



5 Ways

to do food storage

Turn Emergencies
into Inconveniences,
and Inconveniences
into No Big Deal

Welcome to our **free food storage guide**, where you will learn 5 common strategies for building your food storage. In today's unpredictable world, it's more important than ever to be prepared for *unexpected emergencies*. Just because something is unexpected doesn't mean it can't be planned for. One key aspect of emergency preparedness is having a [long-term food supply](#) that can sustain you and your loved ones during difficult times.

Inside this guide, you'll find five different ways to do food storage that will fit any [lifestyle and budget](#). We cover the basics of each type of food storage, including the [pros and cons](#) of each strategy, as well as **who** each one might work best for.

Whether you're just starting out or looking to improve your existing food storage plan, this guide has something for everyone. It is designed to provide you with the information you need to make a plan that works for you and your family *no matter what the future holds* so that you can be more prepared, and have greater peace of mind.

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Strategy 1: The Basics



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Basic long-term food storage is very traditional and has been used for thousands of years. This is what used to be the most common thing people would think of when you say food storage. It consists of dried staple goods such as beans, wheat, rice, oats, sugar, salt, and powdered milk, and is packaged for long term storage in buckets with or without mylar bags, or #10 cans. When properly stored away from light, moisture, and pests, these foods can last for decades, some indefinitely. They are a good place to start for someone who

already eats some of these foods as part of their main diet. This is also a great place to start for someone who doesn't have the time or energy to devote to rotation, since the foods last so long. When you're not worried about rotation, it's easier to get more *creative* about where you store the food, like under your bed, or in the bottom of a closet. If the food does become unpalatable, usually because of un-ideal storage conditions, it can usually still be given as feed to animals and doesn't have to be wasted.

These bulk staples are usually fairly inexpensive, and many people store them just as a form of food insurance, even if they aren't their ideal diet. There are many charts that show how much food is needed to make up a basic year supply that are pretty similar, the main difference usually being portion size and how the different grains are allocated.

Pros

- It is very easy to see exactly how much food you need per person and how long it should last.
- Great for someone who doesn't want to worry about rotation. These basics, when properly packaged, will last for decades. They also tend to be very versatile, a blank slate that can be used as a base for many meals.

Cons

- You'll probably still want to store other ingredients, with varying shelf life, especially spices to add variety

- If you don't regularly eat whole wheat, it can cause gastrointestinal distress to suddenly start eating a lot of it every day. This can be mitigated by having a pantry that helps you transition to eating your long term food, but that does make it more complicated and more work. It's also mitigated if you already eat a diet with a lot of whole grains.
- It's a good idea to put in some extra work and make sure you have a menu plan and know how to cook these items. Now this doesn't have to be done right away all at once, as these items will wait for you to have time to deal with them, but it will nag at you to figure it out



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Strategy 2:

The 52 Week Plan

The 52 week plan is a popular handout for beginner classes because it is easy to explain, and something everyone can take home and get started with that feels doable. The idea behind it is that every week you buy a certain thing and put it in your storage. By the end of a year, you will have a certain supply set aside, usually 3 months. Some will even include household items and toiletries. The good ones try to time the items you're purchasing that week for when that thing would normally be on sale, like buying marshmallows and chocolate in the summer, or holiday foods in November. Most will try to make it so you're spending about the same each time, usually 5-10\$ a week.

This type of storage plan is good for someone who eats a rather standard American diet (if you don't know if that's you, it probably is, people who don't usually know they don't). It's great for someone

who just wants to get started with an easy to follow system. Great for people who love checklists. It's fine for someone who doesn't have a set meal plan and can be flexible in what they eat.

Pros

- It's divided up into easy chunks that you do on a schedule. By the end of a year you will have stored all the things that are in the particular plan you use.
- Has already figured out what you need
- Budget friendly

Cons

- It might not reflect your actual current diet.
- Takes time to collect
- You could change and customize the weeks that don't apply to you, but that takes away some of the easy straightforwardness.
- You still have to figure out a plan of how to use everything

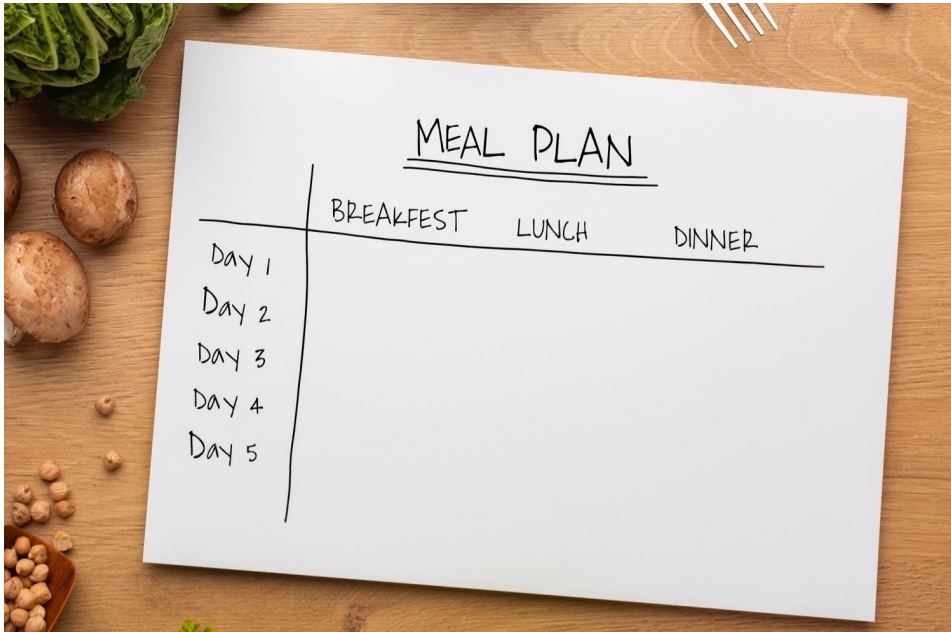
Strategy 3:

Eat What You Store, Store What You Eat



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If you join a food storage group and ask what you should store, half of the people will respond with: Eat What You Store, Store What You Eat. The basic idea is that you only store foods you eat, or you work to make the foods you store part of your everyday diet. It is great advice, but it isn't always obvious to someone who is new to food storage how to accomplish it. Let me break it down for you by looking at the two main ways people go about it.



1-Meal Plan

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If you already use a meal plan for your regular diet, you simply look at all the ingredients you need for all the things you make, and then stock them. If you have a monthly meal plan, and want to have a 3 month supply, you buy 3 of everything you need to make each meal. If you want a years' supply, you buy 12. Say for example that one of your 30 meals is Spaghetti. Well, you obviously need noodles and sauce. But you also want to think of everything else you normally eat with it. Do you serve it with veggies? French bread? Meat balls? If there is a non-shelf stable ingredient on there, see if you can make a canned or frozen substitution.

Pros

- If you already have a regular meal plan, this is a very simple one to do, all you really need to do is find the space to put it and

you'll have guaranteed food that you know your family will eat
(if your family actually eats the food you make that is)

- If you are very thorough with your list, it is very easy to see exactly how much you need per person and how long it should last.
- Can be done quickly or build up over time.

Cons

- If you don't already have a meal plan, this can be overwhelming, and if you just make one up, you kind of negate some of the pros of this, which is that you have food you know you'll eat.
- Must be rotated, as most of these foods are only good for short to medium term storage, not long term.
- Hard to figure out if you eat mainly fresh foods.
- Can have food waste if your diet changes

2-Extended Pantry

The other way to do this is with an extended pantry. Basically, you buy 2 of something when you go shopping, and put one away for storage. Rotation is important with this method. You can label with sharpie the date purchased, or the date it expires depending on the item's shelf life. Use what's called the FIFO principle, or First In First Out.



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Those cool can organizers where you put the new cans in at the top and they roll to the bottom for automatic rotation are based on this idea.

While this method can be haphazard on its own, it can be a great addition to another method of storing to create a more complete and useful system. It's also a great way to get started if you are really strapped for cash.

Pros

- Budget friendly
- Should be only foods you eat
- Easy to get started

Cons

- Haphazard and probably incomplete
- You won't know how long what you have will last you.
- Might not take into account substitutions for ingredients you usually use fresh

Strategy 4: Done-For-You

Prepackaged Meals



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These are the things you see ads on facebook for. It's what comes up if you google "food storage". Buckets full of mylar packaged freeze-dried and dehydrated food ready to rehydrate and eat, with a shelf life of 25 years. These can be both tempting and discouraging at the same time. Here's these buckets that you can just put away and not worry about for 25 years. Everything is done for you, all in one place, nothing to figure out except how long a supply you want to order. But then you see the price and are snapped back to reality. Food storage is so expensive, you think how can I ever possibly do this?

Well, here's the truth. These tubs are great for people who have the money to invest up front in a done-for-you solution, who don't mind eating whatever is in the tub. You are paying more for the convenience, and the ready-made meals. Which is exactly what some people need. Older people who don't cook anymore and have enough disposable income love these. People with lots of money like to give these as gifts to their kids or grandkids, because then they know their loved ones at least have something. They don't take up much space either. Make sure you watch the calorie count though, different companies will give you different amounts of food per person per day. Remember, 1700 calories is considered survival rations, so if you don't want to be constantly hungry and losing weight, go with a company that is closer to 2000 calories, or more depending on your needs.

Another thing to keep in mind is that these meals are not usually individually packaged. Generally each bag has 4-8 servings, and the instructions are for how to cook the whole thing at once. So if there's only one of you, it may be difficult to portion out. Depending on the emergency you may not have a way to store leftovers. Many of the meals could be made in part by eyeballing what a quarter of the package is and just pouring out that, or by pouring all of it into a measuring container and doing some math to see how much $\frac{1}{4}$ of the package is. But if you have a family of 4 (or 8) then the portion size could be a bonus. It just depends on your situation.

Anytime you have dehydrated or freeze-dried food, you need to make sure you have enough water to rehydrate it. Some of the things need to be cooked, others don't, but regardless, it has to be rehydrated, either inside of your body, or out. People who eat too much dehydrated food without adding enough water can actually dehydrate their bodies, because your body needs the water in order to process and digest the food. Each meal will usually say in the instructions how many cups of water are needed to make or rehydrate each dish. My husband's parents gifted us with some of these (they gave them to each of their children and spouses) and I went through every meal and wrote down how much water was required. I believe that it needed 2 Costco cases of water (96-1 liter bottles) for a one month supply for one person (2 buckets). That's not a ton, but it's enough that you need to take it into consideration.

One potential problem I have heard from some friends on Facebook groups dedicated to food storage is that these meals are not lasting the full advertised 25 years + shelf life. People who have tried using and rotating them have reported that even though the meals had pretty ideal storage conditions, after less than ten years some of them tasted bad. This is usually the case for meals with high fat content.

We personally plan to use these as part of our evacuation kit, since we already have them. For us, it's hard for us to store and rotate enough calories for the whole family in our kits. We've already decided that walking anywhere is unlikely with our young family, so

if we have to evacuate it's gonna have to be in a car. This is the food we plan to take along with us. I calculated that a 1 month supply for one person would last our family about 1 week. That's only a little more than what most recommend for a Go Bag (3-5 days), so it works out well for us. I have those along with the water it needs with our other evacuation and camping supplies. Plus, the servings per package work out pretty well for our family so we don't have to worry about what to do with leftovers. I haven't yet started using them to rotate, but I know some people who will take them to eat while camping, and I'm hoping to try that this coming year.

Pros

- Easy.
- Compact.
- Can do it all at once and then be done.
- Doesn't have to be rotated.
- Grab and Go

Cons

- Expensive.
- Need to research companies
- May not be things you like to eat.
- Isn't in individual servings, you make what's in the package.
- Some foods don't last the full advertised shelf life.
- Might be ration calories

Strategy 5: Freeze Dryers



I'm giving this its own section because with the growing popularity of the consumer models recently, many people think it is a food storage system in and of itself, and I've see the question come up a lot: "Should I get a freeze dryer?"

The answer to that is, *it depends*.

Freeze dryers are expensive. There are only a few brands that make them for home use. They can be finicky, and there is a learning curve to using them, as well as operating costs and upkeep. Buying one is major investment of both time and money.

Freeze dryers can work great for singles, empty nesters, and older people with disposable income. They are a great way to utilize

leftovers in a small household. Simply put your leftovers in the freezer, and when you have a full batch, run it through the freeze dryer, and now you have food storage that you know you will eat, pretty much ready to go.

Another group that these are really useful for are people with large gardens who don't want to can anymore, or just want another way of preserving a bountiful harvest. I've also heard of it being really beneficial for people who have access to free food, more than can be consumed at one time.

This can also be a good option if you're on a special diet. If you are grain free, or mainly eat fresh veggies and meats, then your options for long term storage are more limited, and this can add to it.

If you do buy one, I strongly recommend joining a facebook group about them, unless you already have family members that have them and can walk you through the rough spots. They can have a steep learning curve, and depending on the version you get, a fair amount of maintenance.

Keep in mind that just like with the prepackaged meals, you need to have water to rehydrate the food. Even if you eat them as-is for snacks, that water is still required in your body to digest the food. If you don't drink extra water separately, you will end up with intestinal distress.

Pros

- Good option for special diets
- Can do almost whatever food you want
- Doesn't have to be rotated as much
- Can be a fun hobby

Cons

- Expensive.
- Is noisy, puts off heat, and uses a fair amount of electricity
- Need extra water to rehydrate
- Requires maintenance
- High fat foods still won't have a long shelf life
- Is usually used as a supplement to other foods, takes more planning to use for a complete daily diet

Now What?



Now that you have a basic idea of the different ways of doing food storage, decide which strategy you want to start using in your own home. I'd imagine as you went through this guide that some of the strategies didn't apply to your situation. That's great! Choose from the remaining methods one to start with, and get to work. Think about your goals, your budget, and your lifestyle. Then make a plan and follow through. Remember, it doesn't have to be perfect - it's hard to improve something you don't have. Buy some food, get it in your house, and then you can figure out more.

You will be amazed at how good it feels knowing you and your family are prepared for both the emergencies, and inconveniences, of life.

You can do this!

And if you get stuck, there are resources available to help you. The newsletter you signed up for when you downloaded this guide will send you ideas and resources from both myself and around the web. You can also search “food storage” or “preparedness” in youtube, pinterest, or google if you really want to dive into the world of “prepping”.

If you'd like more personalized help or guidance, either for a unique situation, to fast-track your progress and gain accountability, or because you don't have hours to spend online in prepper land, you can either join my private group coaching group, or schedule a call to see if working one on one with me is a good fit. Just email me at sarah@pantryindependence.com and we can talk about your options.

Either way, I'm excited for you. You got this!