

Food Storage Mistakes – Yikes!

*“Preparedness is not just about stockpiling, it's about having an actual plan.”
Mike Ryan*



Over the years I have run across various food storage mistakes, many of which I myself made when first starting out. These mistakes are often costly, not only financially but life-wise too, like when on the trail or snowbound and you find a good chunk of the food is no good.

For me food storage includes water, OTC (over the counter) and prescription medications, vitamin and mineral supplements, as well as, cleaning and hygiene items.

The best way to avoid these horrors is to plan in advance.

Your food storage area needs to have:

- A cool (45-70 degrees), low to no sunlight environment. Temperatures should stay consistent with no more than a 10 degree variation over a 28-30 hour timeframe.
- A Dry, not humid area.
- As insect and rodent free/proof as possible. This is on top of the container having this property too.
- Be organized with everything within easy reach and easy to identify.



“If it is to be, it is up to me.”

William H. Johnsen, Depression-era realist/impressionist painter

If your storage area meets all of the above requirements here are the common food storage mistakes:

Failing to rotate and just stockpiling.

The excuse: *"I always cook from scratch with fresh items"*. My reply: *"What is stopping you from substituting 1 to 2 ingredients from your food stores when you make soups, stews, casseroles and goulashes?"* I got *"well others might not notice it but I will"*. This person has a decision to make; they can either run the risk of going to their food stores in a time of need and find out that it is spoiled; makes them sick or worse tastes OK but has no nutritional value –OR- they can be smart and use their food stores for a few ingredients in soups, stews, casseroles and goulashes to facilitate rotation and use.



Storage/Rotation Tips:

- Be sure to date all stored food. (Manufacturers tend to hide the date codes in small letters and in out of the way places on their products which can make finding the expiration date rather difficult.) Once you do find the expiration or best used by date, use a large permanent marker to put this date in plain sight on the package.
- Create a simple rotation method. I use colored sticky dots with the date (month/year) on the dot and have two shelving units. Green is "use now" and Red is "use later". Green and Red items are stored on their own shelving unit. Always put the newest item to the very back or bottom and the oldest to the very front or top. (Dates take priority over color of shelving or dots)
- Use a Lazy Susan on shelves that hold small items.
- Use shallow organizer shelving in tall, deep shelves to add layers for stacking smaller or shorter items.
- Wire or plastic baskets to hold odd shaped or bulky items.
- Stackable bins
- Place similar food items together to make it easier to remember where that type of food item is stored.
- Keep like food items together will make them easier to find. This works great in the frig and freezer too.



“The more you depend on forces outside yourself, the more you are dominated by them.” Harold Sherman

Purchasing a “Survival Food” kit

You know, those kinds that are good for X number of people for X number of days/months or years. There are two major drawbacks to these:

- “Meal in a Packet”. Low variety of meals and are generally all of one type of food preservation method; freeze dried, dehydrated or canned. You are better off storing individual ingredients in various preservation methods and making your own meals.
- These meals tend to have a higher quantity of alternate protein sources, of which many people are either allergic to or have a horrid dislike for that make them physically ill.



Purchasing large quantities of flour or rice

- Flour has a very poor shelf life, no matter how you store it. This is because to process the grain to make flour you release the oil contained in the grain. This oil is what goes rancid and draws the insects and rodents.
- You can get a little more shelf life for flour by vacuum sealing and then freezing, but not much more.
- The un-processed, un-ground grain has a shelf life of 30+ years. You just need a grain mill, preferably hand operated.
- If you purchase grain or rice in bulk, re-package it into smaller quantities. Use air tight containers and or vacuum seal it.



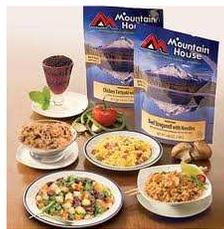
“God helps them that help themselves.” Proverbs

Lack of Variety

Only storing a few staples or too many “meal in a packet” foods is not enough to keep the average person psychologically well (a major ding to your survivability quotient), on top of this it is NOT a nutritionally sufficient variety for a healthy body.



- It is wiser to purchase single ingredients in various preservation methods. For example potatoes (or just about any vegetable) can be freeze dried, dehydrated or canned; whole, French fried, steak fried, cubed, sliced, diced or riced (your own instant potatoes). Fruits can be canned, freeze dried or dehydrated; in jams, jellies and preserves.



- Purchase more than one kind of grains, beans and lentils; nuts, vegetables, fruit and meat; in various preservation methods.



- Don't forget salt, pepper, spices, herbs and condiments.
- Many items like: sour cream, butter, mayo, cream, milk, mustard, ketchup, peanut butter, chocolate, flavored drink mixes, Jell-O (try to find the unflavored and uncolored gelatin to make your own flavors; this can be used as a substitute for eggs in many recipes too) and the like come in powdered form for long term storage.



Forgetting the staples to make sufficient meals

Things like: Cooking oil, shortening, baking powder, soda, yeast, and powdered eggs, herbs, spices and other condiments. Think of all the items that require refrigeration, are imported like cinnamon, or are too costly or time consuming to make yourself, like some vinegars.



Forgetting Vitamins, Minerals, Food Supplements & other Medications



Vitamin C is especially important, children's vitamins and items like calcium and Glucosamine and the like.



Many of us forget things like pain and fever relievers, swelling reducers, cold and flu treatments, laxatives, anti-gas, anti-diarrhea or fungus medications and the like. Never forget any prescription or hard to find medications either. Ask your pharmacist and physician for the optimum storage requirements and shelf life.

Discounting Water Needs



Way too many people in urban and suburban areas do not realize that if there is some kind of city wide power failure they will almost *immediately lose water and natural gas*, as well as phone (land line and cellular) service to their home.

- Water needs to be rotated too. So make sure you can maneuver your water containers. Look for ones that have wheels and or handles and come with gravity spigots.
- Water is bulky and heavy to store, 1 gallon weights about 8 pounds.
- Four items affect water needs: Age, weight, health and physical activity. (If dogs and cats are fed dry food, they will need more water than if fed wet pet food.)
- The average human needs one quart of water for every 50 pounds of body weight. If you include hygiene and cooking needs, that is about 1 gallon of water per person per day.
- Water has a tendency to absorb the flavor of the container it is store in, so chose wisely and remember it needs to be rotated just like the other food items in storage.
- You can reduce water needs by stocking up on wet wipes, Clorox wipes and waterless anti-bacterial washing gel.



Forgetting “Comfort” or “Psychological” Foods

In order to avoid a solid whack to your survivability quotient we cannot forget things like: Jell-O, cookies, pudding, cakes, brownies, cobblers, candies and of course chocolate. A few freeze dried, dehydrated, canned or MRE *meals*, for when you are just too tired psychologically or physically unable, will go a long way to keeping your survivability quotient high during tough times. Add a good assortment of flavored drink mixes are a good boost too.



MRE's are not recommended as the prime source of food for long term food storage as they are:



- Are “Meals in a packet” thus lacking in variety
- They are loaded with high calories of mostly synthetic origin. If people over eat these meals for an extended period, they tend to get either the “trots” or painfully constipated. Not to mention that they are wasting the calories by consuming more than the body needs or can utilize in one sitting.
- They are “What You See Is What You Get”. With no rehydration, this means that the portion size is much smaller than we Americans are used to, both psychologically and physically. Our minds won’t grasp that we have eaten enough and neither will our stomachs.

Not Having a Purchasing Plan or “putting all your eggs in one basket”



It is not wise to go out and purchase say a 3 month supply of sugar, then the salt, then the wheat, etc. It is much wiser and cost efficient to purchase smaller quantities of various items during each purchasing trip. This not only facilitates rotating your food stores, it helps to insure variety too.



“To be idle is a short road to death and to be diligent is a way of life; foolish people are idle, wise people are diligent.” Buddha

Failure to Think Multi-Functional

Soaps most often used as bases for making other soaps and cleaning products



I have run across way to many people that stock up on laundry soap, dish soap, body soap, toothpaste and a multitude of cleaning products. You can save money and storage space if you only stock up on basic essentials that allow you to make all of the other items yourself.

- Backing Soda, Washing Soda, Borax, Olive Oil, Vinegar and some old time bar soaps (Fels Naphta, Ivory soap, Sunlight bar soap, Kirk's Hardwater Castile, Zote, Lever 2000, Pure and Natural, Zest, Kirk's or Dr. Bonner's Castile Soap) will allow you to make just about everything listed and then some.



- If you purchase food grade liner bags, either plastic or Mylar, you can turn a non-food grade plastic or metal trash can into a food storage can.
- Place smaller quantities of food in food appropriate containers and then place them in another non-food grade container. As long as these outer containers are water and air tight you are OK.



There you have it, the most common mistakes people make in their long term food storage. Check out the links at the end of this “letter” for additional detail and some tips on keeping refrigerated and frozen foods tastier and healthier for longer periods of time.



Resources:

2 Food Storage Calculators http://weebly-file/2/2/5/0/22509786/2_food_storage_calculators.xls

Shelf Life Information on Lots of Things http://weebly-file/2/2/5/0/22509786/shelf_life_information_on_lots_of_things.xlsx

7 Mistakes of Food Storage <http://www.backwoodshome.com/articles/tate55.html>

Shelf Life Guide <http://50plus.com/Lifestyle/BrowseAllArticles/index.cfm?documentID=22043>

Long Term Food Storage Calculator (excel spreadsheet) from Food Storage Made Easy <http://foodstoragemadeeasy.net/fsme/docs/foodstoragecalculator.xls>

Shelf Life <http://foodstoragemadeeasy.net/fsme/docs/shelflife.pdf>

Deals to Meals is another great food storage site <http://www.dealstomeals.com/>

Food Storage - Starting & Maintaining <http://FormerlyNMUrbanHomesteader.weebly.com>

Food & Water Storage Considerations <http://FormerlyNMUrbanHomesteader.weebly.com>

Insufficient Water Storage <http://stealthsurvival.blogspot.com/2009/01/common-food-storage-mistakes.html>

Food Storage Tip - Date Labeling <http://stealthsurvival.blogspot.com/2010/01/food-storage-tip-date-labeling.html>

Food Storage – Organizing Tips (including frig & freezer)

<http://stealthsurvival.blogspot.com/2008/11/food-storage-organizing-tips.html>

Alternate Food Storage Methods <http://stealthsurvival.blogspot.com/2008/11/simple-survival-tips-alternate-food.html>

Shelf Life of Food Storage Items <http://stealthsurvival.blogspot.com/2009/10/shelf-life-of-food-storage-items.html>

Food Burn-Out <http://stealthsurvival.blogspot.com/2008/12/common-food-storage-mistakes-food-burn.html>

Proper Food Storage Conditions – Temperature <http://stealthsurvival.blogspot.com/2008/11/proper-food-storage-conditions.html>

Stealth Food Storage - Hiding in Plain Sight <http://stealthsurvival.blogspot.com/2009/07/stealth-food-storage-hiding-in-plain.html>

Avoiding Common Food Storage Mistakes <http://www.articlesqueeze.com/health-articles/nutrition-articles/avoiding-common-food-storage-mistakes/>

The Three Big Food Storage Mistakes Most People Make <http://ezinearticles.com/?The-Three-Big-Food-Storage-Mistakes-Most-People-Make&id=3749430>

Avoiding Mistakes in Food Storage <http://searchwarp.com/swa648290-Avoiding-Mistakes-In-Food-Storage.htm>

Prudent Food Storage: Questions and Answers <http://www.survival-center.com/foodfaq/> or download the text file <http://www.survival-center.com/foodfaq/faqweb25.zip>

What to Do and What Not to Do with Your Leftovers

http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/1402601/common_food_storage_mistakes.html

Simple Food Storage Mistakes That Cost You Money <http://www.paylessforfood.com/money-saving-tips/simple-food-storage-mistakes-that-cost-you-money/>

Food Tricks That Keep Your Hard Earned Money Out of the Trash

<http://www.paylessforfood.com/money-saving-tips/food-tricks-that-keep-your-hard-earned-money-out-of-the-trash/>

10 food storage mistakes — and how to fix them <http://www.50plus.com/lifestyle/10-food-storage-mistakes-%E2%80%93-and-how-to-fix-them/3621/>

New Findings for Longer-Term Food Storage

<http://www.providentliving.org/content/display/0,11666,7797-1-4222-1,00.html>

Longer-Term Supply how to best preserve longer-term food storage products

<http://providentliving.org/content/list/0,11664,7448-1,00.html>

Food Storage Product Recommendations <http://providentliving.org/content/display/0,11666,7531-1-4062-1,00.html>

Food Storage Packaging Recommendations <http://providentliving.org/content/display/0,11666,7532-1-4063-1,00.html>

Food Storage Conditions <http://providentliving.org/content/display/0,11666,7533-1-4064-1,00.html>

Shelf life of spices <http://unclutterer.com/2008/01/30/reader-suggestion-shelf-life-of-spices/>

Taste Test Columns Condiments Dressings Oils Food Storage <http://shelflifetastetest.com/?p=77>



Shelf life Fats and Oils <http://www.survival-center.com/foodfaq/ff10-fat.htm>

Storing Oils and Fats <http://www.preparedpantry.com/food-storage-bulliten-emergency-preparedness-storing-fats-and-oils.aspx>

Providing Crucial Fats and Oils in Your Diet Food Storage

http://www.survivalblog.com/2007/08/two_letters_re_providing_cruci.html

Smart Storage Strategies Shelf Life Common foods and household products

http://www.myrecipes.com/recipes/gallery/print/0,32179,1868939_1872989,00.html

Spring Cleaning: **Shelf life of common pantry items** <http://www.slashfood.com/2006/03/30/spring-cleaning-shelf-life-of-common-pantry-items/>

Some Online Resources on **Determining Prescription Drug Shelf Lives** <http://www.survivalblog.com/cgi-bin/mt43/mt-search.cgi?search=medicine+shelf+life&IncludeBlogs=2&limit=20>

Congressional investigation: **Extending The Shelf Life of Prescription Drugs**

<http://murphy.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=28809>

Military Stockpiles 'Expired' Drugs <http://home.att.net/~vetcenter/expdrugs.htm>

Shelf Life of Prescription Medications (from Mickey Creekmore's blog, July, 2008.)

<http://www.thesurvivalistblog.net/uncategorized/shelf-life-of-prescription-medications/>

From the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette: **Drugs may outlast label date** <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/05150/512789-114.stm>

Many Medicines Are Potent Years Past Expiration Dates (a Wall Street Journal article, re-posted by The End Times Report) http://www.endtimesreport.com/Prescription_longevity.html

Drug Expiration Dates: How They Benefit the Pharmaceutical Companies From Associated Content: http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/5712/drug_expiration_dates_how_they_benefit.html?cat=5

DOD SHELF-LIFE PROGRAM <http://www.dtic.mil/ndia/2003environ/pipan.pdf>

Drug Shelf Life Decision Tree FDA

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/RegulatoryInformation/Guidances/ucm128120.pdf>

Shelf Life for 100 plus Common Household Products-SHELF LIFE GUIDE available by joining mailing list at www.TheSimplifiedHome.net

Positive Mental Attitude

Situational awareness, basic knowledge and a “survivor’s mindset” enable you to cope effectively

- **STOP**
 - Calm down, and size up your situation...
- **THINK**
 - Anticipate which hazards are most likely
 - Take stock of materials and resources around you
- **OBSERVE**
 - Orient yourself to your surroundings
- **PLAN**
 - Select equipment and supplies appropriately
- **ACT!**
 - Execute the plan, evaluate progress, adjust, go on.

“Freedom is not something that can be given. Freedom is something people take, and people are as free as they want to be.” James Baldwin

TNT

Keep on Preppin’

-
- S** Size Up the Situation
(Surroundings, Physical Condition, Equipment)

 - U** Use All Your Senses,
Undue Haste Makes Waste

 - R** Remember Where You Are

 - V** Vanquish Fear and Panic

 - I** Improvise

 - V** Value Living

 - A** Act Like the Natives

 - L** Live by Your Wits, *But for Now, Learn Basic Skills*
-

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