

# How to Store Spices Long Term

*Author: Diane Vuković*

Of all my emergency food, spices were one of the most challenging items to stockpile.

Not only do spices go bad quickly, but pantry pests love them, and they don't make sense to package in bulk.

If you also love food with flavor, here's what you need to know about how to store spices long term.

## Why Store Spices as Part of Prepping?

---

When prepping on a budget, your food stockpile probably consists of many dry staples like rice, oats, beans, and dried fruits and vegetables.

These foods by themselves are incredibly bland. Without any spices to jazz them up, your emergency meals would be incredibly boring.

Flavor might not matter when surviving the apocalypse, but most disasters are short-term. Eating meals, you enjoy can do a lot for boosting morale!

Even if you buy meals from top emergency food companies, you'll still probably want to stockpile spices. Those meals aren't exactly the most flavorful. Plus, the spices can add nutrients like antioxidants to your food – nutrients that are often missing in most emergency meals.

## Do Spices Go Bad?

---

Yes, spices can go bad. Unopened in their original packaging, most spices will start to go bad within one year. Dried herbs go bad within two years. Once opened, the spices will start to lose their flavor fairly quickly.

## **What makes spices go bad?**

The flavor of spices is held in their natural oils. These natural oils are very volatile and can break down very quickly.

If exposed to oxygen and heat, the spices will lose their flavor. The spices may still be safe to eat but won't have as much flavor, which defeats the point of storing spices in the first place. Nutrients in spices will also degrade over time.

## **Pantry Pests Also Can Get Into Spices**

Pantry pests like weevils and moths love to eat some spices. While it is generally safe to eat insects in your food, it can be a bit gross (speaking from experience, weevils add a nasty crunch to your food!).

## **Is It Safe to Eat Expired Spices?**

---

Yes, it is generally safe to eat expired spices. Because spices have low moisture content, bacteria, fungi, and other microbes can't grow easily on them.

Many spices are also high in antioxidants which naturally kill microbes. Thus, it is highly unlikely that you would ever get food poisoning from eating expired spices. In fact, spices are often used to *treat* food poisoning or added to food to prevent food poisoning.

However, do note that spices can absorb moisture from the air. The spices might get wet enough to support bacteria or mold growth in humid climates. Heating spices to 167 degrees F kills most harmful pathogens.

## How to Store Spices Long Term



If you want to store spices for longer than 12 months, you must keep them somewhere cool, dark, and dry and protect them from oxygen. The best way to do this is to repackage spices in airtight containers with oxygen absorbers.

### 1. Choose the Right Storage Container

Because oxygen causes spices to go bad quickly, you must store spices in airtight containers. There are only two good options for this:

- Mylar bags
- Mason jars with two-part metal lids

Both Mylar bags and mason jars are completely airtight when closed. They won't let any air or moisture from the environment into the packaging.

By contrast, the lids on spice jars don't create a very good seal. It will allow air and moisture from the air in, which can cause spoilage. For this reason, you should never store spices long-term in their original containers.

### *Shelf Life of Spices in Mylar Bags*

When stored in Mylar bags with oxygen absorbers and kept away from heat, spices should last anywhere from 2 to 10 years. Herbs like parsley and basil retain their flavor longer than volatile spices like cumin and red pepper flakes.

### *What about vacuum sealing?*

Vacuum sealer bags aren't airtight. Over time, they will allow air and moisture to leak in. So, they aren't a good solution for long-term spice storage.

## **2. Use Oxygen Absorbers**

When you put spices in an airtight container, there will still be oxygen already inside. This oxygen will cause the spices to go bad gradually.

In addition to this, there may be insect eggs in the spices (it sounds grosser than it is). These eggs can hatch, and you end up with an infestation inside the container.

The solution? Oxygen absorbers.

Oxygen absorbers (OAs) are little packets of iron. They absorb oxygen from around them. If put in an airtight container like a sealed Mylar bag, they create a completely oxygen-free environment.

### **3. Keep Somewhere Cool and Dark**

Even if kept in an oxygen-free environment, spices will degrade from heat and light. You must keep them somewhere cool and dark. Mylar bags don't allow light through, but mason jars will. You can put them in a box or wrap them in bags to protect against light.

*Should I keep spices in the freezer?*

Freezing spices will keep them fresh indefinitely. However, freezing isn't usually a good long-term storage solution. The spices might pick up smells from other items in your freezer. Also, if there were a long-term power outage, your spices would start to go bad.

I store some spices in the freezer – but not for long-term storage. These are spices that I frequently use, buy in bulk, and rotate through fairly quickly.

### **4. Use Small Containers**



Spices are only used in small amounts. They also go bad very quickly. Because of this, it doesn't make sense to stockpile spices in bulk quantities. If a long-term emergency hit, your spices would go bad before you could use them up.

Instead, only stockpile a small amounts of spices per container. You can use small Mylar bags or 2oz mason jars.

**Tip:** Mylar bags usually come in large sizes, but you can cut them down to whatever size you want. Just seal the cut sides to create a new bag. Try discount mylar bags if you are looking for decent quality bags at a fair price.

## **5. Store Mixes Instead of Individual Spices**

For most people, it doesn't make sense to stockpile individual spices. I sometimes use more than 12 or more spices in a single recipe. If I wanted to cook a few types of meals during an emergency, I would have to open up dozens of little bags of spices.

I would only need to open a few bags by packaging spice mixes instead. The rest would remain sealed and safe until needed.

## 6. Label Spice Containers

Make sure you label your spice mixes. Otherwise, you might not remember which spices are in the container.

### To label spices:

- Use a permanent marker to write on the container
- Cover this with clear packaging tape. It will keep the writing from rubbing off.

## 7. Keep Spices Organized

If you are stockpiling a large amount of emergency food, it is easy for things to get chaotic. Imagine trying to search through a zillion packages of food to find the right spice mix – and possibly by flashlight!

I keep my spice mixes with the foods they will be used with. For example, I have some sealed bags of quinoa, freeze-dried veggies, and chickpeas. I also put a bag of Middle Eastern spices to be used with them. My Mexican spices are next to my bags of rice and beans. And so forth.

You might prefer a different organizational method, like just keeping all your little emergency spice containers together so you can pick and choose. What matters is you are staying organized?

## Can I Store Spices in their Original Packages Long-Term?

---

If you don't want to repackage spices, choose spices that come in metal pouches. These will keep fresh longer than spices in plastic

containers. Jars of spices are also okay if you keep them away from light. You will still need to rotate through the spices within 1-2 years, or they will lose their flavor.

## Which Spice Mixes to Stockpile?

---

Here are some ideas on which spice mixes to store long-term. Variety means your emergency food won't get boring!

- Italian mix
- Enchilada mix
- Chinese 5 spice mix
- Za'atar
- Curry powder
- Everything bagel seasoning
- Cajun seasoning
- Berbere spice mix
- Garam masala
- Jerk spice mix
- Adobo spice
- Tandori spice mix
- Poultry spice
- Creole seasoning
- Pumpkin pie spice (makes emergency oatmeal taste so much better!)

*Retrieved from [https://www.primalsurvivor.net/store-spices/?utm\\_source=ActiveCampaign&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=How+to+Store+Spices+Long+Term&utm\\_campaign=How+to+Store+Spices+Long+Term&vgo\\_ee=%2BHPDpWAr%2B2x4PoOdsaawAgA3SuMkJhmkGexv49sZvNU%3D](https://www.primalsurvivor.net/store-spices/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=How+to+Store+Spices+Long+Term&utm_campaign=How+to+Store+Spices+Long+Term&vgo_ee=%2BHPDpWAr%2B2x4PoOdsaawAgA3SuMkJhmkGexv49sZvNU%3D)*