



You May Be Sabotaging Your Food Storage

When a calamity involves the whole community—this year the whole world—no one is going to ride in and rescue us. Government, church leaders, prophets, and emergency response organizations have all told us to prepare. We have seen just how essential preparation is as we have dealt with shortages and rising prices. Hopefully, the pandemic has motivated us to prepare better—or to begin.

Food storage and emergency preparations require planning, continuing education, and awareness of our changing needs. It is more urgent than ever before in our lifetimes that we commit to self-reliance and stay on top of our family emergency plan. Don't be left wondering when the next crisis comes, "What have I done? Why didn't I listen when I was warned?"

You could be sabotaging your own best efforts if you:

1. Move Too Fast

Many have gone right ahead and jumped into emergency preparedness—they blew a thousand bucks on off-the-shelf solutions before they'd educated themselves...Slow down. Take the time to understand your needs. We are all planning for the same things: food, water, shelter, hygiene, sanitation, and medical needs. The challenges we are preparing for may differ: some live in earthquake country, some in the path of hurricanes, some in tornado alley. Others prepare for ice storms or power outages, civil unrest, job loss, economic downturn—The list seems to get longer each year, but it really doesn't matter what the emergency is. The items we store will be the same, but with slightly different priorities and proportions.

The knowledge we need to deal with such emergencies comes by awareness, study, and organization. Analyze what your family needs before you begin purchasing. Create a list, then plan and budget your priorities before buying anything. After five months of staying at home, you are probably more aware than ever of your own family's needs.

2. Follow Someone Else's Plan

There are many food storage plans floating around on the Internet. Be careful. A common plan challenges people to spend five or ten dollars per week for a year and provides a list of items to purchase each week. Take a careful look at the list. One list included only a few jars of peanut butter and a few cans of tuna for protein, and no veggies or fruit. Another one suggests you store 50 pounds of flour per person—for a three month supply—and no fruits, no veggies—just grains, beans, salt, oil and one jar of peanut butter. Yikes!

We have already discussed storing from all the food groups and that should always be your goal. With the plan we are following on the [Totally Ready Facebook](#) page you have the option of choosing the foods your family likes. While you and your best friend may be working together and encouraging each other each week, you will not choose the same foods for your families. Each plan will be unique to the family storing it—or at least it should be. Following your own plan also allows you to consider any special dietary needs in your family and only you can determine what to store for those family members. Always think about food groups.



3. Ignore Variety

In real estate they say, “location, location, location.” In food storage we say, “variety, variety, variety.” As you create a list of foods and supplies to store, remember that variety is key to maintaining a lifestyle as normal as possible. You can find many lists that will tell you to store X amount of oats for example, but what if your family hates oatmeal? Remember when you told your mom you loved barbecued potato chips and she put them in your lunch every day? Remember how, after a month, you traded them to classmates for a new taste?

Also, do not make the mistake of storing large amounts of specialty foods. You may enjoy these, but if others evacuate to your home they may not. Children may rebel and refuse to eat. Instead of ending up with foods that are unfamiliar, plan to include a variety of foods.

4. Ignore Nutritional Needs

Again, think about Food Groups. When creating your shopping list, be sure to incorporate all the food groups into your plan. Each group provides a different nutritional need. You should design your list to include grains, proteins, fruits and vegetables, dairy, and fats. Again, remember variety, but this time think color. Fruits are not created equal. Orange fruits provide different nutrients than blue and purple fruits.

5. Forget Spices and Condiments

Look over your favorite foods and be sure to store their ingredients. Remember pickles, relish, olives, mayonnaise, cinnamon, oregano, salsa, and items that make meals special.

6. Ignore A Sensible Storage Strategy

All foods, even grains in cans and dehydrated foods, should be stored in a cool, dark, and dry area of your home. Temperatures should remain under 80 degrees on the worst days, and below 70 degrees for optimal storage. Create new names for some areas of your home to break the mindset that you have become used to. The coat closet can be renamed the “grain pantry.” The linen cupboard can be thought of as the “toiletries and medications cupboard.” There is no law that declares a home must have a coat closet by the front door. Though it is nice to have one, it is also nice to protect your preparedness investment. In a few minutes, you can add a few shelves and make storage spaces much more valuable areas of your home. It may take a few more minutes to grab a coat from your bedroom closet, but it might be worth the effort. If you need storage ideas we have been posting some on the [Totally Ready Facebook](#) page the past few weeks.

7. Use Improper Packaging

Paper, including paper bags and cardboard, are not good for storing food long term. If you are storing for long term, always transfer food to metal, plastic, or glass containers. Plastic, except for buckets, should be your last choice. You want containers that are moisture proof and safe from the ravages of pests like mice and insects.



8. Overlook Comfort Items

Yes—chocolate, candy, and popcorn all have their place in a good, well constructed food storage plan. Did you know popcorn is also the corn you will want on hand to grind for corn meal? Real popcorn, not the microwave variety.

During a time of stress, comfort foods can provide the catalyst that transforms kids from whiners to helpers. (I'm sure you had none of that during your time ordered to stay at home.) Storing comfort foods offer a chance to continue family food traditions in a crisis. Birthdays come even during difficult times, and a birthday cake can really lift the spirits.

9. Store Foods You Do Not Know How To Prepare

All the food in the world will do you no good if you cannot prepare it. You may have a neighbor or friend who knows how to bake bread and soak beans, but you better have enough stored for both families if you plan to ask for the friend's help.

10. Fail to Have The Proper Equipment

If you don't have a wheat grinder what good is wheat? You could use it as a cereal, but that won't help make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich—so why are you storing peanut butter and jelly? Can you cook stored foods off the grid if you should be without power? Do you have at least some foods that can be eaten right from the can? Which begs the question, do you have a can opener that is not electric?

11. Overdo It!

Whether you purchase all at once or create a weekly budget and purchase over time, never purchase too much of just one food group. Always spread your money between all the groups. If you are on a limited budget get a one-day supply of everything, then one week, then one month and so on. Three hundred pounds of wheat or 50 pounds of flour per person is not going to be satisfactory if an emergency arrives before you add the peanut butter and jelly to make the sandwiches.

12. Underestimate The Value Of Water

Water is often the overlooked or under planned element in a preparedness plan. When designing your plan be aware that dehydrated and freeze-dried foods need extra water to reconstitute and prepare. They may need two to three times as much water as product. One cup of vegetables or meat may require two to three cups of water to reconstitute. Remember, you need water for drinking, flushing, cleaning, laundry, and cooking. Don't forget pets are family members too and need to be counted when calculating how much water to store.

13. Overlook Canned Foods

Canned fruits and veggies are also a source of liquids for drinking or cooking. You already know how to use canned varieties and the kids are used to their taste and texture. This is precisely the reason for storing them instead of only the dehydrated and freeze-dried varieties.



14. Put Your Storage In The Basement And Forget It!

You might consider the importance of rotating your food and other supplies on a regular basis. This is by far the biggest mistake most people make. They run out and purchase food storage and it is not what they are accustomed to eating. Therefore, they do not cook with it and they do not rotate it. After a few years, it is thrown away. You must rotate your food storage, medical supplies and even cleaning supplies. All have a shelf life. What good is all this hard work and money invested if it all ends up in the dumpster?

15. Ignore Dates And Labels

When you purchase foods, label them with the month and year purchased on top of the can. This will ensure you are always using the oldest first. Canned goods do not lose nutritional value for at least two years after the expiration date, so you will have at least two years from date of purchase to rotate through your three-month supply.

16. Lose Track Of What You Have

Create an inventory system so you can keep track of what you are storing. Design a spread sheet or get out the good old paper and pencil and record what you have so you know what you still need. Once you have completed the three month supply of foods you eat, record items each time you use them up so you know how many you need to purchase to maintain your supply at the three month level.

17. Put It All In One Place

If you have a natural disaster strike your home, some rooms may be destroyed while others are untouched. If you have spread out your storage you may be able to salvage at least part of your supplies. Thinking a little more negatively, should someone enter your home to steal food, they may find some of your stash, be satisfied and leave. Or, if you take a needy person to one area of your storage with the intent of sharing, they can take what they need while the rest will remain safely unnoticed—just in case they discuss your generosity with others who are not so trustworthy.

18. Store Too Much or Too Little

Know how much your family really uses. Date items like mayonnaise and ketchup and toiletries like shampoo and toothpaste. When you have used them up you can calculate how many you would need for a three-month supply. For toilet paper place the wrapper or cardboard roll in a drawer and after two weeks count them to determine how much you have used. Be sure to do this for each bathroom. Add a few extra because now we know zoom school and work are possible and we may all be home 24/7 needing more supplies.

Once aware of these common stumbling blocks, we can keep our family storage plan on track, in balance, and ready for whatever insures great food storage in our homes.