

Preppers Need These Herbs and Spices

By Jack S



Putting back food is an essential part of prepping. Spices may not have a lot of calories or nutritional value necessarily but they can go a long way towards making all those staple foods you have put back taste a lot better.

I am sure that in a real situation we would just be glad to have something to eat but food that tastes better is going to help morale and mood. How many of us have ever had to live on the foods we have put back?

While some of us may have tasty foods put back from canning or even some special treats, the majority of prepper food is the basics. Let's talk about some tips for buying spices and which ones are the most useful in terms of versatility and availability.

The links in this article are mostly to Frontier Co-Op bulk spices. I have found them to be the best deal for the quality. They are member owned and their spices come in mylar already.

Amazon offers exceptional prices on their products with a minimum \$25 Amazon order. Prices in the spice budget I set forth are set by that. I am going to add it all up for you so you can see how inexpensive it is to put back a lot of flavor for hard times.

Spices are best bought in bulk

You pay a lot for those small 1-4 oz jars that are plentiful on grocery store shelves. Packaging costs and other factors come into play. For prepping purposes, you should be planning on buying in 1-pound containers or larger.

The difference in cost alone will leave you amazed. You can often get organic spices for less than what you are paying for standard spices in those small jars. Mrs. Dash is a good all-around salt free seasoning but it is \$3 for just over an ounce. I can buy a 21-ounce container for \$17.

Creating your own blends that mimic the name brands that cost a lot can be worth it. We generally like to add salt into our cooking separately so we buy salt free blends sometimes. You may have favorite spices that you always seem to run out of because they come in small sizes and you use them often. Plenty of these spices list almost all of their ingredients.

A few try to be vague with the exact recipe but you can get a pretty good idea from the label and your own taste buds. I buy Chef Paul Prudhomes Blackening Seasoning when I get a chance to catch it on sale because it is convenient but it is not cheap and is on my list for creating a generic version.

A lot of blends are high in salt

Basic salt is cheap, Even sea salt doesn't cost that much but when you are buying spice blends the first ingredient is often salt which means you are paying a lot for something that is ¼ salt. You can add salt to a salt free spice blend and come out ahead.

Creating your own blends helps manage sodium levels

Plenty of my fellow preppers and members of their family are on sodium restricted diets or are at least supposed to be. Salt is actually an acquired taste. My husband and I used to eat more processed foods especially when we lived in Southeast Alaska where fresh food could be a challenge to get a good part of the year.

Towards the end of our time there we started getting fresh produce shipped from Washington State and eating less salt. When we returned to NC I started cooking more from scratch and we reduced the salt we ate. Now when we eat out or processed foods we often find them unpleasantly salty.

Spice Options

Garlic Powder

There are a lot of potential health benefits to having garlic in your diet. Some canned butter and garlic powder and you have something good to go on some bread you made and it goes well with recipes found all over the world.

Chives or Dried Onions

Onions keep a long time and they are easy to grow but that doesn't mean you shouldn't put back some of the dried version for tough times. Regular onions have more

flavor and substance to them than chives. A lot of preppers probably have chives growing wild all around them.

Dill

This is an easy herb to grow but if you have to buy it for pickles or anything like that it can be expensive at the grocery store. If you don't choose to grow your own and dry it to put back then at least buy it in bulk.

I speak from my experience one year of not growing enough of it and then being shocked when dill was \$5 for a tiny jar that was definitely not enough to do a big run of pickles.

Herbs de Provence

This is one of the few blends I am putting on this list because it is versatile and not expensive. A lb will last for years in an average household. It is a blend of For white meats like turkey, chicken, rabbit, etc., Herbs de Provence and some salt and black pepper will create a fine main dish. The name of the blend comes from it being the traditional all in one spice in Provence, France.

Pizza Seasoning

Pizza is a comfort food that is actually very easy to make. We rarely ever eat a pizza that we do not make ourselves. This seasoning is great to use in a variety of dishes. You can put a little in oil and dip bread in it.

Italian Seasoning

If you put back a lot of tomato products or plan on eating a lot of soups and stews during difficult times then Italian Seasoning is a must to put back. I buy a 1 lb of this at a time and it lasts me for several years even if I can a lot of food.

This blend contains oregano, sage, rosemary, thyme, basil, and marjoram. I just buy this instead of buying the listed herbs separately because it seems like most of the time, I am using them all together anyway.

Basil

Dried basil is good stuff to have. The fresh version is very expensive to buy for something that is extremely easy to grow. For those in town or in apartments, you can grow this fragrant and savory herb in containers.

Basil is commonly used in Italian and Thai dishes. If you like pesto you can make a version of it with dried basil leaves.

Chili Powder

All those beans and rice put back means Chili powder needs to be put back too in my opinion. Try to find chili powder where salt is not the first ingredient. You want the concentrated form. Adding salt to a dish is not hard.

I have just found that some lower quality chili powders have such a high concentration of salt in them that by the time you get enough chili flavor, foods can sometimes be too salty.

Vegetable Broth Powder

I consider low sodium vegetable broth powder a seasoning. It makes an excellent base for soups and gravies and is a bargain compared to those prepackaged envelopes of broth powder.

Lemon Pepper

Canned fish, chicken, and even reconstituted or canned vegetables have a lot more zip and zing to them with a little lemon pepper. An alternative to this is to keep some lemon juice on hand to splash on some dishes if needed.

Black Pepper

Old reliable black pepper is something that is all too often overlooked when it comes to extra spices. A large container goes a long way so all too often we forget to buy it because it seems like it will never run out. A few lbs put back is advisable.

Red Pepper Flakes or Powder

Another spice where a little goes a long way. Flakes look pretty in cooking but powder is easier to get a consistent flavor with.

Bouillon

I like bouillon but it can be hard to find a good deal on this. You really have to pay attention to ingredients when it comes to buying any type of bouillon. Avoid those with lots of artificial ingredients. It is well worth it to pay for the better brands with this one.

5 Spice Powder

You can make your own by blending the five spices on the list but you can also just buy a pound that is pre blended. I was give one of these containers and it lasted for

years, eventually succumbing to damage during the time we were moving from camper to house.

Creating Spice Packets for Sealed Up Prepping Foods

My husband had a brilliant idea when we first started sealing up beans and rice in mylar. He took sandwich baggies and created spice packets that were put in the mylar and sealed. This meant that every bag of food had some spices right there for use when needed.

Think about how much you have to pay for a tiny box of mac and cheese with a sauce packet in it! Doing it this way you could put some cheese powder and powdered milk or yogurt and have your very own custom prepper mac and cheese that is high quality and inexpensive.

A pound of organic white cheese powder is about \$24 but it goes so far! I can buy a bag of this and cook with it for many months and use it for making snacks like cheese popcorn at home that is fresh and nowhere near \$3 a bag!

So, when you are sealing up popcorn for prepping comfort food, put a cheese powder and powdered sour cream packet with some extra salt in there and you will have a real treat even during a tough scenario. If you have kids, small things like this can make them feel a little better during an emergency.

Storing Spices

A lot of spices will last for a very long time as long as they are kept dry and not over exposed to humid conditions. Getting a little water or humidity in them and then re-

drying and repeating the process multiple times will eventually lead to a decline in taste and spoilage.

Jars with moisture absorbers work well for spices you have opened and in use. Long term storage with a moisture absorber in a vacuum seal bag can allow herbs to last 20+ years at least. Spices that have salt in them are more shelf stable even if they do clump with some moisture.

The Most Important Spice Overall? SALT!

While a lot of us actually have to watch our salt intake, during a survival situation all the heavily salted and processed foods out there may not be available at all which suddenly puts you in the situation of not getting enough.

Iodized salt is cheap to buy but often comes in containers that are paper based so you need to seal your salt up in something that is waterproof. Salt is corrosive so you don't want it leaking out somewhere where corrosion might be a problem. Well-sealed salt will last forever.

For cheap salt we put back the water softener salt that is food grade and sold at home improvement stores. It is definitely rocky salt but for preserving foods or an emergency it is a good buy. Fine ground table salts are best for general cooking and seasoning.

I remember reading stories about the pioneer days and how people would have to boil off water to get enough salt to get by the winter. Tending a salt works was a high-risk job because you were essentially a setting duck for an ambush.

Salt is something we take for granted now but that doesn't mean it couldn't get hard to get during trying times. A lot of people are pretty addicted to salty foods and right now it is cheap to put back so why go without?

Growing Your Own

I have pointed out a few of the herbs and spices that you can grow at home with ease but there are so many more out there that make wonderful edible landscaping that offers you beauty and joy while growing and then nourishes and satisfies later on.

Leeks grow to be very large and can be dried for a large supply of light onion flavor.

Garlic is so easy to grow even in a container. What some do not realize is that garlic greens are delicious to cook with and can be harvested lightly while garlic is growing. The tops of garlic are sometimes called scapes. You have to be careful to not go overboard with cutting them because some green growth is needed to produce a solid head of garlic.

Some of the better heads of your garlic can be saved for seed for the next planting. Garlic can be planted in fall and early winter or spring but usually does best when planted during the cooler months of fall and early winter.

Foraging

If you can forage then why not do so? The cautions that I feel need mentioned are just to make sure you are positive of the ID of the plant and to make sure to not forage where you suspect any major pollution or run off. Picking herbs downhill from a golf course for example would be a bad idea.

Some herbs may grow wild where you live. I mentioned chives. These are good fresh but you can pick them and dry them in little time.

Wild mints are plentiful around here and are easy to dry even if just hung upside down and allowed to air dry with a fan or in direct sun.

Shop Around and Save

Sometimes health food stores have some really good sales on bulk spices but even if you don't have time to hunt for bargains, you can build up a nice stash of spices by just buying a pound of spices here and there. \$8-\$25 here and there is all it takes.

Amazon has some excellent buys as part of their add on program. A pound of low sodium vegetable broth powder is a mere \$8 if you order \$25 worth of products or more whereas a lot of other places want \$11 or more for the same thing

Vitacost some great sales and coupon codes and ship free and fast or you can pay \$2.99 to get your order to ship the next day. They regularly have 15% off an already good price on Frontier Co-op Herbs and Spice Blends which are already well sealed and ready for storage if you buy the bulk bags rather than the small jars offered.

I know that I have not even touched on all the bulk blends an option that you have out there. I encourage you to check out Frontier Co-op website for a full selection of bulk herbs and spice blends. Sometimes Amazon has a better price than the Co-op website but you can also get significant savings on products by paying a \$10 annual fee to be a member. You get 10% off your orders and store credit back at the end of the year so it is not a bad deal for those that are interested in a variety of bulk foods.

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