



Pros and Cons of Foods for Long-Term Storage

This document will provide a description of the primary types of foods used for long-term food storage and the pros and cons of each. Consider choosing a variety of foods to store in order to vary your meals and please the palates of your tribe.

Purchase a good all-around cookbook and practice cooking with your stored foods. There are many cook books aimed at preppers. [The Prepper's Cookbook](#) by Tess Pennington not only provides 300 recipes designed for using long term stored food, but also has a lot of useful information on storing and preparing foods.

1 – Freeze Dried

Freeze dried foods are one of the easiest long-term storage foods available, requiring only hot water to prepare. They have a very long shelf life and are simple to store effectively. Freeze dried food retains much of its natural flavor and texture when rehydrated.

Note that all freeze dried foods are not the same, some are simply rice and bouillon with no meat and very few vegetables. They can also contain very high levels of sodium. Check the label for ingredients and nutritional information.

Freeze dried foods typically come in three package formats:

- Individual meal packages typically contain one or two servings of a meal ranging from breakfast dishes such as scrambled eggs and bacon to dinner entrees like beef stroganoff or lasagna. These meals are prepared by adding boiling water directly into the package, stirring, and waiting a few minutes. It is worth experimenting with a few servings of freeze dried foods to see what your tribe prefers. You can have fun deciding on beef stew or chili mac for dinner, not to mention freeze dried ice cream! Many manufacturers offer 'kits' of individual meal packages intended to provide three meals a day for two, three, four or more days. Be sure to read the meals offered and compare products for calories per meal, meal ingredients, cost per meal, and nutritional information.
- Bulk meal packages come in large cans, called "Number 10", and typically offer eight to ten servings of a specific meal such as beef stroganoff or scrambled eggs. This can typically provide about nine servings of the specific meal type. These will save you a little money as compared to individual meal packages and once opened typically still have a shelf life of one year if stored properly.
- Bulk food items come in a pail, bucket, or can and typically provide a single food item. They include almost anything you can image from fruits, vegetables, meats, powdered eggs, powdered cheese, powdered butter and so on. This is typically the most cost efficient means to purchase freeze dried foods. They are valuable for long term bulk storage and can be used just as you would use fresh foods to create a multitude of recipes. Note that a five-gallon bucket of freeze dried apple slices contains a lot of apples and once opened the shelf is reduced to about one year if stored properly. If buying in large quantities look for items that are divided into several packages, so you do not have to open

Pros and Cons of Foods for Long-Term Storage

Page 2

all of the contents at once. You can also divide the contents and repackage in mylar bags with oxygen absorbers in order to make stored quantities to meet your needs.

Pros

- They have a very long shelf life of up to 25 years or longer.
- Light weight meal pouches designed for backpacking make it easy to carry.
- Food retains much of its nutritional value, natural color, taste, and texture
- Readily available from a wide range of suppliers. See the Resource section for more info.
- Easy to store.
- Easy to prepare a meal in approximately ten minutes.

Cons

- Freeze dried foods can be expensive.
- Require a method of providing hot water.
- They can be 'boring' and simple (rice and broth), check ingredients carefully.
- They can have a very high sodium content and low protein, check nutritional information.

There are many manufacturers of freeze dried foods; [Mountain House](#) is one of the premier providers, especially individual meal packages. Their products can be found on Amazon, at Walmart, and in most outdoor supply stores such as REI. [Augason Farms](#) is one of several manufactures of bulk freeze dried foods, offers a wide variety of products, and can be purchased through several online outlets. See the Resources section for other supplier options.

Note that freeze dryers are available for home use, but cost \$2,000 to \$3,000 or more. If you have the budget to purchase one, or means to use one, you can freeze dry you own foods and store them in mylar bags with oxygen absorbers. This method will allow the food to have a similar shelf life of commercial packaged foods.

2 – Dehydrated Food

Dehydrated food is similar to freeze dried although it has a shorter shelf life and takes longer to rehydrate. It also does not retain its nutritional value, original shape, texture, and color as well as freeze dried foods. Dehydrated food contains more moisture than freeze dried foods, about 5-10% compared to 1-2% for freeze dried and there are far less foods that can be dehydrated than can be freeze dried.

Pros

- Long shelf life of five or more years depending on food type.
- Can be produced at home with an affordable dehydrator.
- Easy to store and transport.

Cons

- Loses its nutritional value, taste, texture and color.
- Requires water to prepare and takes longer to rehydrate than freeze dried.
- Not as wide of variety of foods can be dehydrated.

3 – Canned Foods

Canned foods are one of the most common sources of stored food since they are very readily available. Canned foods do contain preservatives and are not recommended for the sole source of a long term diet.

Pros

- They are super simple and require no other supplies other than a way to open the can and a utensil.
- They come in a wide variety of products including meals such as stews and chilies, meats and fish, fruits, and vegetables.
- Readily available in any grocery store.
- Have a very long shelf life when stored properly.
- Can heat the food right in the can.
- Easy to rotate into meal plans and keeps your supply fresh.

Cons

- Heavier than most other options making them a poor option for your BOB or GHB.
- Exposure to heat or moisture can cause the can to rust and potentially compromise the quality of the food.
- Can contain a lot of preservatives making a diet of primarily canned food a potential health risk.
- Cannot be frozen and sensitive to temperature variations.
- Require a can opener or other tool to open.

Check the can for dents, bulges, leaks, rust, and corrosion. Although a dented can of food may be perfectly edible, the dent may have broken the seal on the inside of the can protecting the food from the tin can which can rust or corrode. If in doubt look at and smell your food and use your best judgement based on the severity of your situation.

This article provides useful information on opening canned food items without a can opener: [Opening canned food without a can opener.](#)

4 – MREs

MREs, or meals ready to eat, contain a complete meal including entrée, desert, drink mix, napkins, utensils and often a heating source to heat your food in a single package. They originated as field meals for the US military and are now available from a variety of manufactures. The quality of the food and taste of the food is something you should test before you spend too much money on MREs. Start by purchasing a few and validate the quality and reliability of the manufacturer.

Pros

- They are super simple and require no other supplies, making them a good choice for a quick, hot meal in an emergency situation.
- Do not require water other than to use for drink mixes.
- A good choice for your workplace or car emergency food kit.
- Depending on the weight you are carrying can be used in your BOB as well.
- Can be fun to train with children to open their meal full of different ingredients.

Pros and Cons of Foods for Long-Term Storage

Page 4

Cons

- They are typically the most expensive option when considering a cost per meal.
- They are relatively heavy.
- Their taste can be a challenge for some people.
- Their quality and reliability of packaging information can be suspect.

Using a vacuum sealer or mylar bags with oxygen absorbers can allow you to make your own MRE's or meal kits with foods such as single serve canned tuna and peanut butter cups, protein bars, fruit cups, and other foods your tribe enjoys.

5 – Pre-Packaged Foods

Pre-packaged foods differ from freeze dried foods in that there is still a considerable amount of moisture in the food. Depending on the food item they can have a much shorter shelf life. A box of Tuna Helper or mac and cheese with a can of tuna added can make an easy meal, but keep in mind that without the tuna, or other protein, many of these boxed 'meals' provide very little protein. Dried cereals and granola with powdered milk are good options for a breakfast meal in your food plan. These are available in bulk packages with extended shelf lives from several food suppliers.

Pros

- Easy to prepare and add variety to your meal planning.
- Readily available in any grocery store.
- Long shelf life.

Cons

- Can have limited nutritional value.
- Packages can be subject to pest or rodent contamination if not stored properly.

6 – Dried Goods

Dried goods such as beans and grains are a staple to any long-term storage plan. As noted in the food rotation ideas it is important to eat what you store in order to rotate your foods. Thus, if you are storing dried beans or grains such as rice, practice regularly preparing them in a manner your tribe will enjoy. You can add salt, pepper, spices and other ingredients to make them palatable.

Beans are a good protein source and "beans and rice" is widely acknowledged as a complete meal capable of sustaining you for many days. Beans and rice can be prepared together in a wide variety of ways. Pennington's book includes 20 recipe variations.

Dried goods have a long shelf life but are highly susceptible to pest and rodent contamination as well as moisture. They need to be stored in airtight bags and kept in a rigid container that prevents rodent invasion.

Pros

- Easy to prepare and add variety to your meal planning.
- Readily available in any grocery store.
- Long shelf life.

Cons

Pros and Cons of Foods for Long-Term Storage

Page 5

- Can have limited nutritional value.
- Packages can be subject to pest or rodent contamination if not stored properly.

7 – The Staples

Storing the staples such as baking powder, flour, sugar, cooking oils, salt, pepper, and spices is an important part of any food storage plan. This list is entirely dependent on your taste and cooking abilities. Practice ‘cooking from scratch’ with your stored food items.

Lundin suggests his ‘big four’ as whole wheat, powdered milk, honey, and salt. Each certainly has its values. Other ideas such as experimenting with recipes and a box of instant baking mix, such as Bisquick, instant potatoes, powdered milk, or other dry goods can be fun and worth practicing.

Like dried goods, the staples need to be stored in airtight bags within a protective container in a cool dry place.

Pros

- Long shelf life.
- Readily available in any grocery store.
- Provides variation to your meal planning.

Cons

- Requires cooking skills

8 – Survival Foods

Energy food bars are a good supply to have for a variety of food kits. They offer readily available calories and can be found in most stores that sell food. There is a wide range of nutritional content in these bars so care should be taken in choosing products that meet your needs.

Beyond what you typically see at the grocery store or convenience mart there are also high-calorie products designed for survival situations. For example [S.O.S. Rations](#) bars provide a high calorie content in a small package and may supply a higher nutritional value than many energy bars.

Pros

- Readily available calories.
- Easy to store and carry, making them ideal for BOB, GHB or work food kits.
- A wide variety of products readily available in most grocery stores.
- Palatable to children due to high sugar content.

Cons

- Not suitable as primary meals in your long-term diet.
- Can be expensive.
- Limited nutritional value.

9- Canning and Preserving Foods

Learning how to preserve foods yourself through the process of canning is a very useful skill. Canning is an excellent way to preserve fruits, vegetables, and meats for a long time without a

Pros and Cons of Foods for Long-Term Storage

Page 6

refrigerator or freezer. Foods can be grown in your garden or bought in bulk at the grocery store or farmer's market.

A pressure canner is used for many foods although some foods can be canned using a hot water bath that requires only a pot of boiling water and [Mason Jars](#) with appropriate lids.

Pros

- Excellent way to store fresh foods without refrigeration.
- Long shelf life.
- Wide variety of foods can be canned.

Cons

- Requires specialty equipment.
- Requires space to store the jars.

Disclaimer: This document and all contents herein are intended for use solely by students who are enrolled in the EPT Institute online course and have agreed to the Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy statements published on the EPTInstitute.com website. The use of this document by any other persons is a violation of these agreements and is prohibited. Any person using this document or the information provided herein is bound by the limitation of liability and other information found in the Terms and Conditions and Privacy Policy documents mentioned above.

L4T2.Pros and Cons of Food Types.220216