

Starting a Food Storage Program

By Joseph Parish

A prepper I know recently confided in me as to their confusion of what to store up on for a potential emergency. Their major concern was the great changes that we are seeing in our weather across the country. They stated that if the conditions get too drastic the supply trucks will not be able to get to the local grocery stores and as a result the shelves will remain vacant. This is rightfully a valid concern and I was glad that at least the consideration had prompted a desire to stock up on food supplies.

The best that I could tell the person was to stock up on a year's supply of emergency foods. I explained how difficult it is to specify specifics since no two people's diets are the same. I was asked if the food storage programs were worth the large sums of investment dollars needed, to which I reply in the negative. Now before all the one shopper who buy these survival packages get excited and send me nasty email letters let me explain. As stated, each person's taste in foods are varied and the packages may send you certain foods which may never get consumed. In that case it is a waste of both money and food. While you might initially feel the package represents a good bargain if nothing else it might be a good way to kick start your food preparations. Remember however, store up on those food which you eat on a regular basis.

Bulk purchase of survival foods is a great way to initially get started but keep in mind that you can easily assemble months' worth of emergency foods by purchasing items here and there. Look for the deals or sale items at Wal-Mart or your local grocery store and then put the package together yourself. I compliment my purchases with the #10 cans as well.

You would not want to start eating any unfamiliar foods at the onset of an emergency situation. Try to avoid this at all costs. Stocking up on the long shelf life items which your family eats on a regular basis will allow you to keep eating those foods after an emergency is declared. The foods are best which your body is used to, that you enjoy eating and will help keep your food stock rotated.

Not all of the packages that are offered for sale are of value to the prepper. They may appear to be a bargain when shopping for bulk foods but may not be if there are products included that you do not use. You are likely to find unprepared grains, TVP (veggie protein) and sugar. Many items are basic and would merely serve as a base from which to build further storage upon. I started out by spending an extra \$10 to \$20 dollars per week at the local grocery store on canned foods and rice. I would always try to buy more than what I expected to use thus building up as much stock as I wanted. I would then rotate the stock using the older cans from previous weeks. As I did that I would then purchase one or two to replace it.

Your basic food storage could start with storage of white rice, winter wheat, pancake mix, and elbow macaroni. For vegetables you would want to stock up on cans

of dehydrated potato chunks, freeze dried sweet corn, green peas, chopped onions, dried mushroom pieces, instant potatoes and broccoli. No diet menu can be complete unless it includes some fruit to compliment your other foods. Make sure to include apple slices, dried strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and raspberries.

I included as a basic starting point the following dairy products powdered milk and chocolate drink mixes. You will likely later add items such as butter or margarine powder. Other nice to have's may include sour cream, powdered eggs and instant cheese powders.

Beans are an excellent source of protein and you should include a variety of different types. Include dehydrated pinto, black, lima and lentils as well. I generally eat lentils on a regular basis. They are a fairly complete protein source with lots of fiber and are low in fat. Lentils can generally be prepared in a number of delicious ways and a search of the internet will return literally hundreds of recipes.

TVP or Textured Vegetable Protein is an excellent meat substitute and is consistent with the taste and texture of real meat. If you are a vegetarian this would be a great addition to your food reserves. You can start with the basic meat TVP such as bacon, beef and chicken and later expand it to include specialties like taco, BBQ and sausage flavored TVP. Now add your cooking basics such as white sugar, baking soda and baking powder to your list.

The following items are excellent additions to add to your emergency food pantry. I keep supplies of potted meat and deviled ham, canned chicken breast, tuna, canned Chili and cans of baked beans. All these are commercially sold in the grocery store and should keep for 3 to 5 years when properly stored.

The general life spans of prepared items are freeze-dried products is 25 years, dehydrated products is 20 years and the TVP products at least 10 years. These spans are for unopened cans.