term shortage is to make bottled water a part of your stockpile. Having enough water on hand for three days is a basic part of any emergency kit—and the very first step you will take when you begin your stockpile. See page 80 for more details.

You should also consider different ways to store water. Large containers (fifteen, thirty or fifty-five gallon drums) can be purchased. Garden companies stock rain barrels, designed specifically for collecting rainwater, for a garden. Even if you don't intend to drink this water, you will be able to use it to water your pets and plants, and for washing in the event of a shortage.

When you use a barrel or large container, you will also need an emergency siphon to get the water out as needed. Stored water needs to be kept out of light, and necessary precautions should be made to keep harmful bacteria from growing. Water filtration and purification kits can be purchased to ensure that your water sources remain safe. A few of the different ways water can be purified and rendered safe for drinking are listed below.

There are a few techniques to provide you clean drinking water even in the most primitive conditions. The quickest way to purify water is to bring it to a rolling boil for about fifteen minutes. Try to let the water sit for a bit to let any sediment settle to the bottom and pour the cleaner water off the top. This does not kill all the bacteria but it seems to eliminate the harmful stuff. In a pinch it will give you potable water. If the water has been stored for a long period of time, aeration by pouring it back and forth between two containers several times will improve the taste. A pinch of salt per liter of water helps with the flavor also.

Chemical Purification

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that ninety percent of the world's water supply is contaminated in some way. Many fear that some natural disaster will contaminate local water supplies. This is a real concern. Water purification tablets are available around town in drug and hardware stores. Stocking up on these tablets can be a good way to ensure a clean water supply for an extended period of time. Common household bleach (unscented) can be used to treat water. It should contain 5.25% hypochlorite to be effective in killing bacteria. You can purify your water by mixing a solution of eight drops of bleach per gallon of water. If it tastes too strongly of chlorine then some powdered drink mix might help mask the flavor of the bleach.

Iodine tablets are another tried and true method of purifying water. Dissolve one tablet per quart of water for about thirty minutes; a little longer for especially murky water. Iodine tends to give the end product a bad taste. Vitamin C will eliminate any bad taste and odor caused by iodine if added after the iodine is allowed to treat the water. A two percent tincture of iodine at a ratio of five to ten drops per quart of water is usually recommended, depending on its clarity.

Iodine should not be used at all by women who are pregnant or people who have thyroid conditions, and should only be used for short (two to three days) periods of time by otherwise healthy persons.

Mechanical Purification

Other water purification methods include filtration, which involves straining water through filters; and distillation, a method of purification that involves boiling the water and letting the vapor condense back into liquid form. This is a fairly effective technique but takes considerable time.

It's the same basic principle that granddaddy's moonshine still operated on. While filtration requires the use of some bulky machinery and is fairly expensive, a distillation rig can be set up with some pretty basic items. Whichever method you choose, it's best to have a back-up system, just in case. So, with the proper preparation and planning, water purification in emergency situations should be something that is easily handled.

Specialty Foods for Survival

You can purchase survival "kits" specifically designed for emergencies. They contain long shelf-life foods and are packed to last for up to a month (different brands may vary). There are several websites that sell food survival kits. Keep in mind, prices might start rising as more people become concerned about a possible food crisis, so if you're interested, you'd better act now.

What can you expect from the more expensive, already prepared, survival foods? Most of the foods are freeze dried; all you have to do is add water. They come in cans and can have up to a thirty-year shelf life. If money isn't a problem for you, you can get a whole year of gourmet meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) for around \$3,000.

Other foods are dehydrated. Some would say the advantage of freeze-dried foods is that they retain their texture, freshness, and nutrients, resulting in a better overall taste. However, you'll have to take into consideration the amount of water you'll need to prepare these meals. Make sure you store additional water for meal preparation.

Another option would be MREs (Meals Ready to Eat). These were developed for the U.S. Army. You can eat the meals right out of the package. MREs can be purchased at camping stores and military surplus stores.

Make sure the MREs you purchase are legitimate “civilian” products and not stolen military meals. You might get in trouble for that if your home ever gets inspected.

There are a couple disadvantages with MREs: they are packed in water (or oil), making them a heavier product, and they are not very cost efficient. You could feed more people for your money using unprocessed foods. Remember, these meals follow the same rules as other pantry items when it comes to storage conditions—cooler temperatures and store away from the light.

If you do decide to try some specialty foods, order a small amount first and actually try them. Prepare them as directed and see what you think of the quality and taste of the food. If you like what you taste, and the price seems worth it, then add a supply of specialty foods to your stockpile.

If your electricity goes out for a day or two, if you can't get to the store, or if you have some other reason to break into the stockpile, start with your “regular” supplies. Save the specialty foods for when you really need them—supplying you with a meal under extreme conditions is what they are designed to do.

Can It: Preserving and Using Stored Food

Canned Goods:

Canned foods, as you've probably guessed, are perfect for stockpiling. The studies done on canned food are really quite remarkable. For instance, in a study articulated by the FDA, canned foods from one hundred years ago, despite the lack of fresh smell and appearance, were determined to have no microbial growth and the contents were safe to eat.

Fruits and vegetables are filled with the vitamins, minerals, and fiber essential to our well being. You would think that fresh produce would win, hands down, against canned food when it comes to the nutritional value. And you are right—if you pick that fresh produce from the garden and put it directly on your plate.

When you can't do that, though, canned goods come pretty darn close compared to fresh. Other than some loss of vitamin C due to heat processing, studies have shown stable levels of the nutrients found in canned foods.

Surprised? What do we know about canning? Well, it's one of the safest ways to preserve food. The high heat process kills the microorganisms responsible for food-borne illnesses and there are no preservatives. The suggested shelf life of a canned food is two years. You can either load up on canned goods from the store or you can learn to can your own homegrown produce. Don't know how to can? It's easy to learn! There are DVDs available to teach you this long lost skill. You'll be canning like a pro in no time. (Check out www.foodshortageusa.com.)

The only disadvantage to canned food, whether it's your own or bought, is the weight of the container and the difficulty that comes when rotating your supply. You also need quite a bit of storage space to stockpile enough jars or cans to feed your family (and don't forget a little extra just in case you need to share with your neighbors). There is also the possibility that after a crisis—if authorities were confiscating supplies—the canned food would be the first to go simply because they would be the hardest to hide.

You can use this weight to your advantage in some cases; if you need to balance a shelving unit, use cans on the bottom shelf. If food is ever confiscated, having some canned goods visible and available for easy confiscation may stop searchers from finding your "real" stash!

Dried Food:

You can purchase dried food in bulk and store it in airtight containers to prolong freshness. Common dried foods include: rice, beans, milk, meats (jerky), and fruit. You can buy a food dehydrator and dry your own fruits; strawberries dry particularly well. Dried foods store well. Just be sure to keep them in air tight containers to preserve the freshness.

Vacuum Sealed:

You can buy some foods that have been stored using a vacuum method. Doing so allows them to stay edible at room temperature for longer periods of time.

Shelf-stable bacon and cheese both use vacuum storage methods. If you have ever purchased a brick of coffee, you have used a vacuum stored product.

You can purchase a vacuum sealer for your home to prepare foods for long term freezing or storage.

Long shelf life items:

Some groceries that you buy will automatically have a longer shelf life than others. Canned goods, as discussed above, are included in this group, but so are oils (stored unopened), shelf-stable milk, shelf-stable tomatoes, walnuts and other nuts that have a hard outer shell, and bottled condiments. If you have a sweet tooth, rumor has it that Twinkies® will last a hundred years without changing, assuming you don't mind your sweets heavily processed.

Longer Shelf Life

The number one condition for establishing a longer shelf life is a cool temperature. Where you live will affect the location and method you store your food. If you live where it is cooler, and even below freezing for several months, you should be able to store your goods in the garage or shed, if needed. However, if you live in an area where it gets really hot, you'll want to make sure that products are kept cool. This may mean an air-conditioned space or perhaps a root cellar in case there is no power available.

Remember to write the dates of purchase on your food so you can rotate them and use according to age. Store opened boxes or bags in airtight containers to prevent oxygen and insects from getting to the contents.

Other Pantry Items

There are plenty of other items that can be stored in your pantry and used in an emergency. While the suggested shelf life for some of these products was given previously, it's important to remember, when it comes to your pantry items, the proper environment and storage needed for a longer shelf life: cool temperatures, out of the light, and tightly sealed. Let's take a look at some of the other pantry items you should consider having on hand.

- ☐ Powdered milk
- ☐ Bouillon cubes
- ☐ Cereals
- ☐ Nuts
- ☐ Dried fruits/jerky
- ☐ Vegetable oils
- ☐ Lard/Shortening
- ☐ Seasonings/spices
- ☐ Flour
- ☐ Sugar/white and brown

Don't forget pasta products. A basic pasta dish can be whipped up in no time and with few ingredients. Spaghetti, macaroni, rotini—these are inexpensive ways to feed your family. Plus, as mentioned earlier, they have a shelf life for up to two years when unopened.

Remember, with all of your items, regardless of shelf life, get in the habit of writing the purchase date somewhere on the container. This can really help when rotating your supply and help you use up the older items first.

Should You Buy in Bulk?

Warehouse stores such as Sam's Club or Costco are great places to buy items like beans, rice, or flour. When you purchase bulk items you usually get more for your money. You might want to consider purchasing large amounts of food from a store that you don't frequently visit. Or you might want to accumulate items for your stockpile gradually over a period of time rather than all at once. When you run across a great deal, it may be tempting to buy up the merchandise to eliminate the need to purchase it again for a long time. However, it depends on what the merchandise is and how much you normally use it as to whether it will really save you money in the end.

Some stores sell items in bulk at a much lower per item price than you would normally have to pay. You can also find great buys at the grocery store when they have sales for a variety of reasons. However, if you don't know how a grocery business works, then you may not recognize the reason behind the sale. Following are some tips that will help you save money by stockpiling the right products at the right time.

- ❑ Plastic lasts forever. Nearly everything else has an expiration date and no store wants to get stuck with a bunch of merchandise with an expired date on it. Medications, meat, canned goods, snacks, and lots of other things may be put on sale to get rid of them before the date expires. If you find a great deal, make sure the product is still fresh enough to be of use to you long enough for stockpiling to be beneficial.
- ❑ Be realistic about whether it is something you can use. Getting a thousand toothbrushes at half the regular price isn't going to pay off in the end unless you change your toothbrush every week or toothbrushes suddenly become a hot bartering commodity.
- ❑ Consider the storage space you have available. If you are going to have boxes of goods sitting around the house, you want available space for them. Filling the garage with your stash may eventually force you to leave the car out in the weather. This is especially true for perishable items that need to be refrigerated or frozen.

- ❑ Don't buy items that you have never tried or don't normally use. If you stick with a specific brand of laundry soap and come across a great deal on a different brand, you could end up getting stuck with a product you don't like. If you don't normally use an item, then you aren't saving money by buying it at all.
- ❑ Be especially cautious about purchasing snack items for your children. Even though they may be living on a single product at the moment, their tastes change frequently. You could buy a year's supply of their favorite boxed juice only to find out a week later they don't like it any more. Try to stick to foods that are basic and that the whole family (or most of the family) will enjoy.
- ❑ Buying treats is fine, but use caution. Don't stock up on too many snacks and not enough actual food. You should also be mindful of the way you will need to prepare the food. One hundred packs of microwave popcorn won't be very useful if you need to cook them over an open flame.

Stockpiling is essential for emergency preparation, but it is also a dangerous area for impulse buys. Think each purchase through carefully. Be sure you need all of it, have a place to store it, and that it is likely to stay fresh enough to be safe until you have used it all!

Be mindful of where you shop. The ability to maintain a low profile could be the difference in keeping your food or being forced to "share" with the local authorities. Remember, stores can track your purchases when you use a credit card. It may be your best bet to pay in cash when making purchases for your stockpile. Try to stay off the radar.

Low Priced Foods

When food items such as grains and beans are not ground or cracked, they have an almost unlimited shelf life. Like so many other goods, proper dry storage is needed. Buying grains or beans by the bucket (six gallon or less) is a really inexpensive way of stocking up on useful food. Think about it. There's little work that goes into it...the grains are harvested, dried, put in containers, and pretty much are ready to sell just like that. That explains why they are so inexpensive.

Those who are in the habit of baking their own bread buy grains by the bucket and mill the amount needed when needed. It's a great way to have enough on hand to feed a large amount of people for minimum expense.

Let's say you buy a six-gallon bucket of wheat. You can decide how you want to use it. Want some cereal? Crack it. Want bread? Grind it into flour to make breads, cakes, or pastas. There's nothing quite like fresh bread—especially when the flour has just been ground. And if you don't know how, this might be a great time to start learning!

Be sure to buy grains and beans that have been prepared for storage. It would be a shame to invest your hard work and money into a product that will be full of worms or bugs in three months.

Saving a Bundle on your Stockpile

Most of us have noticed that the cost of groceries has been steadily climbing for the last couple of years. With the way the economy is going, it is more important than ever to shop to save—both for your stockpile and for daily use. For many, having the money to pay for necessities is more of a burden than ever before. If you take some precautions and put in a little effort, you will be impressed with how much money you can save at the grocery store. Here are some tips to help you save as you shop:

- Don't go to three or four different groceries all over town to get the different items they have on sale. Many people think they are getting greater savings this way when, in fact, they are usually spending more on fuel than they will save. If you are shopping sales, choose the store that has the most of what you are looking for and stick with it.
- Use coupons to save on items that you would normally buy. Don't feel like you have to buy something that you normally wouldn't just because you can get \$1.00 off the price. Combine sale items with coupons to increase your savings.
- If you find a good deal on something you need, purchase more of that item for your stockpile (make sure it stores well). Consider the perishable date and then get enough to last you until the item expires.

- ❑ The best store value may not be the best value for you. If the single-serving size of an item is only \$.15 less than the family size, you will be tempted to get the larger size since it seems like a good value. However, if you only need the single serving, then you will be throwing the rest of the larger size in the trash and that \$.15 will be wasted. That isn't much, but when you do this with many different items, it can add up to a lot of money over time. As you add to your stockpile, smaller sized boxes of some items may be more usable for your needs. If you are dealing with a situation where you lack refrigeration, you will not be able to save unused portions for any length of time—so smaller cans may be better than giant ones. (Smaller ones are easier to stash too.)
- ❑ Don't go grocery shopping more than once a week. Most of us make impulse buys when we go shopping and the more often we go, the more we will spend. Cut down on trips and you will spend less.
- ❑ Always have a grocery list. Look at the grocery circular before you head to the store, so you will know what items are on sale, and can look for coupons for those items. Once you get to the store, it may be difficult to remember what you need and what you still have. You may end up buying items that you already have plenty of and that will go to waste.
- ❑ If you don't have the willpower to tell the kids "no" then don't take them to the grocery with you. Much of the advertising for products is targeted towards children and it works! From the colors on the packaging to the eye level of the item on display, they are the target customers that are responsible for a large number of sales.
- ❑ It's an old tip and it still holds true: don't shop for groceries when you are hungry. You really will spend less if you eat before you shop.

Coupons 101

Another great way to save at the store is by using coupons. With the state of this present economy, many are trying to find ways to save money for the first time in their lives. Coupons are a great way to help save money on many of the items all of us need if you know the right way to use them. Once you learn the most effective way to put coupons to work, you will be amazed at how much money you can save. Use coupons to add items to your stockpile each week. In some cases, you can pick up products for pennies once you hand over your clipped coupons.

Where to Find the Best Coupons

The Sunday newspaper is often rich with a variety of coupons for many popular items. Some grocery stores print out coupons when you check out to use the next time you shop. There are also coupons that you can print online, though often times they are not valid in your area.

Start by Getting Organized

Start by getting a coupon organizer that has several pockets in it for different categories of groceries. As soon as you get a coupon or group of coupons, cut them out and put them in the organizer. As you put more in the same pocket, fill in from the back, keeping the ones that will expire soon within easy reach. The newer ones will probably have the later expiration dates and that will make it easier to clean out the old ones. Only put the coupons in for the products that you normally buy or for new ones that you might be interested in trying.

Take Advantage of Double Coupon Days

If the grocery where you shop has a double coupon day, this is the time to do your shopping and get double the savings. Keep in mind that most stores will only double up to \$.50 and some coupons have instructions not to double the value on them. Take advantage of the savings to get items that you normally use and that won't be a concern for storage. Double couponing is a great way to get stockpile items for pennies!

Make a Grocery List First

A magnetic list on your refrigerator will help keep track of what you need. Don't forget to add both stockpile items and daily grocery items to your list. Go through your coupons before you go shopping to see what matches up to your list.

Keep these coupons to the front of the organizer and then take it along to the store. If you find anything that you want to try out that is new, then you can check and see if you have a coupon that applies. Also, the store may have things on sale that—combined with a coupon—are too good a deal to pass up.

Choose Your Brand and the Best Bargain

Most of us have some items that we only purchase in certain brands while others we aren't so particular about. For those items you are less brand-conscious of, explore other brands. Perhaps the one you have a coupon for is really the better buy. Store brands or others may be a better value without a coupon.

Using coupons does take some time, but it's worth it if you are able to match coupons to sales, increase your stockpile quickly, and hedge against inflation as well.

Loyalty Cards

Don't share your information with the store. Some stores require "loyalty" cards to get sale prices. These cards actually track your purchases and how much you buy. You can avoid this by "forgetting" your card. Most stores have one at each register to use if you "forget" yours. You can also pick up a new application every so often—the cards are usually attached and in most cases, you don't have to send in the application to use the card.

If a store absolutely insists you fill out an application, you can either pass on shopping there, or fill it out with a fictitious name, and again, get a new card every few visits.

The store is not tracking purchases for your benefit. They want to know what you buy and what to market to you. It is really none of their business what you purchase and just to be safe, you should try to limit any document that tries to track your spending.

Your Own Garden

The best, most practical, way to “live off of the land” is to have your own garden. If you’re already an avid gardener, this is no big deal. But for those who don’t have a clue about growing their own produce, it can be a little overwhelming. Take a look around your yard and think about where the best place to grow food would be. Choose the area that gets the most sunlight and has ample access to water.

One thing to consider, if you’re turning a part of your yard into a garden for the first time, is the amount of chemicals you are currently using in that area. You might want to stop applying herbicides or insecticides. Sometimes these chemicals can make for difficult growing. Another option, if you don’t want to dig up your yard, is to use raised beds. For even more variety, you could always plant berry bushes or fruit trees on your property.

It might not hurt to read up on which wild plants can be eaten (just in case). Learning to identify edible weeds could be a fun family activity. If you really want to be prepared, you could study up on the medicinal uses of herbs and other plants and grow them as well.

There are quite a few edible plants that are probably already growing outside your door. A local bookstore may have a book about your local plant life which you can use as a guide to the edible plants in your specific area.

It is important to remember that while foraging can yield great results, you should avoid berries and mushrooms unless you are 100% positive you know what they are. A wild blueberry or raspberry bush is pretty easy to identify, but wild mushrooms are not, and a mistake can be deadly!

There are an abundance of books available on the subject of gardening and the use of herbs. You don’t want to be forced to learn about these things because of a crisis.

Learn about them before—make it part of your everyday life.

Food Growing 101

Why “food growing” instead of “gardening”? Because not all food that you can grow is in a garden! Growing your own food includes planting traditional food plants like tomatoes, herbs for flavor or medicinal purposes, even beekeeping and small domestic animal care. Following is an overview of some of the different ways you can grow your own food.

Seeds

Heirloom Seeds vs. Hybrid Seeds

For gardeners and farmers the world over, the types of seeds they choose can mean the difference between life and death. The choice between open-pollinated (heirloom) seeds and hybrids is one each individual gardener and farmer will have to make. For example, some heirloom seeds will not have the genetic manipulations that make their hybrid cousins more disease resistant, but those hybrids cannot be used for seed stock. Each person will have to take their unique circumstances into consideration when choosing which type of seed to buy.

What are Hybrid Seeds?

Hybrid seeds are the first generation offspring of two distant and distinct parental lines of the same species. For a long time farmers were persuaded to buy new hybrid seeds each season in order to try and improve their harvests. While hybrid seeds offer farmers the chance to improve their crops through better disease resistance or greater yield, there is a great risk the seeds won't grow at all.

To add to this, hybrid seeds, also nicknamed “high response” seeds, are high maintenance. They require excessive amounts of water as well as a constant supply of pesticides, fertilizers and herbicides to keep growing, which takes time and money.

Today's hybrid seeds still require large quantities of water which involve the construction of irrigation systems and a constant water supply to support the hybrid plant's needs. Hybrids are not usually the best choice for a survival kitchen garden. Plants grown from hybrid seeds will produce unpredictable and usually inferior seeds themselves, so you won't be able to collect seeds and replant them for future harvests.

What are Heirloom Seeds?

Heirloom seeds are commonly referred to as "open-pollinated" seeds and have been grown for their widely recognized desirable traits for centuries. They are the foundation seeds upon which all hybrids are based. However, a gardener or farmer can use the seeds from the heirloom varieties for planting next year's garden, unlike hybrid varieties.

Heirloom seeds are far better suited to the environment and can withstand a lot more hardship and flexibility than the unpredictable hybrid varieties. Heirloom seeds don't allow breeders to manipulate flavor like they can with hybrids.

Heirloom seeds are dynamic, versatile and can adapt to the local ecosystem, which means they will change over time and possibly improve yields naturally. Hybrid seeds are very much stuck in their ways and, unless they are manipulated by breeders, will remain unchanged.

There are some great resources available if you want to learn more about planting and saving seeds. In fact, there is a Survival Seed Bank that can be purchased. It's a really neat concept for those who garden and those who don't. There are enough seeds to plant a full acre. Plus, they are heirloom seeds, meaning you can harvest the seeds from this year's crop to use for next year. For more information on how you can order one of these crisis food banks, go to www.survivalseedbank.com.

Great Plants for Beginners

When you decide to start a new garden, the first question that comes to mind is: “What should I grow?” Begin with something easy to grow, that does not take up too much space, has a high yield and eventually is worth the effort that you need to put in to make it grow. There are a number of plants ideal for beginners. They grow quickly and easily, and have great yields.

Carrots: Can be grown several times throughout the season, and are easy to plant and pull as needed.

Cucumbers: Plant in early spring, and you’ll have fresh cukes by July. Very easy to grow, and some varieties have huge yields (i.e., tons of cucumbers!)

Green Beans: Beans are easy to grow, but make sure you pick them. Don’t let them dry on the vine, or the plant will stop producing. This climbing plant can also hide in many locations. Plant next to a fence, and most observers will think it is ivy.

Lettuce: Sprouts and grows quickly—plant leaf lettuce instead of head lettuce, and you can snip fresh greens any time you need them.

Tomatoes: Ideal home plants and can give great yields if plants are well cared for properly. A number of varieties exist and can be chosen for the soil type and the area where the garden is located.

Herbs and their Uses

Most of us know all about the world of herbs through cooking. Basil, saffron, rosemary, thyme and sage, plus thousands more, entice our taste buds and enrich our senses. Yet amazingly, some of what we use to satisfy our appetites can also be used for medicinal purposes. For example:

Aloe Vera

Aloe vera is the pulp from inside the thick leaves of the plant and is used to heal burns and wounds. It can also be used as a face cream to help skin cell regeneration and has antibacterial, antifungal and antiviral properties.

Bilberry

The whole of the bilberry plant acts as a diuretic, helping to control insulin levels. This plant serves to heal the urinary tract, helps combat cataracts, stress, anxiety and strengthens connective tissue. However, if it is taken internally, it can interfere with iron absorption.

Cinnamon

Cinnamon comes from tree bark and contains essential oils and starch that help aid diarrhea, nausea, congestion, blood circulation and digestion. Cinnamon is wonderful for diabetes, the metabolism, for yeast infections and can help people lose weight.

Echinacea

The echinacea plant is also known as the coneflower and contains vitamins A, C and E. The echinacea plant can be used to support the immune and lymphatic system as well as helping colds, flu and other infectious illnesses.

Fennel

Fennel comes from berries, roots and stems and contains an array of beneficial nutrients for the body. It is filled with calcium, as well as vitamins A and C. Fennel can reduce abdominal or stomach pain and is recommended for use after chemotherapy or any radiation treatments.

Ginger

Ginger root is bursting with vitamin B₃, folic acid and essential oils. It is used as an antioxidant and can be used to help bowel disorders, circulatory problems, fever, indigestion, motion sickness, nausea and vomiting.

Hawthorn

Hawthorn comes in the shape of berries, flowers and leaves. It contains sugars as well as vitamins B₁, B₂, B₃, B₆ and B₁₂ as well as vitamin C. Hawthorn is recommended for anemia, cardiovascular and circulatory health.

Mint

Mint is a natural breath freshener, and can also be used to soothe a troubled tummy. You can brew a gentle mint tea to help with nausea. Mint is very easy to grow—in fact, it grows so well it will take over any patch you plant it in, so you may want to restrict your mint to its own container!

Consider Potatoes

Why potatoes? Potatoes are hardy, friendly tubers that are easy to grow and are one of the most versatile vegetables to adorn the dinner table. Potatoes are starchy root vegetables that are cholesterol and fat free, and are excellent sources of vitamin B₆ and dietary fiber. They are rich in potassium and vitamin C.

Potatoes can be baked, boiled, fried, mashed and made into a wide variety of tasty dishes. Potatoes are easy to grow and each seed produces a high yield without taking up too much space in your garden. Potatoes are a great stealth garden item—most people will bypass a potato plant, assuming it is an ornamental. Tomato plants announce their presence, and beg to be stolen or confiscated. Ninety-nine percent of the people out there won't know your potatoes are there unless you tell them!

Growing Spuds

A potato seed is simply a small potato cut into sections. Each section must have at least one lateral bud known as an “eye”. These are the things you usually cut off when you are peeling a potato to eat.

Have you ever forgotten about a potato, or let it sit too long? Chances are it sprouted, and actually started to grow, without even being planted first. Potatoes are extremely easy to grow! Use certified seed to be assured of plants that are strong and disease free.

Never use potatoes from the supermarket as your seeds as they may carry disease and are often sprayed with a chemical to prevent the eyes from sprouting. That is definitely not what you want! Most garden shops carry certified seed potatoes.

Eight pounds of seed will sow a row about 100 feet long, and potatoes can be integrated into your landscaping as needed. Plant seeds in mid to late spring for fall yields.

As the plants grow, more and more soil needs to be heaped on them to keep the expanding potatoes covered. These plants need plenty of water—about an inch a week—but be careful not to over-water as this will predispose the potato to rotting. The crop is ready to harvest when the vines begin to die out. Potatoes can stay in the ground for up to three weeks as long as the ground is not overly wet. When harvesting just dig your way into the mounds of dirt and all the fresh potatoes will be waiting to be dug up. One of the more clever growing arrangements you can use for potatoes is old tires stacked on top of each other. As the plants get taller simply stack another tire on top, fill with dirt and continue on that way throughout the season. At harvest time simply kick over the tower of tires and collect your spuds.

Pests and Other Problems

Potatoes are susceptible to a variety of pests, most notably the Colorado potato beetle. These critters can be taken care of by hand picking them off of the plants before they lay eggs. After the eggs have been laid there are pesticides that can be applied to take care of them.

Potatoes are at risk of developing any of a slew of diseases, most of which can be avoided simply by using certified seed stock. Potatoes are a versatile and delicious staple in homes all around the world and you can easily grow them in your backyard, supplying your stockpile and plates as needed.

Care Free Perennials

There are many benefits to gardening. Fresh foods are tasty and healthier for you than those purchased in the store. It can be an incredible source of pride to see the result of all your hard work and the money you've saved growing your own food. If inflation indeed becomes a problem, having a supply of fresh produce will save you money, and help you stay healthy. Gardening can be a lot of work though, so plants that come back year after year are very appealing.

Perennials are plants that grow back each year on their own—you only need to plant them once. As they age, they get easier and easier to tend. As they become more established, they block out weeds and often increase the amount of crop that can be harvested each year. There are many low-maintenance foods you can plant and forget about, including fruits, vegetables, and herbs.

Fruits

There are three main types of fruits that fall into this category. The first is berries. Most grow on bushes, such as blackberries, raspberries, and blueberries. However, strawberries also make for a great perennial crop and they grow in a ground cover type of plant.

Next, there are vines. The main perennial that grows on a vine is grapes. These usually need to be put on a fence or trellis. While it often takes a few years to get them established, once they are, you will have tasty grapes year after year.

Finally, there are a number of trees that can be grown for fruit. If you have a fruit tree in your yard that you have been neglecting, take the time to determine what type it is and if it will be useful if cared for.

Vegetables

There are also several vegetables that can be grown that return year after year. Asparagus and rhubarb are probably the most well known. Another one that many people grow on accident is dandelions. While many see this to be a troublesome weed, it can be eaten fresh as well as cooked. Growing it in a separate part of your garden can make for a pesticide- and fertilizer-free vegetable that is very good for you.

Herbs

There are also a huge variety of herbs that come back year after year. Many of the leaves are great additions to salads and they also offer fantastic choices for soups, stews, and stir fries. These include chives, thyme, sage, sorrel, lovage, lemon balm and lavender.

Edible Flowers

There are a number of flowers that can be eaten. They can be added to the plate as garnish or to salads for their beauty, as well as for a tasty treat. Perennial flowers that can be eaten include carnations, sunflower, chrysanthemums, cowslip primrose, day lilies, lavender, ox-eye daisies, rosemary, and yucca.

Composting

You can create your own fertilizer from the trash and leftovers from your table. Composting allows you to provide the plants you grow with rich nutrients at no cost. Once you understand how to compost correctly, it is an easy way to make nutrient-rich fertilizer. What is composting, and how can you get started?

Composting is a natural process that breaks down organic matter into nutritious topsoil. Organic matter naturally decomposes, but composting speeds the process so you can obtain fertile soil more quickly. This process occurs naturally on forest floors, but it can be accomplished just as easily in your own back yard.

The process of composting is carried out by microorganisms that break down organic material. These microorganisms rely on moisture, oxygen, and nitrogen to efficiently turn these materials into nutrient-rich topsoil called humus.

While water, air, and biodegradable organic material are all essential to composting, the critical factor is obtaining the correct nitrogen-to-carbon ratio. Nitrogen-rich material will speed the composting process and provide the right blend of nutrients to help you grow healthier plants.

Table scraps are typically rich in nitrogen, but you will want to take care and sort these items properly. Vegetable peels, beans, fruit rinds, and wilted greens are all excellent additives for composting. Other waste, such as meat trimmings, dairy, and oils can contaminate composted material, so it is important not to place these items in your compost.

Carbon-rich materials should also be added to your compost to regulate the speed of decomposition. These include hay, tree bark, dried leaves, and wood chips. Properly regulating the speed of decomposition prevents valuable nutrients from being destroyed by heat during the composting process.

If you have the correct carbon-to-nitrogen ratio, your compost will generate heat as it cures. This is a natural part of the decomposition process. When the humus is ready to be used as fertilizer, it will feel cool.

Having a proper container is essential to creating humus through composting. You should choose a durable container that is large enough to hold enough composting material to meet your needs. The container should also have vents so that air can flow through the decomposing material. Vents also keep the material from becoming too moist since excessive moisture can impede the process.

Your container should also be placed on level ground to help insure that the composting material does not become too compacted. It should be placed away from animals and garbage which can contaminate the humus.

To use, spread the compost on your garden or on any plants. Feed your compost pile regularly and in return, it will provide you with a fruitful garden!

Beekeeping and Honey

Think beekeeping sounds silly? It won't be so funny if shortages mean you can't sweeten your food! Honey is not only delicious, it is good for you. You can grow your own fresh honey by keeping honeybees. Beekeeping doesn't take much work and there are minimal expenses, especially after getting started.

A hive is also something that most people won't recognize or think to look for. If confiscation is a concern, position your hive behind a bush in your yard. Chances are no one will ever know it is there.

Equipment.

To get started with your beehive, you will need to buy some equipment. You will need a full beekeeper's suit, complete with gloves and a veil, as well as a smoker and hive tool. Next, accumulate the equipment necessary for setting up your hive. You'll need boxes and frames that the bees live in, work in, and where they will eventually deposit their honey, as well as the inner cover and a telescoping outer cover.

The boxes that make up the hive are some of the most important parts. Here the honeybees will raise their young and store the materials they need to make honey. You will also add boxes called "supers" for your crop to be collected in. Most beekeepers recommend that you get one deep hive body, one honey super, ten deep frames and ten shallow frames for each hive you want to set up.

Adding Your Bees.

One queen and about three pounds of bees will be required for each of your hives. You can either pick these up locally or have them shipped to you. When they arrive, you will get your bees in a screened-in box and the queen in a small cage. Take the queen out and then gently dump your bees into the hive.

After the bees have calmed a bit, hand the queen between two frames. Finish by closing it up. Your bees will relax, get settled, and begin work.

Adding the Supers.

You will add the supers to begin honey collection after the deep boxes are full. The bees will make honey in the supers and you can take the honey out frame by frame as they fill up. As long as there are flowers and warm seasons, your bees will continue to make honey. After the season ends, they will live off of the honey they have built into the deep frames so you don't want to take any of that out.

Your honeybees will need attention in the spring and fall when you prepare them for the season, and then when you collect the honey. In the winter they hibernate and in the summer they will work in peace. It will be important to check them every now and again to make sure that all is well, but for the most part, they will run themselves.

Honey is a very pure food and no special techniques are required to enjoy it—just decant into a clean container and store as needed.

How to Keep and Care for Chickens

Not all food grows in the garden! It's not just farmers that keep chickens; anyone can keep chickens as pets, for eggs, or, to the chicken's dismay, to eat. All you need is a bit of knowledge to get started.

First, it's important to be aware of the different types of chickens and the terms used to describe them:

- ▣ The Chick – a little bundle of feathered cuteness
- ▣ The Hen – a mature chicken and a mother figure over the age of one—the hen will be the source of your eggs. .
- ▣ The Rooster – the lovely alarm-clock male chicken over one year of age.

Baby Chicks

Chickens are very easy to care for and don't cost a lot to maintain. However, before you buy your chicks, make sure you are ready to take on the responsibility. Your chicks will require hourly attention at first, which means late nights and early mornings. They must be kept under a heat lamp, their ambient temperature monitored closely, and enough food and water provided regularly. As the weeks go by, their ambient temperature should be very gradually lowered until they are comfortable with the temperature outside. This is when you can then remove the lamp and place them in the main coop, field or garden.

Free or Cooped

The happiest chickens are the ones who are allowed to roam free and explore, not trapped, confined and caged. If you have little space, then you're probably thinking the chickens should be cooped or penned. However, if you are going to look after chickens, then you need to carefully consider the quality of life they'll have in a limited space. When chickens get stressed, their eggs suffer as a result. If you decide to have a coop, then be certain the chickens can exit and enter it at will, and that they have a stretch of grass to soak in sunlight and breathe fresh air.

Building a Chicken Coop

Chicken coops can be bought pre-made or you can build one to suit your needs. You can design it any way you wish, but be sure it has enough room for the chickens. Comfort and protection from predators is imperative. The coop should also have roosting poles, proper ventilation, and boxes for the chickens to nest in.

Chicken Supplies

Once your fluffy chicks are grown, waterers, feeders, bedding and litter, feed, scratch and grit need to be provided. Local farm supply stores that carry these products can be located on the Internet or through farmers or chicken owners in your area.

Do I Need to Buy a Rooster?

If you are raising chickens for their eggs, you don't need to get a rooster. This is a common myth that in order to have eggs you need a rooster, but the eggs we eat are not fertilized. If they were, we would be making our omelettes with baby chicks. Roosters are necessary if you want chicks, but for eggs, you only need hens. Roosters do offer some protection to your flock with their raucous behavior when danger is present, although they probably would lose the fight with a fox.

Choosing your Chickens

With over four hundred varieties of chickens available, you have plenty of choices from which to pick your chicken(s). When choosing the breed of chicken, take into consideration the climate you are bringing them into and the climates they thrive in. Compare the temperaments of the different breeds when deciding which one is right for you. If choosing the chicken as a pet, you would want a good natured chicken. If, however, this chicken is for the meat, then temperament isn't so important.

When looking at chickens for their eggs, then choosing a breed with a high level of egg production will benefit you greatly. You can have multiple breeds living with one another; chickens will establish the pecking order very quickly.

Caring for your Chickens

Hens cannot last long without water so you will need to make sure their water is always filled, they are fed regularly, their eggs are gathered and their beds are cleaned. Maintain a strict schedule and the routine will pay off with chickens that are healthy and happy.

Chickens can provide you with a free and steady supply of eggs, and meat you won't have to hunt for. You are not going to be able to hide a chicken coop, though, so if confiscation is an issue, you may lose your birds.

Sheep and Goats

Farmers aren't the only ones that raise sheep and goats; people all over the world look after them in their back gardens. Some people even treat their pet sheep like dogs and take them for walks every now and again. You would never need to buy a lawnmower; just be sure you look after your sheep and goats as they need you to.

If you are thinking about raising your own sheep then there are a few things you need to know. Sheep are usually easier to care for, and less likely to get into trouble than goats. A sheep can provide you with wool for clothing and blankets, and can be used for bartering. A goat will be more useful in most cases—they provide a steady stream of milk, and can be used for meat as well.

Sheep

Sheep are ruminants: their stomachs have multiple compartments for specific foods, unlike humans who just have the one. Their stomachs are filled with microbes that can digest grasses and shrubs.

Sheep are herd animals, which means they prefer to move within a flock of sheep and not on their own. So if you are thinking about having just one sheep as a pet, then there's a risk concerning its happiness. Sheep are used for their wool and meat, and looking after them is very straightforward.

How to Care for Sheep

If you are planning on raising sheep, then they'll need plenty of grass and a variety of grains. A sheep or two can also be your "reason" for purchasing grains in bulk! Grains can be fed directly to your sheep without processing or grinding first.

Sheep Housing

Sheep require little and can survive outside as long as some type of shelter is provided to protect them from the harsher elements. Think about it—they have built in wool sweaters! Shelter for your sheep can be created in an old barn, a shed, or an old garage.

They can't stand humid and hot temperatures, so if they are housed in a tight fitting barn, they may become stressed. The best shelters are well ventilated.

Goats

Goats have very amusing and interesting personalities and can be very affectionate, especially during the summer. Goats love being around people and receiving a good old back scratch. Compared to sheep, goats on the whole are more sociable and make wonderful pets. They can be more troublesome, though, as they have a naturally curious nature.

Caring for your Goats

Caring for a goat takes less than an hour a day. Female goats will need milking every twelve hours. You can use the milk immediately, or store it as needed. A single goat can yield enough milk to supply a family of four!

You will need to keep your goat or goats away from your garden. They have a very healthy appetite when it comes to eating trees and flowers.

Shelter

Goats need to have a shelter that is dry with plenty of space to stretch their legs. They hate being isolated and separated from one another. If you have more than one, try to keep them together. You will need a place to keep all the bedding and food as well as a very clean milking area where you can milk the females.

Feeding

Goats need generous amounts of water throughout the day. They will eat pretty much anything. Let them graze freely; they will enjoy it very much. Unlike children, goats love their greens, as well as branches and cut grass. However, they won't eat grass out of choice. They will only eat it if there is nothing left to eat.

Hunting for Food

Hunting is a great American pastime and tradition. As illogical as it sounds, American hunters have done more for the conservation of wildlife than any other group. The numbers and variety of game available to us is because of the taxes hunters pay for hunting activities, contributions made by hunters into wildlife funds, and conservation planning on the part of hunters and wildlife managers alike. Hunting is a part of our frontiersman heritage and one of the best ways to add to your stores of meat. Just like vegetables, meat can be frozen, canned or dehydrated for later use.

The type of game available to you will depend on your location. The most common game is deer, squirrels, and rabbits; however, in certain parts of the country you can bag a moose or an elk! It takes practice at marksmanship, and skill at handling a weapon to make an enjoyable hunt. If you have never hunted before, you need to find someone who has and take the time to learn from them. While there may be a few outlaw-type hunters, most are ethical men and women who obey the laws and bag limits set forth in their state.

There are several weapons available for hunting and you may want to learn to use more than one of them. For primitive hunting, there is the bow or muzzleloader. It takes a lot of practice at stealth and patience to be successful with this type of hunting, but it is very rewarding when you learn to effectively hunt this way. For those who need a little more practice at sneaking up on game, long-range weapons such as shotguns and rifles are available. For rabbits or squirrels, nothing beats a shotgun.

You're going to need to learn how to field dress your game, how to butcher the meat, and how to put it up. There are many good books out there that will teach you how to field dress and butcher game.

For freezing or canning meat, you can go to <http://www.foodshortageusa.com> and order their DVD series on food storage secrets.

Here are some basic tips for beginner hunters:

1. You need to have a firearm. If you don't already have one, now's the time. Make sure to follow all applicable state laws about gun ownership.
2. Most states require you to take a hunter safety course in order to get a hunting license. State wildlife management agencies can help you find a course and time near you.
3. Make sure you use a firearm that is appropriate for what you're hunting. (You don't want to blow up the rabbit)
4. Practice shooting. Go to your local shooting range and hit target after target.
5. Don't forget other necessary tools—a knife is used to field dress the game. Game cleaning kits are available online or at most stores that carry hunting equipment.
6. Read a book or two about hunting and field dressing. Search online—there are tons of materials out there.

Fishing 101

When you think about adding wild food to your table, don't forget the fish. All you need is a pole, some string, a hook and some bait to get started. Poles can range anywhere from a high tech carbon and fiber optic rig to some switch that you cut off a tree. The pole you use doesn't need to be fancy...it just needs to be able to support a reel. The type of line to use is generally dictated by your location and the type of fishing you plan on doing. A light or medium strength string will suffice for lake and river fishing.

The type of bait to use again depends on what and where you fish, but just some night crawlers will undoubtedly do the trick. Starting at one end of the worm just thread him onto the hook leaving a small portion at the end to wander free and provide a little movement to catch the fish's eye. Other things can be used for bait. Bits of hot dog, corn kernels, and dough balls have had good results. Chicken liver or cow liver is also a good choice. If the "yuck" factor of live baits bothers you, than there is a wide selection of artificial baits to choose from. The most common is the rubber worm but there are baits and lures that spin and shine and smell just like what fish in the wild crave.

Add a bobber to your line, if you have one. The bobber keeps your line suspended in the water and lets you know when a fish strikes at the bait. If you see the bobber go under, then pull back on your line to try and “set” the hook into the fish’s mouth. If you do not set the hook, the fish will obviously spit it out. But that’s okay. Keep watching and sooner or later some fish will be around to nibble on your bait again. If you notice a large amount of time passing in between nibbles, check your bait to make sure it’s not gone. When you do get the hook set and your catch starts to pull, reel him in slowly. Try to avoid any sudden jerks that might dislodge the hook.

Cook your Catch

If you plan on eating your catch when you get back to camp, refrain from clubbing them in the head and throwing them into the back of the boat. The fish will taste fresher the longer you keep them alive. String them along on a leader that keeps them in the water and breathing. When you are ready, you can dress (clean) and cook your catch.

Gutting a fish takes a bit of practice, but it’s nothing you can’t learn after just a few tries. If there are fishing possibilities in your area, grab a local book on fishing, and buy some basic equipment, just in case.

Just like all of the other things talked about in this handbook, you should prepare now and get some hunting and fishing experience under your belt. You don’t want to have your family’s survival dependent on how quickly you can pick up a new skill during a crisis

Can You Eat Your Dog’s Food?

Sure your dog gets an occasional scrap or two from your table, but what about sharing what’s at his table? You would never even consider eating your dog’s food on a normal day, but what if that’s all that’s available? Dog food is pretty cheap. But is it safe?

While there are few reasons why a person would actually want to eat dog food, the idea seems to make people curious, and if you aren’t prepared, it may even be a necessity. So can you eat your dog’s food?

The short answer is yes, humans can eat dog food. Of course, you wouldn't want to eat any food—whether designed for humans or animals—that has been tainted or recalled. In most cases, though, humans can eat dog food without any short term health effects. It is important to understand, though, that there are many aspects of dog food that make it less than desirable for human consumption.

First, dog food is laden with chemicals and fats that are designed to extend shelf life. For this reason, the dog food you buy at the store has probably been around much longer than packaged food for humans. Plus, the “no trans fats” movement hasn't quite hit the animal food industry yet, so you're probably not doing your arteries any favors by consuming dog food.

Second, most commercial dog foods and treats are not made from human-grade ingredients. They typically include meat by-products which can include a variety of animal organs and inferior meat cuts that are discarded when preparing meats for human consumption. Dog food can also contain horse meat, as well as the meat and organs of euthanized animals. Grain by-products, such as chaff and hulls, are also common ingredients in dog food.

If consuming wet (canned) dog food has crossed your mind, remember that it is sterilized after cooking. Not too many people are fond of the idea that food requires sterilization before it can be eaten. Canned dog food is also frequently cooked in the can, so trace metals can leech into the food.

While you probably won't notice any short-term effects from eating dog food, a very real potential for long-term effects exists. The high fat content in dog food can cause a variety of health problems, from heart disease, to obesity, to liver problems. Also, because lower grade cuts of meat are used to make dog food, it lacks the nutrients found in foods made for human consumption.

Another significant long-term risk from eating your dog's food stems from the fact that it often contains the flesh of euthanized animals. Depending on the euthanization process, the flesh may contain a variety of harmful chemicals toxic to the human body.

The animals may also have been diseased, so the use of their flesh can contribute to many long-term illnesses, including cancer and dementia.

If you are worried because you tried your dog's food to see what it was like, there is little cause for concern. On the other hand, if you have developed a taste for it, beware of the long term-health issues that accompany a steady diet of dog food, making it a bad idea.

Maybe you should start purchasing a more grain-based dog food, just in case you should have to share a meal with your animal friend. Seriously, don't forget your pet when stockpiling. Have some extra bags in storage—for Fido, not for you!

Pets and Survival

Today, most of us take for granted that cats and dogs are beloved household pets. Have you ever wondered though, why we decided to domesticate these animals? After all, we view cats and dogs as companions today, but in centuries past, did people really keep cats and dogs for companionship?

Although we have always felt a sense of attachment to cats and dogs, they weren't always around just to keep us company. During the colonial days of the United States, these animals fulfilled a variety of other needs. The domestication of cats and dogs arose more out of necessity than for companionship.

Dogs were domesticated largely because they could effectively look after a farm. Cattle and sheep farmers found that dogs had the capabilities to round up and move herds quite easily—much more easily than humans could. Dogs also protected livestock from a variety of wildlife, ensuring that the farmer would have livestock to butcher or sell to keep the farm running.

These animals were similarly useful for other types of farmers. Dogs helped preserve the crops that farmers toiled over by keeping destructive animals out of wheat, corn, and other vegetable fields.

They also proved to be a deterrent for thieves of the human variety, who would take produce from a neighboring farmer's field during the pre-dawn hours of the day.

Dogs also led oxen in the colonial days. Oxen pulled the plows that prepared, sowed, and harvested the fields. Using dogs to lead the oxen made the job of tending the fields much easier for the farmer, enabling him to accomplish more in less time.

Cats, likewise, were used for more than companionship in the early days of the United States. These animals were instrumental in keeping rats and other vermin out of grain bins and other storage units. Rats and mice were responsible for destroying many tons of stored crops, and cats protected these resources. By controlling the population of vermin, cats also reduced the spread of a variety of diseases and allowed farmers to maintain profitable operations.

These domesticated animals also protected livestock from a wide range of infestations. Vermin frequently caused problems for chickens and turkeys. The domestication of cats helped reduce the spread of these problems. It was not uncommon for cats to live alongside farm animals, protecting them from disease and distress.

They also controlled vermin in farm houses, particularly in cellars and other areas where farmers stored food for their families. The "house cat," in those days, allowed many farmers to survive long winters, when a reduction of the food supply could mean the difference between survival and starvation.

While dogs and cats make great fireside companions today, they served vital functions for humans in centuries gone by. When your favorite pet curls up in your lap at the end of a long day, remember that these animals once contributed to the survival and prosperity of our ancestors.

If you are ever faced with a long term disaster that leaves you living off your stockpile or off the land, remember the roots of your family pet. Press Rover into service guarding the garden or domestic animals, and let Kitty keep the mice away from your dry goods and pantry. Pets have always been valued for their companionship. Keep in mind that yours may be an essential part of your survival plan.

Food for Barter

Let's take a look at some other food products that can be purchased for use during an emergency. They are fairly inexpensive and can be stored for a long period of time. Since these items could be harder to acquire during a crisis, they could be used as bartering items.

☐ Candy (almost 100% sugar)	☐ Salt
☐ Cocoa	☐ Spices
☐ Coffee	☐ Sugar
☐ Grain	☐ Tea
☐ Honey* consider beekeeping	☐ Tobacco

These sorts of items could become very valuable during a time of emergency when the supply runs really low. One of the best things about stocking up on the above items is that if you don't use them for barter, you can use them yourself.

Don't forget the importance of salt as a stockpile item, especially when you start to prepare unprocessed foods for your meals. You'll appreciate having some salt around. Salt has a long shelf life. Just keep it dry.

Sugar and spices will come in handy too. Dried spices don't spoil, but they do diminish in strength. If kept in airtight containers, whole spices can last up to four years and ground spices for two to three years. Leafy herbs can last between one and three years.

If there is no smell, toss it. If a bit of fragrance is left and you can still use it, just use more of it than called for in the recipe. Abide by good storage rules (cool, dry, and dark) and your spices and herbs will last for quite some time.

If you don't make your own bread, you probably don't keep a lot of dry yeast on hand. This is another item that could be a great bartering tool. You can buy packets or jars (the jars should be refrigerated, though, after opening). Who knows, you might start producing loaves of fresh bread for your neighborhood.

Anything you have a lot of can be bartered. You can barter for tomatoes and produce in the summer and wool in the winter. If you keep chickens, they will probably produce more eggs than you need, and bartering the extra can supply you with items you need.

Survival Through the Ages

Isn't it amazing how unprocessed foods, such as grain, can last for such a long time? Remember the famine in Egypt thousands of years ago? Joseph saved Egypt by storing enormous amounts of grain. Did you know that after years of storage, you can sprout wheat kernels or even plant them? What incredible food wheat is!

While meat can be a great source of protein, it's not the only way to get life sustaining amounts. In fact, wheat contains the eight essential amino acids required to synthesize complete proteins. Sure, the levels are lower in wheat than in meat, but the fact is, they are still there.

The ideal situation would allow for a combination of grain and meat. But, if you had to go a few days, maybe weeks, without meat, you could survive on grains and legumes. Unfortunately, grain doesn't have as much of the vitamin or mineral content that your body needs. Because of this, it would be wise to make sure you stock up on the vitamin and mineral supplements that you currently take.

(This is not intended to be a nutritional handbook, so for further information you'll have to do more in-depth research)

All about Wheat

Wheat can be a complicated grain. It comes in several forms, can be added to your diet in many ways, and is best when you buy it in its least processed state for what you want to make. You can even grind it yourself and make it into the foods that you want.

Wheat Berries

You can get standard wheat berries in five main types. Each tends to be best for different types of foods.

- ❑ Hard Red Berries – these are the best bread berries because they create a light bread while offering the best flavor. They can easily be ground at home for fresh flour with a grain mill. These are also the best option should you choose to make bread in a bread machine.
- ❑ Hard White Berries – these are also good for making bread. However, the final bread isn't as flavorful, and has a slightly smaller amount of protein.
- ❑ Soft Red Berries – these are much softer than the hard varieties, making them a poor choice for bread. Instead, they are used for flat breads that don't need to rise, a variety of pastries, and crackers.
- ❑ Soft White Berries – even softer than soft red berries, these tend to be used for pastries, crackers, and noodles.
- ❑ Durum Wheat – this is a very hard wheat that is often processed to remove the germ and bran. It is used for pasta.

Cracked Wheat

Cracked wheat is sometimes called bulgar. It is wheat that has been cooked, and then dried and cut up. Much less cooking time is required to soften it. It can be added to salads, used in recipes that call for rice, and can make an excellent side dish. You can add it to stir fries, stews, and soups as well.

Other Processed Wheat Options

You can also get wheat that has been rolled, flaked, and puffed. Each of these has advantages. Rolled and flaked varieties can be used for cooking and added to a number of dishes in a similar fashion to cracked wheat. You can also make them into a hot cereal like oatmeal. Puffed wheat is often eaten as a cold cereal.

Wheat can become an important part of your diet, and as a whole grain it is an excellent choice. You can not only bake with it, you can enjoy many varieties and processed options for great hot cereals. You can also add it to your life in ways similar to rice by tossing it in salads, adding it to stir fries, and including it in soups and stews.

More to Eat Than Wheat

Don't think you're limited to wheat in an emergency situation. There is a wide variety of grains that can be added to your diet. They are healthy for you, have high levels of protein, and they can be cooked in various different ways to add life to your diet. Some may be familiar and some may be grains you have never heard of.

Amaranth

Amaranth isn't really a grain, but rather a pseudo-cereal because it acts like a gluten-free grain. It makes an excellent porridge when cooked on the stove, in a rice cooker, or a pressure cooker in its whole form. It can also be made into flour and mixed in with wheat flour to make cookies or breads. You can find it in many bulk food sections and stores as well as health food stores. If you want to make your own flour, grind the whole grain in a spice grinder.

Barley

For a great addition to soups, stews, and grain salads, you can use barley. Barley has a tough outer hull with loads of fiber. You can choose to use it with the hull on but the cooking time is longer this way. There are also slightly-processed barley forms such as Scotch barley and barley groats. If you want something softer and easy to cook, you can get pearled barley. However, it lacks some fiber of the other options.

Buckwheat

While technically a fruit, buckwheat makes for a great grain or cereal. You can make a hot cereal or side dish by boiling buckwheat until it is soft. Pancakes, crepes, and pasta can also be made from buckwheat. By mixing it with other flours, it adds a hearty taste and extra nutrition to a meal.

Corn

Maize is the proper name for corn which can be consumed in several ways as a grain. In fact, corn is a whole grain, and corn products include grits, cornmeal, and popcorn. You can use cornmeal for breads, baked goods, and to keep things from sticking to your cooking surface.

Millet

Most countries enjoy millet as a mild tasting grain with lots of uses. It can be cooked into a hot cereal, seasoned for delicious savory side dishes, or added into salads and other dishes. In America it is used as bird feed, but it is a great thing to eat!

Quinoa

Quinoa has an abundance of great nutrients and is high in protein. It also can be cooked like pasta, rice, or a breakfast cereal. You can make it into breakfast, use it as a pilaf, and add it to salads, soups and other dishes. It can also be a tasty addition to baked goods. Quinoa is packed with protein, and cooks in about 10 minutes, so it is ideal for efficient cooking.

Sorghum

For an interesting grain, try sorghum. It has a texture similar to millet and can be made into porridge. It can also be ground into a flour that is excellent for baking and most exciting, it can be popped like popcorn.

Other useful grains include:

- ▣ rice
- ▣ dried beans
- ▣ oats
- ▣ soybeans

These foods can last and last, as long as they are stored properly (cool and dry).

Don't forget that these are also "yummy" for pests. Take the extra effort to keep these foods from being ruined by insects or mice (or even larger vermin). Plastic containers are difficult for furry friends to penetrate; however, the key to keeping insects out is to keep oxygen out of the containers.

Store It

It's not as hard to build up a grain/legume supply as you might think. The only concern with having large containers and plenty of supplies on hand would be—and we hope this will never happen—government confiscation during an emergency situation. Remember, credit card purchases can be tracked by authorities. If you are buying larger than normal quantities, you might want to consider paying in cash.

If you really want to stay under the radar, you might want to get an animal or two as livestock. Then your grain purchases could be used primarily for feeding your animals while simultaneously adding to your stockpile.

Purchasing grains locally can be cheaper, but that means the packing would probably be up to you. You would need containers designed for food storage as well as being moisture-proof. The all around best container would be a 6-gallon bucket and it needs to be food grade. A food-grade container is one that will not transfer non-food chemicals into the food and contains no chemicals which would be hazardous to human health. Any container that has been used for paint or any other chemicals is no longer safe for food storage.

Instead of purchasing questionable buckets from a hardware store however, you should get in contact with a local restaurant and ask if you can have their empty buckets. Because restaurants buy in bulk, many of their foods come in plastic buckets that are just thrown away when empty. If the lids no longer seal as well as you'd like, then go on-line and buy storage lids for your container. A Gamma Seal™ lid will turn your white plastic pail into an airtight container that is easily accessible. The outer rim with an O-ring seal is permanently attached to the bucket. The screw-on inner ring, also with an O-ring seal, can be spun off for easy access and then resealed.

It's food-grade safe, fits nearly every 3 ½ to 7-gallon bucket, and comes in a variety of colors that you can use to color-code bucket contents.

Where do you plan to store your grains? Storing these goods can cause problems if you leave them in their original packaging. There are some things you ought to know about storing your dried goods.

Things That Ruin Your Grains:

Grains can be kept for a long time without going bad. However, there are some things that will dramatically decrease the life of your grains. You will need to protect your dried goods from contaminants, including:

- ☐ Bugs – most dried goods are very susceptible to bug infestation. Because of this you need to find a solution that keeps the bugs out.
- ☐ Mice and other pests – grains are a favorite for a number of pests.
- ☐ Moisture – moisture from spills and humidity can ruin your dry goods and even cause mold and mildew.
- ☐ Heat – increased heat will shorten the shelf-life of your dry goods. This is especially true with grains.

Storage Containers:

First of all, it is important to get your dry goods out of their original packages within one to two weeks of their purchase (sooner is better). The best containers are airtight and prevent moisture or pests from getting into your grains.

Glass is an excellent choice, can't be chewed through by pests, and when used with a rubber seal, makes for an excellent storage container. Glass is breakable however, and stored grains can be heavy, so accidents are more likely with glass containers.

Plastic works well, but can occasionally be chewed through. There is a tendency for plastic to take on the flavors of the foods it contains; this can cause issues when storing other foods in said container.

One way to cut down on the flavor seepage is to use a cloth liner in your plastic container, or use that container to store one type of grain (i.e. always keep corn in the “corn” bucket, and oats in the “oats” bucket). Another drawback to plastic is that it may not seal well, or the seal may become loose over time. A Gamma Seal™ lid will take care of this problem.

You can also use pottery with a good seal. This can be a great option. Metal containers are available, but not always a good choice. The metals may wear down into your food through continued use.

Why a good seal? You don't want moisture getting into any of your food containers. So you'll need to be aware of the conditions and provide the driest environment possible. When you purchase your grain, make sure that it's been dried completely. If you buy grain shortly after it's been harvested, it'll probably be moist. You'll have to be sure to dry it before storing it. Always smell the grain before buying, or using it. Make sure it hasn't gone bad.

If you do have a supply of grain that needs moisture drawn out, using silica gel packs is an option to consider. They may be available at your local supply or hardware stores. You can also go to the flower section of any craft store or Wal-Mart and buy the cans of silica (used for drying flowers) and manufacture your own container. If you are unable to find them, check out Desiccare, Inc. (www.desiccare.com) As a manufacturing company for moisture control products, they have a large selection to choose from with some innovative items for the home. They don't list their prices online so you may want to give them a call and place your order.

In addition to moisture absorption, you'll want something that absorbs oxygen as well since oxygen content plays a large role in pest infestation of your grain. Oxygen absorbers are new to the market however, and not widely known. You can research them on-line.

Storage Location:

Now that you have a good container, you need to find the right location. Choose one that is as cool as possible. A basement or cellar may be your best option. Keep the containers off of the concrete floor or ground (if you're storing them in your garage or shed). Lay some boards down to stack the containers upon.

It is important to keep your grains out of direct sunlight. The sun may warm them too much, increasing the possibility of spoilage. Keeping dry goods in the refrigerator or freezer will increase their shelf life.

Rotate:

It is a good idea to rotate your dry goods in the same manner you do the rest of your stockpile. To do this, dump it into a container that will make it easy to pour. Then wash your container and thoroughly dry it. Put the fresh food in and top with the old. This way the oldest foods get used up first. Rotate your containers, using the oldest grains first. Avoid stacking the containers too closely together. You don't want them to "sweat".

Pests:

Pests can be a major threat to your supply. One of the easiest ways to combat pests like mice is to adopt a cat. Usually, just the smell of the cat will keep most mice away...and the cat will deal with the ones that aren't smart enough to stay away.

For smaller pests like bugs or weevils, you can try dry ice—frozen carbon dioxide gas—if you're comfortable handling it. This is deadly to pests as it prevents the animal from getting oxygen—a very effective method. Be cautious when handling dry ice since it'll freeze your skin on contact. (Locating dry ice can be as easy as a Google search or your phone book. Welding supply stores and ice cream parlors may also have some.)

Dry ice comes by the block or in pellets. You might find that pellets are easier to work with. Be sure to use heavy gloves and the proper tools when handling dry ice. Once your six-gallon container is filled with grain, lay a quarter pound of dry ice on top. Press the lid down gently and allow some of the air to escape.

After the dry ice has evaporated (it'll take anywhere from two to five hours) seal the container.

Maintain a watchful eye on the process to prevent air from getting back into the container before it's sealed. If it is sealed prematurely, the bucket may split or the lid could pop off. Any adult insects or larvae in the container will die from the lack of oxygen. It may take a longer period of time for eggs and pupae to die.

(NOTE: Do not let children or pets near dry ice and never use in a closed room.)

Buying Locally

You might try to purchase your grains from a local co-op that caters to farmers buying feed for their animals. Be aware that this grain has not been cleaned and disinfected as it would be for human consumption. After all your hard work to store the grain, you may find yourself with a bucket full of weevils and dust when you open it. However, this can be a great option if you're interested in buying locally grown produce as well as other supplies for farm related issues (i.e., animals and crops). It might be in your best interest to conceal that you're store-housing for a crisis, or that the animal feed you're buying might be used for human consumption in an emergency.

We all know how these things end up. When the government notices that an increasing number of people are buying grain, they'll be sure to impose a higher sales tax or put a limit on how much you can buy. Plus, federal agencies might start paying closer attention to the human use of products intended for animals.

It may be more difficult to acquire grains through a feed store. The reason is simply that products are packaged and marketed towards specific animals rather than a general mixture. Some places also add supplements to the feed to prevent deficiencies in animals. You may raise suspicions when purchasing large quantities of grain and opting to have it free of additional supplements. If you can find a feed store or co-op that doesn't ask many questions, take your business there.

Another option for you is to act like you don't know any better. Pretend you're a hobby farmer trying to go "all natural" for your animals. In this case, it won't be so bad if they try to take advantage of you by "letting" you buy too much. The more grain you intend to purchase the more difficult it will be to conceal your motives.

You can load the grains in the back of a pickup truck (they can be bagged first if you'd like) and once you get home you'll have to take the necessary steps to store them properly. If you don't have the privacy of country living, you should probably pull into your garage to unload. You don't want nosy neighbors trying to figure out what you're up to. Take care to clean up the dust after it settles. Not too many people are aware that flour dust can be explosive—a spark can ignite the dust. This is especially true after grinding your own wheat; be sure to clean up all of the dust afterwards.

If you don't feel comfortable visiting the local co-op or feed store, befriend a farmer. They probably wouldn't mind selling you a load or two from their harvest. If they have livestock that they butcher, you might be able to purchase some of that meat and fill your freezer. This is one relationship that could really come in handy.

Buying Grains Online

There are numerous websites that sell grains or legumes (or just about anything else that you want to store). The advantage of purchasing online is that all of the hard work is already done. You simply pick out what and how much you want. If you choose larger quantities, they come in five- or six-gallon pails—and most of them are already oxygen-free. With this option you don't have to worry about handling dry-ice or other methods of pest control.

This also gives you the freedom to buy in smaller quantities first and then determine what you really want larger amounts of to store. Buying online is also great for the unprocessed food "beginner". There are some great websites that have pictures and good descriptions of all their products along with useful information like preparation and recipes.

What to do with Unprocessed Foods

One of the best things about having unprocessed foods in storage—grains or legumes for example—is the ability to choose how you want it processed and what you want it used for. Add a little meat and make a protein-bulked soup with legumes; put in a little wheat or rice and it turns into an even more nutritious meal.

You can take some wheat, boil it to use for a breakfast cereal, or use it in a dish as a substitute for rice. If you sprout legumes or wheat you can use them for a salad along with some of your home-grown veggies. Soybeans can be used to make your own soymilk. And how about fresh bread made with freshly ground flour? Yum!

Purchasing grain in bulk requires a mill for processing. These items can be pretty pricey, but well worth the investment. You'll have to decide which product best suits your needs and your budget. Consider what you plan to grind and when you plan to use it.

An electric mill makes grinding grain easy. They are popular because of their speed and efficiency. If you're concerned about emergency use, such as no power, you'll want to make sure you have a generator available so that you can still use it. (A solar generator would be perfect for something like this.) A good electric mill starts around \$200. There are disadvantages to electric mills. They are loud compared to a hand mill and they produce flour dust.

A hand cranked mill can be less expensive; a basic one can be found for a little under \$100. However, there are hand mills that are equal to, if not more than, electric mills in cost. With a hand mill you can grind anything, including grains that tend to be oily (ex., flaxseed). Another advantage is the ability to crack the grains; an electric mill is unable to do that. The only downside with the hand mill is that you (or another family member) have to do the work.

How To Grind Your Own Grains

Grinding your own grain has many benefits. Not only is the grain healthier it is also tastier. You will find that your flours and cereals have a fresher taste, accompanied by the taste of the grain you've chosen to grind. It is also a fairly easy way to go.

What You Need.

In order to grind your own grain you will need a grain mill. Choose from the types listed above.

Grain Options.

This process can be used to grind almost any type of whole grain. Barley, wheat, corn, oats, and triticale can all be ground to make hot cereal or side dishes. They can also be ground into flour and used in baked goods along with rice, teff, sorghum, quinoa, and amaranth.

General Process.

Each grinder will have a slightly different operation method. However, the process remains similar.

- ☐ If you are choosing a grain that needs to be rinsed before use, you will want to start by rinsing and drying it well. For example, quinoa has a lot of pesticide residue that should be rinsed off.
- ☐ If you have the option to select a different grind for your grains, you will want to adjust it to meet your needs for this particular grind.
- ☐ You will want to fill the top hopper with grain.
- ☐ Use your grinder according to its function. (i.e., turning the crank if you have a hand mill or turning it on for an electric version.)
- ☐ Once the grain has been ground, you can decide to empty the bottom portion and continue to grind or regrind it for a finer grain.

Storage.

Fresh ground grain doesn't keep for very long. Keep it in an airtight container in the refrigerator or freezer to lengthen its life. For the best tasting baked goods or cereals, use your fresh ground grain right away.

Grinding your own grain is much healthier and tastier than buying processed options in the store. Depending on the mill you choose, you can grind flour and cereal. The grains can then be used in baking, pasta, hot cereal, and added to a wide range of dishes for increased nutrition, fiber, and flavor.

Using Your Grains.

Grain that has been ground, but hasn't been made into flour, is excellent for breakfast cereal or porridge. You can add all sorts of sweet and savory toppings for a delicious and healthy meal. It can also be served as a side dish with savory and spicy options. Add it to your soups, salads, and stir fries. Most types can also be served in a variety of dishes, for example rice.

You can also grind grain and use it for baking. While many grains aren't good for baking bread on their own, they can be mixed with wheat flour for a tasty and healthy addition. It can also be used to make cookies, flat breads, and cakes. This offers more nutrients and flavor than wheat alone can provide.

A Fine Grind

Remember, the finer you grind the grain, the less of a laxative effect it has. As silly as that sounds, there is a reason this is mentioned. We are so used to eating highly processed, refined flours that when you switch to coarser whole-wheat flour, your body will need to adjust. You can begin with finer flour and gradually switch to a more course flour.

If you are feeding babies and young children, you'll want to make sure that they are consuming a finely ground flour to prevent any problems with digestion.

Sprouting

Another way to use grains or legumes is to sprout them. Here are some of the seeds and beans you can sprout:

☐ Alfalfa	☐ Lentils
☐ Barley	☐ Mung beans
☐ Chickpeas	☐ Peas
☐ Corn	☐ Pumpkin
☐ Fenugreek	☐ Wheat

The health benefits that come from eating sprouts are amazing. They are a year-round source of vitamin C, carotenoid A, as well as B vitamins. By consuming them, you are consistently getting a high volume of vitamins. Unlike vegetables and fruits, which begin to lose their nutritional value after they're picked, sprouts remain full of vitamin content and even continue slow growth after being harvested.

How do you go about sprouting? It's easier than you think.

You'll need a large jar. Keep in mind that sprouted seeds have a larger volume—six to eight times— than dry seeds. (You have to account for that when considering the size of jar.) Do not use seeds packaged for gardens. They might be chemically treated and the germination rate will be slower. Purchase good quality seeds and go through and remove any damaged ones before placing them in the jar. For a quart container, measure about four tablespoons of seeds.

Place the seeds in the jar, fill with water, and soak. (Cheesecloth works well as a cover for the jar since it allows airflow.) The seeds' size will determine how long they should soak: smaller seeds—five hours; medium sized seeds—eight hours; grains and legumes—ten to twelve hours. When the soaking time is completed, drain the water and rinse off the seeds.

After rinsing, place the jar in a cool, dark place. Rinse and drain the seeds twice every day. Within two days, the sprouting should occur. Don't let the sprouts sit in water as this will cause them to rot. The best time for flavor and nutritional value occurs when tiny green leaves appear at the tips, and the sprouts are about two to three inches long. Refrigerate them to retain freshness and nutritional value; they should be eaten within a few days.

Sprouts are an excellent and inexpensive way to acquire a high concentration of vitamins, minerals, and enzymes. Toss them into a salad, make bread (cake-like) with them, or add them to soup. Regardless of how you choose to use them, you'll benefit greatly health-wise and it'll even be fun for the kids!

It's Never too Late to Start

Don't worry if you've never stored your own wheat or legumes before. It's never too late to learn the proper storage, processing, and cooking methods for unprocessed foods. In fact, it may become a fun family activity. There is a plethora of resources available to guide you. Experiment with recipes, learn how to grind your own wheat, teach the kiddos how to sprout. If you begin making it part of your daily (or weekend) life then when a time of crisis comes, you'll be prepared.

Remember to keep on hand various seasonings, spices, oils—all of the extras that add the “oomph” in making a delicious meal. Stock up on the items you use the most or learn how to grow and make your own.

Family Needs

When determining what you should add to your stockpile, your first priority should be “family needs”. Take into consideration things like formula or diapers (if you have an infant), diabetic needs, low-sodium foods, and anything that is a special need.

It’s important, in families with children, to stock up on food items they like and need for nutritional value. A milk substitute comes in handy. Powdered milk has a shorter shelf life once opened while cans of evaporated milk last longer. Peanut butter and jelly are always good things to stock up on too.

Again, making the adjustments now will make it easier later if there comes a time you are unable to run to the grocery store.

Don’t forget your pets’ needs. Stock up on bags of food, treats and chew toys. Any medicines they need or flea treatments would also be good to have on hand. Be sure to stay current with their vaccinations and rabies shots.

Where to Buy Unprocessed Foods

There are several options available to you for purchasing unprocessed foods in bulk. Your decision will be made based on what’s important to you. Maybe it’s buying locally, maybe it’s finding the lowest price, or maybe you just want a quality product with minimal labor on your end.

If you decide to buy locally, you’ll want to locate a co-op or find a farmer who’s willing to sell some of his harvest. This method might require either owning or renting a truck or paying for delivery. It’ll depend on the amount of grain you are purchasing. If you purchase a truckload, you will need the space to store it all. Next, you will need to consider the best way to protect your investment from pests. This might not be the easiest route for someone who lives in an urban area unless you are willing and able to package the food into air-tight containers after you take delivery.

By far, the easiest way to purchase your grain is online. The products you order will come to you prepackaged. Simply store them until you need them. Pests will not be a concern because of the packaging, and the absence of oxygen will kill any bugs. Most websites sell numerous types of grain, as well as any other unprocessed foods you may want to have in storage. Taking the time to research and find the lowest prices will save you a few dollars. You can also order from a company that has products in stock and can ship right away. Sometimes you just don't want to wait for your merchandise.

Alternative Cooking Methods

Another aspect that requires consideration is, in the event of a crisis, how would you cook your meals? If the utility companies were shut down for a few days—or longer—what type of fuel would you need to create the heat necessary for a hot meal or baking bread? You need to have a plan for emergency heat. Keep in mind that it's a good idea to understand how to use (and cook) with this alternative heat source before an emergency occurs.

Even if you have a highly reliable electricity provider, there will still be times when your electrical service will be interrupted. One of the most frustrating things about losing electricity can be the inability to cook (unless you have a gas range). Fortunately, there are ways you can cook food, even when the electricity goes out in your home.

If you have a gas stove, cooking food during an electrical outage poses few problems. While the electronic ignition won't work, you can still light the burners with a match. You won't however, have the use of your oven. If the electricity goes out in your home during the winter, this can give you an additional advantage—your gas stove will generate heat in your home, so you will have to rely less on kerosene or other portable heat sources.

Without a gas stove, cooking can be a bit of a challenge. However, with a bit of creativity it can still be done. One simple way to prepare food during an electrical outage is to use an outdoor gas or charcoal grill. Of course, during the winter months, this can be a bit uncomfortable. It helps quite a bit if you have a diehard grilling fan living with you.

How many of us don't know someone who relishes the thought of standing in front of a grill, no matter the weather?

With a little skill and practice, nearly any type of food can be prepared on a grill outdoors. Meats can be cooked directly on the grate, while vegetables can be wrapped in foil to prevent drying them out. Placing a cooking pot on the grill is a great way to heat soups and cook pasta, and a saucepan can be used to heat sauces. With some practice and a little luck, you can even use a covered pot to cook rice outdoors.

A fireplace can also come in handy for cooking during a power outage. This can be quite challenging, since it is difficult to control the temperature, but it can be useful for heating soup, cooking meat and vegetables, or to boil water for coffee or tea.

A wood burning stove is similarly useful. While it is hard to control the heat source, a wood burning stove gives you the advantage of being able to leave a kettle to heat, instead of holding it over an open flame. This reduces the chance of injury, and allows you to attend to other tasks while your food is heating. These types of stoves aren't limited to wood as their fuel source. You can use other flammable materials such as wood chips, paper, twigs or grass. For safety reasons, don't burn items coated with noxious or volatile substances.

A camping stove can be good for emergencies. You'll have to decide which type of fuel you want to work with. Some stoves run on propane tanks (similar to a gas grill) which means you'll want to have additional tanks in storage. Other stoves run on gasoline—this option requires extra caution because you'll have to store extra gas. There are additional items that could come in handy, such as Coleman's propane crock-pot and propane oven.

There is another cook stove available that allows the use of propane, wood, charcoal, or whatever you have on hand. It's called the Crisis Cooker and is available at www.crisiscooker.com. An unbelievably well-insulated unit, you can cook just about anywhere, on any surface, without the worry of possible damage.

It produces a remarkable amount of heat and with a twenty-five pound bag of charcoal you can cook two meals a day for up to three weeks (this might vary depending on the size of the crowd you're cooking for). The point is, this might be the most economical and efficient way to cook during an emergency.

Many people assume that they cannot cook without electricity. As you can see though, there are several ways you can prepare meals, even if the electricity goes out in your home, or is out for an extended period of time.

Always remember that when using units designed for the outdoors, you keep them outdoors!

Cooking Efficiently

No matter what type of cooking method you use, try to be as efficient as possible. If you are going to the trouble of lighting a campfire or charcoal grill, wrap some potatoes in aluminum foil and place them in the coals. Keep a kettle or pot of water boiling the whole time. You can use this boiled water for coffee, tea, or even to drink if water safety is a concern.

Make cornbread or any other quick bread in a cast iron skillet, placed near, but not in, the flames, and covered tightly with foil.

If you place a large pot on the stove or grill and begin to boil water, you can partially submerge smaller containers and cook multiple items at one time, (i.e., veggies in one container and soup in another, without having to use the big pot for one purpose at a time).

Leave some room on the grill for meat. You can cook your entire meal at once which allows you to preserve your fuel. Even if you use wood as fuel, someone still must find and cut it, so using it economically is wise.

Have a Trial Run

Very few family activities are as enjoyable as a camping trip. Even if just for the weekend, camping provides quality time with family and friends. If you have the time to do so, a camping trip will help you to put your survival skills to the test. Reading how to start a campfire is one thing but actually doing it is another. If you have experienced camping at least once, you won't feel as intimidated by the prospect of going without electricity, or eating food prepared over an open flame.

If you do decide on a trial run, schedule an overnight or short weekend trip to a nearby campground, or you can even camp out in your own backyard. (No cheating, though.)

Regardless of where you go for your trial run, you will need to get your equipment together. Those items include: a tent, sleeping bags, fishing gear etc. Be sure to include flashlights, batteries and a good first aid kit.

Finding a campground isn't terribly difficult. Your local parks and recreation department should be able to point you in the right direction. The National Park Service and the U.S. Forest Service offers good information for camp sites on a national scale. Choose a shaded, level area for your campsite, large enough to suit your needs. Make a note of any water supplies, restroom facilities and garbage disposal areas.

Around The Campfire

Once you find a spot for your campsite, build a campfire. Fire is essential to any extended stay in the wilderness. Knowing how to build a campfire is information everyone needs to know if you plan to camp or fish, or if you get stranded in the wilderness and must rely on your skills.

The first thing you need to do is find a level piece of ground, one that can accommodate the size fire you want and still provide adequate clearance to the surrounding area. For a small campfire this would be about a 6x6 foot area. Locate the fire site in the center of your clearing. Clear back all loose brush, leaves and debris for a four to five foot radius.

If at all possible erect some type of stone barrier around the fire pit. This helps to cut back on raging brush fires that burn out of control.

Gather dry leaves and small twigs then place them in the center of the pit. Light the leaves and let them burn while you continue to feed small twigs to the pile, adding fuel to the fire. When you have a decent little flame going, start incorporating twigs that are a bit larger, allowing them to get good and toasty. When gathering the larger pieces of firewood, get the downed and dried wood. Living wood is too wet and will not burn well.

Continue to do this, gathering progressively larger sticks until you have a fire that suits your needs. Do not to pack the sticks too tightly together as this will smother the fire. Lay them loosely, crosswise and such, to allow air to circulate. Oxygen is one of the key components in the equation to get things to burn, so let the air circulate through the fire stock. Try to expose as much of the surface of the wood to the fire as you can.

Safety, of course, is a concern. You should never leave a campfire unattended. Any small breeze could fan flames or blow burning embers aloft into the surrounding areas. If possible have plenty of water on standby, and a shovel for smothering the fire if it gets too big.

Keep children away from the fire at all times, except when roasting marshmallows. Even when the flames have died down the remaining coals give off heat for hours afterwards. Water is the best way to extinguish a fire.

A small cook stove is needed, unless you plan to cook directly over the fire. Some small pots and pans will be necessary although food is quite often wrapped in aluminum and thrown directly on the coals to cook

Unless you plan to hunt or fish for your meat, bring resealable plastic bags with food portioned off for meals. While wild animals aren't usually a problem, you can further discourage their presence by storing all food in the car and spraying your refuse with ammonia.

When you are done cooking, douse the pit with water for about ten minutes, turning and stirring the remains as you do. Smothering with dirt and sand works well but some heat is still retained. Be sure you extinguish the fire. Most cases of people getting seriously burned occur the morning after the fire, while the embers are still smoldering.

Simply zip yourself into your sleeping bag when you are ready to turn in at night

When ready to head home, clean up all your trash and be sure to leave the campsite as you found it. Chances are you have picked up some new skills during your camping trip, and you will have confidence in your abilities to cook for and feed your family in rustic conditions, should the need arise.

Quantities – How Much?

Planning how much to store can be a little overwhelming. An average person can do quite well on 2,000 calories a day. If, during an emergency, you are performing tasks that increase your daily activity (walking or biking to work, working in a garden, processing more of your own food, etc) then you would want to increase your calorie intake for adequate energy and to maintain weight.

You'll also want to make sure that everyone is getting enough protein. When things get tough and you find yourself doing more physical work than you're used to, your muscles will need that protein to rebuild until they are conditioned for the additional workload. Children especially need protein for their growing bodies.

You may want to plan to provide three thousand calories for each person each day. If you use up that much food per day, then fine, you planned for it. And if you don't? Great, there's more in storage. At this point you're probably thinking "Okay, fine. But how do I calculate that into actual food amounts?"

Optimally you'd like to have a year's worth of stores on hand. However, most people just don't have the room to keep that much food around.

While it depends completely on your budget and your personal goals, a three to six months' supply seems like a reasonable amount of food to store.

When determining the amount of food per person, some suggest one six-gallon container per person for one month. So, if you have a family of four, you would want four six-gallon containers of wheat for one month.

There is a website designed to calculate the amount of food for you. All you have to do is enter the number of adults and children. Keep in mind, their calculations are for 12 months. The website is www.thefoodguys.com/foodcalc.html.

Figure the ratio of grain to legumes at four-to-one. This is a good ballpark figure for the number of containers of legumes you should store. So, for every one container of beans, you should have four containers of grain.

Checklists

Do you have what you need for the members of your family? Review the next page for each family member, and make sure. Things like basic food and water are needed by all. These are the items you may not have thought of, sorted by group.

Stockpile Checklist

Baking/Cooking Essentials

- Baking Powder
- Baking Soda
- Yeast
- Salt
- Vinegar

Dairy

- Dry Milk
- Evaporated Milk

Fats and Oils

- Vegetable Oil
- Shortening
- Salad Dressing
- Peanut Butter

Grains/Legumes

- Barley
- Hard Wheat (white or red)
- Quick Rolled Oats
- Pinto Beans
- Brown Rice
- Grain Cereal

Seasonings/Spices

- Pepper
- Chili Powder
- Onion Flakes
- Garlic
- Bouillon Cubes
- Cinnamon

Sugars

- Honey
- White Sugar
- Brown Sugar
- Jams/Jellies
- Flavored Gelatin
- Flavored powdered drinks

Water

- Water
- Filter/Purification Kit
- Storage Barrel/other containers

Additional Pantry Items

- Pastas
- Tomato Sauce
- Instant potatoes
- #10 size cans of various fruits and vegetables
- Bags of dried fruit
- Coffee/Tea
- Condiments
- Bleach

Household items

- Aluminum foil
- Ziploc® or vacuum bags
- Sharpie® marker for labeling
- Calendar for rotating stock
- Iodine tablets for water
- Matches

Checklist for adults:

- ☐ Basic food needs (listed above)
- ☐ Any prescription medications
- ☐ Any over-the-counter medications
- ☐ A vitamin supplement (with iron for women, without for men)
- ☐ Calcium supplement/Tums®
- ☐ Feminine hygiene products

Checklist for babies & kids:

- ☐ Basic food needs (listed above)
- ☐ Food grinder (to make your own baby food if needed)
- ☐ Bottles
- ☐ Diapers
- ☐ Any prescription medications
- ☐ Any OTC medications: Tylenol® will be helpful for teething and fever
- ☐ A vitamin supplement with iron
- ☐ Thermometer
- ☐ Diaper rash ointment

Checklist for seniors

- ☐ Basic food needs (listed above)
- ☐ Denture supplies (if needed)
- ☐ Spare glasses (if needed)
- ☐ Any prescription medications
- ☐ Any over-the-counter medications
- ☐ A vitamin supplement with iron

Part 2: Applying What you Have Learned

This book is designed to be full of helpful information that will help get you started down the path of preparedness. Since there are so many variables, it is impossible to prepare for any one scenario; you have to be prepared for just about everything.

Too much information can be overwhelming, so we have devised a plan to help you get started, beginning with the basics, and slowly building up your stockpile over time.

Follow the steps outlined below in order, at your own pace. Some, you may complete quickly—even overnight or on a single shopping trip. Others may take a while. Every family is different, and you can move at your own pace.

Following the steps as shown helps in several ways. First, taking small, tangible steps lets you focus your energy on one goal at a time, and allows you to really accomplish something. If you try to do everything at once, you might end up with a huge mess.

By choosing one goal at a time, you can really integrate your survival stockpiling into your daily life, and over time, build a stockpile you can use if needed.

Following the steps we have laid out for you also allows you to be fully prepared for some emergencies right away, and to build on your stockpile as you go. Buying one hundred pounds of wheat as a “step one” wouldn’t help much if that was all you had in the event of an emergency!

Refer back to specific sections as needed. When you get to “plan your garden” for example, turn back to the section on gardening, herbs, and composting and review for more information.

You may choose to skip some steps entirely. You certainly don’t have to spend a week stocking up on pet food if you don’t have any pets!

Stockpiling Goals:

When you create your stockpile, you will work towards some defined goals, in the order of importance:

- ▣ Water – water is essential for human survival, and is the very first item on our list
- ▣ Emergency kit – three days of food, supplies, and cash to get you through a crisis
- ▣ Short term stockpiling – stocking up on the basics and having enough in your stockpile to eat a varied diet for a few weeks or longer
- ▣ Long term stockpiling – planning ahead for self-sufficiency, bartering, concealing supplies if needed, and other long-term concerns

The Survival Stockpiling plan is designed to tackle the most important things first. If you start with the long term things, you may not have enough food and water to get you through a short supply disruption.

Step by Step Survival Stockpiling

- ✦ **Step 1: Water:** Water needs to be the first thing on your stockpile list. Your first assignment is to purchase enough water to last your family for three days. You can purchase bottled gallons, or even the big five-gallon jugs. Make sure you check expiration dates (yes, bottled water does have a “sell by” date), and make your goal three gallons per person. So, if you have three people in your family, your goal will be a minimum of nine gallons. Don’t forget the family pet(s)—add a gallon for them as well.
- ✦ **Step 2: Emergency List:** This step is all about planning. You will use the information in this step to help you decide exactly what you need to have on hand for your family in the event of a disaster.

Get a notebook, and make a page for each family member. Under each name, write the important things that that person will need. Do not include basics like food or water; everyone in the family will need those. These lists should include the specific medications, supplements, and supplies each family member requires. Having this list helps ensure you don’t leave anything out. Review the checklists on pages 76 and 77 to be sure you don’t overlook an essential item.

- ✦ **Step 3: Emergency Kit:** While your entire stockpile is intended for emergency use, you should assemble a kit to use in the event of a disaster or crisis.

Add the following supplies to your emergency kit (some you may have on hand, some you may need to purchase.) Depending on how much money and time you have to direct to this effort, this step can take a few days or a few weeks. Every item you add to your emergency kit moves you closer to being prepared. Include:

- Enough non-perishable food for three days. This can include protein bars, pre-packaged meals, and other commercially prepared foods. Don’t forget a manual can opener if you are including cans.

- ❑ Portable, battery-powered radio with extra batteries, or a hand crank radio
 - ❑ Flashlight and extra batteries.
 - ❑ Basic first aid kit (you can purchase one complete).
 - ❑ Small amount of emergency cash (\$100 is a great start, but you can start with less if needed)
 - ❑ Toilet paper
 - ❑ Matches and waterproof container.
 - ❑ Items for infants such as formula, diapers, bottles, and pacifiers.
 - ❑ Other items to meet your unique family needs (see list made in step 2).
 - ❑ Pet food (canned works great) for three days, if needed
- 🌟 **Step 4: Examine your surroundings:** Take a nature walk, look for edible plants and fauna. Familiarize yourself with what animals live in your locale, and what types of foods grow wild. Look at your neighborhood with new eyes—are there deer or wild turkey in the woods? What type of fish can you catch in the river? Just what are those berries you see growing everywhere? Are they edible?
- Read about hunting and fishing on page 46, and if either seem like they would fit into your long-term survival plan, do some more in-depth research. Have a basic hunting and dressing guide on hand. It is essential if you think you might need to live off the land for a while.
- Don't forget the ocean. If you live near the sea, you can catch shrimp, crabs, and other food with a net or trap.
- 🌟 **Step 5: Stock up on grains:** Review the grain information on page 53. Decide if you prefer grinding your own grain or purchasing it processed. Make your goal fifty pounds of grain to start. Five ten-pound containers should work. Grains are inexpensive, so you should be able to stock up quickly. You can increase this amount later, but this is a good basic amount to get you started. Choose a few different types for variety, so you don't get bored.

- ❖ **Step 6: Begin to stock up on prescription and OTC meds:** Buy some basic over-the-counter medication such as aspirin, Tylenol®, Motrin®, and antacids. (Tums® and related brands contain calcium, an added side benefit.) Don't forget the vitamins; pick up one container for adults and another for kids.

For your prescription medications, you will have to take a different approach. If you are insured, your insurance company will likely limit the number of times you can refill a medication. This will prove challenging if you're trying to stock up. A few things to try:

"Lose" your medicine. You can usually get an extra refill if you lose yours. Place the "lost" medication into your stockpile.

If this doesn't work, begin refilling your prescription before you need it. Most plans allow for a grace period of a few days. You can gradually build up a stash of extra medication this way. Just remember to rotate this because some medications lose effectiveness after a while. If you are using this "slow stash" method, you can move to the next step. It may take a few months to stash a good supply of extra medication.

- ❖ **Step 7: Plan your garden:** Read up on gardening on page 31. Think about what plants you would like to grow. If you are not ready to garden just yet, consider purchasing some heirloom seeds, just in case. Even if you don't want a huge garden, if the time is right, try planting at least three things. They can be herbs, a tomato plant or other carefree vegetable, or a simple perennial like strawberries. Planting on a small scale allows you to enjoy the benefits of growing your own food, without a huge amount of work.

You should also make sure you have a shovel, gloves, and a hose or watering can so you can tend your plants.

- ❖ **Step 8: Purchase or plan at least one alternative cooking source:** Read up on alternate ways to cook food on page 69. Buy or plan at least one way to cook food. If you already have a barbecue pit or grill, get extra fuel for it, just in case.

- ✦ **Step 9: Stock up on canned/purchased foods.** Review the shopping information on page 26 and start stocking up. You already have some basics in your emergency kit (from step 3), but now you are going to ramp up the food stockpile.

Use coupons, shop sales, and buy in bulk to increase your stash. This is on-going, and the amount you stockpile will depend on your comfort zone. A minimum of one month's supply of food is a good start—three to six months is even better.

- ✦ **Step 10: Begin planting** (weather/season permitting)—even a few tomato plants or herbs are a good start. Try to plant at least three items, one of each type. An herb like basil or mint, a tomato plant, and some strawberries would be a great start.

One of the easiest things you can do is buy a bag of topsoil and a single tomato plant. Place the bag of soil on the ground somewhere it will get sun during the day. Use a small spade to cut a hole in the center of the bag, scoop out a little dirt, and place the tomato plant inside. Water daily, and watch it grow. This is a great way to integrate food into your landscaping, and you can easily move the plant wherever you would like it to go.

The idea is to have at least some familiarity with what planting and maintaining a food plan is like. Tomatoes, herbs, and strawberries are hearty and difficult to kill, making them a great first choice.

- ✦ **Step 11: Look for good storage/hiding places for the stash:** If you have been following the steps up until now, you probably have quite a large stockpile to store. Read up on storage techniques on page 57. Think about possible places to hide your stash. Having it out from under foot is better for your daily life, and having it tucked neatly away prevents it from being discovered by a casual observer.
- ✦ **Step 12: Water, revisited:** You have enough water in your stash for a few days, but now is the time to think about where your water will come from in the long term. Read up on water purifying and collecting methods on page 17, Choose the one that suits you best.

- ❖ **Step 13: Purchase a hunting rifle and ammunition:** If you are planning to hunt, you will need a rifle of some sort—unless you plan to chase and overpower your prey on foot (not recommended). If you do buy a gun, learn to use it properly, and always keep it stored out of children’s reach, and away from curious eyes.

If you want to hunt, but guns aren’t your style, or if you fear firearms will be confiscated, snares and simple traps are a possible alternative. There is information available concerning these methods. Stock up on personal supplies. Use coupons!

Got fish? This would also be the time to get a rod and reel, or if you live by the sea, a shrimping net or crabbing pot.

- ❖ **Step 14: Document Day:** This is the day to make sure you have copies of insurance policies and other important papers in a safe place. You can even make copies (or request them from your insurer), and place them in a large Ziploc® bag. The copies can go into your emergency kit, and will be available whenever you need them.

Consider adding copies of important documents like social security cards and birth certificates to this pile as well. Add a Sharpie® marker and some blank paper to the box, too—just in case.

Why a Sharpie®? They are dark and permanent. People fleeing Katrina used markers to label their personal belongings—and even small children—just in case.

- ❖ **Step 15: Stash the Cash!** In the event of an emergency, you may not be able to get to an ATM, and your debit card may not work. Save some cash, and store it with your emergency papers. It will take some time and the amount will vary, depending on your lifestyle. Track what you spend in a normal week, and make a one-week emergency fund your goal. This way, if you need to leave home or have to do without banking services for a while, you will have some cash on hand.

- ✦ **Step 16: Learn one useful skill or hobby:** Sewing, preserving, canning, soap making (from scratch), fishing, crabbing, etc. This could come in handy for your own family, and for bartering.

You don't have to become an expert, but having a skill can help your family survive, or even thrive, following an emergency.

- ✦ **Step 17: Consider livestock:** Sheep, goats, chickens, bees, rabbits, etc. Do they suit your lifestyle? Your yard? Even if you don't want any now, know where to acquire them and how to house them. You can get some basic information on the easiest livestock to keep on page 41.

- ✦ **Step 18: Pets:** Prepare an emergency kit for your pet. Include extra food, an identification tag, any medications your pet needs, and a basic pet care guide.

- ✦ **Step 19: Live off your stockpile for one day:** Choose a day when everyone will be home, and role play a day without electricity. Use your alternative cooking source and eat only foods you have saved. You will quickly see what gaps you need to cover, and what you have forgotten. You will also learn how well your family adapts to more primitive conditions.

If you are interested in more "survivalist" techniques, like starting your own campfire, this would be the time to plan a short camping trip, and put your skills to the test while the stakes are low.

- ✦ **Step 20: Rotate your stock.** If you are like most people, it will have taken months to get to this point. Now is a great time to review what you have purchased and check expiration dates on everything.

Put another "review and rotate" date on your calendar for about three months from now, and get in the habit of doing this every three months.

That's it. Twenty steps to being fully prepared. You may complete all the steps in a month, or it may take you several months. Some steps will take you longer than others—and some you will skip completely. Every family is unique, and the nice thing about planning ahead is that you can choose what works best for your individual needs.

Don't Wait Any Longer

You wouldn't have read through this if you weren't concerned about a possible crisis. The time to start preparing is now. Don't wait any longer. No harm can come from being prepared. In the case of an emergency, you'll be ready.

Don't procrastinate any longer. With the instability of our country's economy and the dollar on the brink of collapse, who knows what the next year will bring. Make a list of items that you need to start stockpiling. Prioritize that list according to your family's need and geographic location; purchase the most important things first.

Another piece of advice—don't let everyone know what you're doing. Even trusted friends or family members can unwittingly blab about your stockpile to the wrong people. Keep your growing stockpile hidden. Begin to accumulate those items that have long shelf lives.

Don't look at it as wasted money. This is an investment, one that could save the lives of your family and possibly your neighbors. Not only will you be able to provide food but you'll have items that could be bartered if needed. Now is the time to start planning!

This handbook was designed, not as a comprehensive guide, but as a way to get you thinking more about what you should do to prepare for a crisis situation. A steer in the right direction, if you will. Most Americans don't think enough about "What if." Well, it's time to go even further than thinking about it. It's time to act. Good luck.

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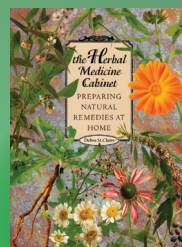
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