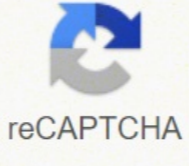




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## How to make a food survival kit

There's a lot that can go wrong during and after a disaster, starvation being a prime predictor in whether you survive or perish the ordeal. However, if you start preparing today, going hungry will be the least of your problems should the worst happen. Let's take a look at how to prepare yourself for survival with a 25-year emergency food supply. While stockpiling an emergency food supply that has a viable 25-year shelf life may sound rather daunting, it doesn't hurt to try and imagine the worst possible scenario to better prepare for them. Whether it's a political, environmental, or man-made disaster, having a stable and well-planned emergency food supply is the single most important thing you can do for you and your family. What is a 25-Year Emergency Food Supply? Not all food supplies are created equal. This is primarily due to the intent of that food supply, rather than what that food supply actually contains. In this case, a 25-year emergency food supply is intended to be food that is shelf-stable for two and a half decades. By shelf-stable, we are, of course, referring to food that will not spoil or go bad during their stated shelf life, while at the same time requiring very little upkeep. Other than adhering to their recommended storage conditions, shelf-stable food will remain a viable food source without ever having to be touched. Variety of shelf stable foods There are many examples of foods that can be classified as shelf-stable. In all likelihood, the first place your mind goes to when you think of stockpiling foods are canned items. It's easy to picture shelf upon shelf of canned goods in your pantry, sufficient enough to offset the duration of an imminent disaster. To be clear though, while canned goods are an excellent source for stockpiling an emergency food supply, they aren't exactly meant to last 25-years. Typical grocery store canned food aisle Surprised? Don't be, it's all about science. High-acidity canned foods such as fruits and tomatoes can last you up to a year and a half, and low-acidity canned foods such as meats and vegetables can go for up to five years. Even if you store canned goods in a cool, dark place (as best practices dictate), you might extend their shelf life by a few months, perhaps a year at most. Past that, you will need to be creative and find other food sources that are candidates for viable long term storage. Buy or Make a 25-year Emergency Food Supply If your goal is to create an emergency food supply with a 25-year shelf life, you have two options: Buy prepared food guaranteed to have a shelf life of 25-years Make the food supply yourself Option 1 - Buying the Food Supply The easiest option, by far, is to simply buy an already prepared 25-year emergency food supply. You will likely not find these foods readily available at your local grocery store though, as you'll need to buy them at specialty stores. These stores offer a staggering array of different types of emergency food kits, meals, drinks and desserts that come powdered, dehydrated or freeze-dried and usually sealed in Mylar bags. It's important to note that the type of container in which your food is stored is as almost as important as the food itself. Mylar is a kind of polyester used in making things like emergency space blankets, solar filters, and helium balloons. It's extremely durable and can create an extremely airtight barrier, which makes it the best choice for the long term storage of food. Food Supply Candidates The following is a list of popular and reputable companies that specialize in producing emergency food with a 25-year shelf life: Mountain House Wise Foods Augason Farms NuManna Granted, while this option is certainly not cheap, you can rest assured that these foods are guaranteed to have a shelf life of at least 25-years and will deliver the same taste and texture as when the food was first prepared. Option 2 - Making the Food Supply While buying your 25-year emergency food supply is an excellent and largely painless process, it's also quite expensive. If cost is a factor to you, the alternative is to build your own emergency food supply from scratch. This option boasts several distinct advantages: You will save money You will learn how to prepare and preserve food that will last decades You can customize the food supply to fit dietary needs (vegan, gluten-free, low sodium, etc.) Outlined below are steps to make your own 25-year emergency food supply. Equipment and Supplies Preparation is key when gearing up for a potential emergency situation. Planning a food supply is no exception: expect a reasonable start-up cost to get your own emergency food supply off the ground. Here's a cheat sheet of what you'll need out of the gate to get started: A large supply of Mylar bags in different sizes and capacities. You can buy these by the carton and use them in conjunction with an impulse heat sealer to easily seal and extend the shelf life of your foods. DryPacks Mylar Bags - 1 Quart Oxygen absorbers for food storage. These are food grade absorbers which are added to each Mylar pouch before sealing. These little packets ensure all oxygen is removed from the bag and greatly enhances and extends the shelf life of your foods stored in the Mylar pouch. Food Grade Oxygen Absorbers for Mylar Bag Food Storage A heat source to seal Mylar bags shut. In this case, using an impulse sealer will allow the Mylar bag and its contents to remain safe and viable in your emergency food supply. Metronic 8-inch Impulse Sealer - Mylar Poly Bag Heat Sealing Machine Plastic 5-gallon buckets. These will act as your primary food storage containers. Although slightly more expensive, it is worth investing in buckets that use a Gamma Seal lid as they are the gold standard for food storage. It is crucial that any bucket meant for food storage is made of food-grade plastic, otherwise chemicals and dye from the plastic bucket could lead to food contamination. GammaSeal Brand 5-Gallon Bucket with Gamma Seal Lid A freeze-dryer. This will be necessary for removing all moisture from meats, fruits and vegetables to enhance their storage longevity. A freeze-dryer machine is expensive though, and you might be tempted to use a food dehydrator instead. Don't! While a dehydrator will remove moisture from food as well, it is not nearly as efficient as a freeze-dryer machine. Food dehydrators can leave behind up to 10% water content in food, while freeze-dryers boast water content levels in food of less than 1%. The technology used in a freeze-dryer chills your food down to about negative 30-degrees Fahrenheit and activates a high-powered vacuum pump that gets rid of the water vapor inside the food. This process removes nearly all moisture, and as such, your food can last more than 20 years when properly prepared, sealed and stored in this manner. HarvestRight Freeze Dryer Label maker. You'll need this inexpensive device to create self-adhesive labels identifying the contents within your sealed Mylar bags and the dates that the food was prepared, packaged and/or will expire. Mylar bags are not transparent, so having a label clearly identifying what's inside is very important, especially if you have prepared meals that were made to satisfy specific dietary requirements (vegan, gluten-free, low sodium etc.). Brother P-Touch Label Maker - Model PTD210 How to Prepare Your Emergency Food Supply Once you have everything you need, the following step are rather simple and straightforward: Cut up larger food items into smaller pieces Combine the foods you want, such as pasta with cheese, meat, and vegetables, etc. and put them in a tray (foods that you would typically combine in a meal) Put the prepared meals into the freeze-dryer Once the freeze-drying process is complete, put the meals into a Mylar bag with an oxygen absorber; use different bags for different meals Seal the Mylar bags with the impulse sealer and label each bag with its contents and dates that the food was prepared, packaged and/or will expire Store the bagged meals in food-grade plastic buckets and label each bucket accordingly Final Thoughts Regardless if you bought your 25-year emergency food supply or made your own, you will need to find the right place to store your food as this can greatly affect shelf life. The most important criteria for storage is to keep your emergency food supply away from heat and sunlight. Even though your food will be sealed in Mylar bags and plastic buckets, it's critical to keep your food from light exposure and high temperatures. Traditionally, this meant storing your food in cool, dark places such as a root cellar or basement. If you live in a place where these are not available, storing the food away from windows and sources of heat (such as a furnace or water heater) is your next best bet. Root cellars - The old school way of storing your food supply Ideally, if you don't have a root cellar or basement, store your food supply in an interior room, such as a closet at the lowest level of your home. Be sure to check on your food supply from time to time to assess its condition and update its inventory if you are cycling food in and out of your supply. FAQ Still have questions about how to put together the ideal 25-year emergency food supply? Read our in-depth and comprehensive FAQ below for answers to some of the more commonly asked questions. Where is the best place to start when starting a DIY a 25-year emergency food supply? Many people often start their supply by gathering an assortment of canned food, giving little thought as to the expiration of these items. A common misconception is that canned goods last years on end, but this is simply not the case. Canned goods are not meant to be shelf-stable for 25-years; they are simply to augment an existing food supply in the short term. A better approach is to create a hybrid emergency food supply, in which a small cache of 25-year shelf-stable food is purchased up front, then largely augmented with both canned and dry goods. As time and budget allows, slowly increase the shelf-stable food supply while decreasing the amount of canned food items. Check out our comprehensive companion article, which details how to start your own short term emergency food supply. It's important to remember that, when storing canned or dry goods for any period of time, that they be cycled out with new stock every few months or years. All canned and dry goods, whether store bought or homemade, need to have expiration dates to ensure their maximum freshness and taste over time. What are some of the best emergency food supplies? When determining what emergency food supplies you should have in your pantry, consider the individual needs of you and your family first. It is also prudent to have an idea of how long you think you will need to rely on your emergency food supply for. Most emergency food companies, such as Augason Farms, offer 1-year emergency food supply kits, which provide sustenance for you and your family for up to one year. Often, these supply kits have a shelf life of up to 30-years, which helps meet the challenges of longer term disaster preparedness. At the end of the day, the best emergency food supplies are the ones that will last longest (freeze-dried, not dehydrated) are cognizant of dietary restrictions, and most importantly, are ones that will actually be eaten. Nothing is worse than being faced with a meal you absolutely cannot make yourself choke down. Eggplant, anyone? What items should be in your emergency food supply? A fundamental building block for any emergency food kit is water. Not only is water needed for sanitation and drinking purposes, but it is also required for re-hydrating food. Allocating enough water, per person, per day is a cornerstone for surviving and even thriving during emergencies and disasters. According to the CDC, 1-gallon of water per person per day is acceptable. Begin with a 3-day supply to start, then work your way to a 2-week supply. Remember to cycle out your water supply every 6-months to maintain peak taste and freshness. In addition to water and food, a basic field dressing and first aid kit is crucial, as well as a flashlight with fresh batteries, a hand held radio and water-proof matches or flint and steel with tinder (either homemade such as char-cloth, or purchased such as Black Beard fire-starter) will round things out as the bare essentials. In addition to the above, you'll want to pack away emergency meal options including a varied selection of dehydrated, powdered and freeze dried foods that are properly packed, sealed and/or sealed in Mylar bags. What is the best survival food with a long shelf life? Generally speaking, the foods with the longest shelf life will be your typical dry foodstuffs. With such a low moisture content, dry foods will last much longer than foods with a higher moisture content. Moisture, as we know, promotes mold and mildew in foods over time. Examples of dry foodstuffs include dehydrated and freeze-dried foods, of course, but also hard grains like buckwheat, soft white wheat, various rices (cereal grains) and millet. These grains (and others) can last for up to a decade or more when properly stored. Canned meat, fruit and vegetables are additional viable options for long term storage, but be sure to check their expiration dates prior to storing them as a part of your emergency food kit. To prolong shelf life, you can store these foods, and others such as honey, dried beans, dried lentils, maple syrup, and pastas with oxygen absorbers to assist in extending their shelf life as well. What should I look for when finding a company to invest in for emergency food? This is definitely a huge consideration when it comes to investing your money into an emergency food supply. The surefire way to ensure you're getting your money's worth is to do your research before plunking down your cash. Generally speaking, reputable and legitimate emergency food companies will share the attributes listed below: Their foods are guaranteed for taste and freshness for at least 25-years They have been in business for a decade or more They produce all their food on-site at their own manufacturing facility They are approved for emergency and/or disaster use by the Department of Homeland Security They are active in social media, interact with customers and are responsive to questions and concerns In addition, you'll want to examine their secondary attributes. For example, do they package their meals in Mylar bags? What kind of foods and meals do they offer? What is the nutritional value of the foods and meals they make? Do they make foods and meals that align with you and your family's dietary needs, and if so, is there enough variety? Is there a benefit to storing dehydrated food? Dehydrated foods and freeze-dried foods are lightweight and tend to take up very little space. This makes them ideal candidates for long term storage as well as for packing away in bug out bags if the need to leave an area presents itself due to disaster or emergency. However, when you choose a freeze-dried food option, water is a critical requirement when re-hydrating these foods prior to consuming them. Dehydrated foods, on the other hand, generally have no such requirement, as these foods can easily be eaten without the need for water. Of course, the downfall of dehydrated foods is the fact that their increased moisture content acts as an Achilles heel, which makes them susceptible to mold and mildew over time, something freeze-dried foods are able to avoid as their moisture content is much, much lower. What kind of nutritional needs should I consider when building an emergency supply? This basically comes down to macro-nutrients and bio-availability. Everyone's metabolism and energy level needs are different, and therefore should be carefully planned for. The amount of protein, carbohydrates and fats are prime predictors of how well an emergency food supply will tend to your nutritional needs. Not all emergency food supplies are created equal though. Some food supplies are geared for folks who intend to be active during emergencies and disasters (such as first responders or EMTs for example), while other food supplies are meant to give you the bare minimum of essential nutrients to keep you alive for as long as possible. Generally speaking, food supplies with high levels of carbohydrates and fats will promote energy and a feeling of "fullness". Other emergency food supplies will offer a more balanced approach, giving you nutrients and vitamins to stave off disease, hunger and maintain your metabolism. Regardless of the above, foods like nuts, dried meat, whole grains, and canned beans are all good choices to consider adding to an emergency food kit. You can then begin adding in supplemental food items like vegetables and (powdered) dairy items to round out your dietary and nutritional needs. What do you think of our write-up? Did we get it right? Feel that we got it super wrong? Tell us! Feel free to reach out and let us know what you think of the article; we always appreciate thoughtful, constructive criticism, good or bad!





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