

Poverty Prepping

How to stock up for tomorrow
when you can't afford to eat today.



By
Susan Gregersen

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How to stock up for tomorrow
When you can't afford to eat today!

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Dedicated to everyone who ever wondered where their next meal was coming from,
and to my kindred spirits who have also dug through couch cushions and their car
looking for change!

Thank you, to my wonderful husband, Steven, for his help and encouragement in
writing this!

Table of Contents

[Poverty Prepping](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Why Store Food Anyway?](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Freeing up money](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Don't Obsess with Nutrition](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Buy what you eat, and rotate it.](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

[How you're going to stock up](#)

[Chapter 6](#)

[What to buy and how to use it](#)

[Flour](#)

[Sugar](#)

[Rice](#)

[Beans](#)

[Salt](#)

[Other Basics](#)

[Chapter 7](#)

[Creative ways to store it](#)

[What to store it in](#)

[Where to store it](#)

[Chapter 8](#)

[Stretching it!](#)

[Gardening](#)

[Foraging](#)

[Fishing](#)

[Hunting](#)

[Raising your own animals](#)

[Bartering](#)

[Stealing](#)

[Chapter 9](#)

[Non-food Items](#)

[Chapter 10](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Other books by this author:](#)

Introduction

I've heard a lot of people say they can't store extra food because they don't have the money. Many people who are interested in "prepping", or preparedness, have spent time on Internet forums devoted to the subject, or read books and newspaper articles about it. They quickly become overwhelmed by the discussions about how much to store, what types of food to store, and how to store it.

It seems like a daunting task to accomplish, especially if you have little or no money to work with. You may even give up before you start

You don't need to buy expensive Freeze-dried long-term food-storage items, or nitro-packed wheat, or any of the other luxury food storage items. They're nice to have if you have the money to buy them, but a lot of us don't.

Being among the "financially challenged" segment of society I consider it an accomplishment whenever I can afford one extra of anything. That might be a can of salt, a bag of noodles, or even a 50-lb. bag of rice!

The important thing is that if something happens, such as a power outage, huge snowstorm, or possibly an economic, political, or war type disaster, I have something in the house to keep us fed, at least for a while.

People worry about how much to store. At our end of the money spectrum, it's more of a question of having ANYTHING to store, so my philosophy is you start with one thing. I've heard a story about how to eat an elephant. You do it "One bite at a time". That's what we're going to do with prepping.

We're going to learn how to take that first bite, and how to keep taking bites. I can't tell you when you'll be done eating the elephant. Maybe never. Maybe you'll keep adding to your stores, then need to use them, then add more again. Maybe you'll have to live on them for years. Maybe nothing will ever happen, and you'll have to shove some of it off on your family, friends, or neighbors before it gets too old to eat.

But at least you'll have it if you need it. And with my poverty prepping plan, you won't even feel the pinch as you build up your reserves.

I believe you can be a prepper for \$20 or less per month.

Chapter 1

Why Store Food Anyway?

We live in a land of plenty here in the United States. There are grocery stores in every town, convenience stores scattered everywhere, and even hardware stores, video game shops, and just about every place we go have snacks and drinks for sale.

Most of us have income in the form of paychecks from our jobs, and others have checks from retirement funds of one kind or another.

We have a safety net for those in need, in the form of other types of checks and food assistance programs. The most commonly known one is food stamps. In addition to that program there are food banks run by various organizations in many towns and cities, as well as soup kitchens and other meal programs.

FEMA, the Red Cross, and others have plans and supplies to help when natural disasters occur. I know this hasn't functioned as well as hoped, but they are always working to improve their preparedness plans.

So, again... why store food? I can think of a lot of reasons. Fresh in our minds is Hurricane Katrina. Resources were stretched beyond thin. There wasn't enough to go around, and the disaster was too wide-spread to reach everyone in a timely manner.

New England has been hammered with some pretty big snowstorms the last couple of winters. Electricity was off for days in some areas, and driving anywhere wasn't safe while trees, limbs, and lines were down.

Tornadoes have been known to tear up wide swaths of land and destroy whole towns. Floods have forced people to flee their homes, or isolated them when roads were underwater and they couldn't get to the grocery store.

There are economic reasons to store food. Gas is expensive and getting higher almost by the day. Every trip to the store costs more than 3 times what it did 10 years ago. If you don't have to go as often, you're saving money, and that money can be put toward more stores of food.

In the last several years there have been huge numbers of workers laid off. Unemployment checks are usually not enough to keep a person's bills paid, let alone buy groceries. If it happens to you and you have some basic food stored, you can greatly increase your comfort and lessen the financial strain.

Again, there are safety nets for people who find themselves in that position, but it can take time to complete the application process and begin receiving assistance. At the very least it's good to have enough food to carry you through those first few weeks.

It's a personal decision how much food you think you would feel comfortable storing. By the time you finish reading this book you'll be able to formulate a plan of your own.

Chapter 2

Freeing up money

A lot of people don't like this subject, because it means changing a few things about how and when they spend money! No, I'm not going to tell you to give up all your treats! There's just a few painless tweaks that could make all the difference!

Obviously, if you're eating out a lot, going to the movies, or buying new clothes every month, you know where you can make some cuts. But what if you already don't eat out, go to movies, or buy new clothes?

And what if you already work hard to buy things on sale or use coupons, and your pantry is still pretty empty by the next payday?

The first thing to do is look at everything you spend money on and see if there's a way you can do things cheaper. Even if you can only free up \$10 a month you can build up a store of food within a few months. It won't be enough to survive on by itself for longer than a few weeks, but it's the first step, and for some it may be enough.

How can you free up \$10 a month? First you can look at things like your cell phone plan, or cable/satellite package, and see if there's anything you can cut without penalty that would save \$10 a month. If not, let's see where else you might save.

Can you cut down your transportation costs? Are you close enough to walk or ride a bicycle to work, or to the grocery store or any place you regularly drive? Even just one or two days a week? Depending how far it is and the fuel efficiency (or lack of!) of your vehicle, it might not be hard to save \$10 from your fuel costs.

Pack your own lunch and snacks from home, and save money on eating out. My husband used to spend a couple dollars a day on snacks when he went to work. It didn't seem like much until one day he added it up. \$2 a day was \$10 a week, and approximately \$40 a month. Over a year, it was around \$500. Even at the current price of things, that would buy a 25-lb. bag of flour, plus a 25-lb. bag of sugar, plus either a 50-lb. bag of rice or a 25-lb. bag of pinto beans, EACH MONTH!

That's just by dropping the \$2 a day on snacks! Imagine if you're spending \$5 a day on lunch at a fast-food or other place! \$20/week, \$80/month, \$960 a year!

What about your utilities? Can you lower the temperature of your hot water heater? Wash laundry in cold water? Lower the thermostat in winter, or raise it in summer? Turn lights off, use outlet strips for things like TV and Computer equipment and keep them turned off when not in use? Many televisions and other appliances have circuitry that draws power even when the appliance is off.

Can you hang your laundry instead of putting it in the clothes dryer? We saved almost \$15 a month when we stopped using our dryer. You can put shirts on hangers and hang them from curtain rods or the shower rod, drape them over kitchen chairs, etc. Hang underwear on door knobs or cabinet knobs. Hang socks over chairs, curtain rods, etc. If you hang them at bed time they'll be dry by morning and they won't be in anyone's way. The smell from the laundry soap can be pleasant in the air.

Cut back on the amount of soaps you use, on everything from dishes to laundry to yourself. The savings will add up when you don't have to buy these things as often.

Don't mow your lawn until you have to. Mowing less often equals paying less for gas over the summer. Some places have rules about how tall the grass can get, so keep that in mind. Wash your car yourself instead of taking it to a car wash.

Just doing one of these things can free up enough for you to get started buying food storage. Like I said in the introduction, you can prep with only \$20 per month, or even \$10.

Throw your spare change into a jar and use it for purchasing food. Even if you only have 50 cents extra each month, that could buy you something such as a can of salt, which is about a pound and a half of salt. I know what you're thinking. Salt? What would I do with all that salt? We'll cover that in the Salt chapter! Well, okay, it's a sub-chapter of Chapter 6!

Chapter 3

Don't Obsess with Nutrition

Some people spend a lot of time evaluating nutritional charts and figuring out how much of each vitamin or mineral or other nutrient will be needed per person per day. They figure out daily calorie counts per person, based on weight, age, sex, and activity level. They go online and compare prices and ounces at preparedness supply websites.

To me, that's thinking too hard, especially if you're doing good just to scrape together some nickels to get a few things stored up. The stress of worrying about this is probably taxing your health more than a few days or a few weeks eating a sub-standard diet.

The important thing is to at least have some food to handle a short-term emergency. If the power is out for a week after a devastating ice storm, you're going to emerge in fine shape after eating pop tarts and crackers for the duration, unless you have a health issue such as diabetes.

If the power going out from something major such as an EMP and won't be back for months, years, or maybe never, then you'll need to consider other options beyond the pop tarts and crackers. In later chapters we'll not only talk about what to store, but how to supplement it to stretch your supplies.

Most of the things you'll buy as a poverty prepper are basics. They're things like flour, which can be used to make a number of things that you will, hopefully, be able to use along with those things you supplemented your supplies with. That might be vegetables from a garden, or wild berries from the woods, or fish from a nearby stream.

If funds are short, the best plan is to acquire those basic foods you won't be able to grow, forage, hunt, or fish for. You can grow potatoes, carrots, and lettuce, as well as many other vegetables, but you probably can't grow flour, sugar, or rice.

Even if you have the money to buy storage food according to nutrition charts, consider this. Some of the food sold as emergency storage food is unfamiliar to a lot of people. If you go that route, be sure to sample some of it in "normal" times and make sure you and your family will actually eat it.

Try not to fall into the trap of thinking "Oh, if they're hungry enough, my husband and kids WILL eat it!" Sure, they might ... but then they might not! Children will sometimes absolutely refuse to eat unfamiliar foods no matter how hungry they are. Or they may all gripe and complain so much you'll throw everything away and let them starve!!!!

Consider the transition time after a disaster or other emergency. There will be a lot

of stress going around just from the shock of whatever has happened. It's not a good time to impose a completely different way of eating onto people going through that.

At least store some things everyone is used to, including treats. It can be things like chips, candy bars, marshmallows, or drinks like pop or kool-aid.

Again, don't get hung up on the nutritional value and calorie counts for short-term emergency food storage. We aren't going for a specific goal, we're just trying to buy what we can, to have something, anything, to eat in a time of need. For people who can barely afford groceries for today, it's more important that they buy the foods they can afford, rather than have nothing stored because they can't afford 'real' storage foods.

Chapter 4

Buy what you eat, and rotate it.

In the prepper world there's a saying: Buy what you eat, and eat what you buy. It's good advice. If your family doesn't like beans, or you don't like oatmeal, then don't store it. Don't feel pressured to buy whole wheat and a grinder, if your family doesn't like whole wheat.

This is especially important for the Poverty Prepper, and even more important if you're just starting to build up food storage. Spend what money you have to buy foods you're familiar with, and that you and your family like. Later, when you've stored enough to feel comfortable branching out, then you can add more variety or experiment with new foods.

If you start thinking "well, maybe I should get a bag of whole wheat", then you're going to realize you'll need a wheat grinder. So you'll start looking at reviews and discussions and then it gets complicated. Everyone has different suggestions or opinions. So what happens? You stall and try to make sense of it, and ultimately, you don't buy the wheat or the grinder.

Not to mention that people new to prepping might not want the challenge of finding a place to buy wheat, or to scrounge up money for a grinder.. Rather than push people into foods and equipment they're not familiar with, I prefer to see them get started in a simple way with readily-available, cheap basic food items.

Some people haven't cooked from scratch in a long time, if ever, and just buying a bag of flour will be a big deal for them. They don't need to have the added stress of being told storing flour is bad, that they need whole wheat and a grinder. Someday they might be in a position to buy the wheat and the grinder, but if not, it's okay.

If you need to learn how to cook using ingredients like flour and spices, this is the time to start getting some information about it. There are great websites such as www.allrecipes.com and www.food.com which not only have recipes for everything you can think of, but great easy-to-follow directions.

We're always told to cook from scratch to save money, but if your kitchen isn't well-stocked with the ingredients to do so, your set-up costs and shopping lists will be high. If you continue eating your normal way while stocking up on these basics, eventually you'll have everything you need to cook from scratch without buying it all at once and needing a lot of cash to do it. You can ease into it.

In the short term these foods are adequate in nutrition. In fact, many Americans live on these kinds of food as part of everyday life, and might do better than those who must go through the stress of a diet change during an emergency.

In a long-term situation, you can supplement it, but for now, at least get started. Get some extra food in those cupboards or other storage areas so you have *something* to eat in a crisis.

As you build up your supply of emergency food, use the oldest things first and put newer things behind them. This keeps the food rotated so that nothing gets old enough to become rancid or depleted in nutrition.

Chapter 5

How you're going to stock up

So here's the plan to stock up for tomorrow when you can't afford to eat today. You're going to buy one thing each month. Or maybe two things, depending on the price and how much you have. For around \$20 a month you can begin to build up a supply of extra food, but if you're really low on funds, even \$10 will do it. Most people should be able to spare \$10 a month.

For the first month let's say you buy a 25-lb. bag of flour. Around here a 25-lb. bag of flour can be had for \$8 to \$10 at this time, (winter of 2011/2012)). I won't mention how upset I am that 10 years ago a 25-lb. bag of flour was \$3.99. We'll just go ahead and buy the bag of flour.

Suppose you were able to get it for \$8.99 and you had \$10.00 in your hand for this month's preps. You could buy a 1-lb. can of salt for 50 cents. Or get two and blow the whole remaining dollar! Or just get the one and put the other 50 cents in a jar to start a fund to supplement your food storage money.

If you're working with \$20, you could buy double. Get two 25-lb. bags of flour.

The next month take your \$10 and buy a couple of 10-lb. bags of sugar. Depending how much they cost, you might have to buy a 10-lb. bag and a 4-lb. bag. If you have \$20 to spend, go ahead and get a 25-lb. bag, which is running around \$15 right now. You'll have about \$5 left. You can add it to the fund in the jar, or buy a few bottles of spices for \$1 apiece at places like Dollar Tree.

The third month you can buy beans. If you only have \$10, buy as many 1- or 2-lb. bags as you can, and put any extra money in the food fund jar. If you have \$20, try to get a 25-lb. bag of beans. We're paying around \$15 for 25 lbs. of pinto beans, though I'm sure the price varies. If you have money left... into the fund jar with it.

Any time you have money left, you have the option of either putting it in the jar, or buying spices, salt, or whatever you can squeeze out of the leftover money. Don't forget things like baking soda, vanilla, cornstarch, baking powder, etc. Just one box, can, or jar of those each month, in addition to the main Staple item, will build up a well-stocked pantry in a short time.

The fourth month you should buy rice. If you have \$20 and access to a place like Costco you can buy a 50-lb. bag of white rice and have a couple dollars leftover. If you only have \$10, buy a few smaller bags of rice.

Even if you eat rice or these other foods regularly right now, these that you're buying with your prep money are extra above your regular shopping. If you need to dip into them and eat them now, then do so. But don't look at the extra food on the

shelf as an excuse to overeat!

You don't have to buy these foods in this order. If you think rice is more important than beans, buy that first and put the beans off for another month. Decide what your own preference is. I'd stick to the flour and sugar the first two months, but it's up to you what you want to do. I could live on just those two basics plus salt, supplemented with garden and forage goods!

I don't consider the basics to be potential barter goods. They're too essential to the survival of myself and my family.

We could come up with more basics, and the little extras to buy with any leftover money, but I think you're getting the idea. Remember what I said about buying what your family will eat. If they've never tried it, buy a small amount and prepare it a few different ways to see if it can be added to your storage plan.

When you've built up a supply of emergency food, then you can branch out and start buying things like powdered milk. You may never want to mix it up and drink it, but if times get tough it's nice to have powdered milk to add to cooked or baked foods, or even to make things like pudding. After a few weeks on tight rations it'll taste pretty good!

Again, you'll be buying what you can squeeze out of that month's money, and it might not stretch far. But see if you can fit it in your budget a couple times a year. Cooking oil and shortening are other foods you should add as time goes by.

There's a glaringly obvious lack of essential foods like fruits and vegetables. That's partly because I'm assuming people in most locations can supplement the flour, beans, rice, and sugar with their own home-grown fruits and veggies, or foraged foods. I'll cover that later in this book.

If you know you won't have any fruits or vegetables immediately available in a crisis, then use the small amounts of leftover money each month to buy the cheapest cans of them that you can afford. Even just a couple a month will add up, and you can supplement your basics with them if you need to eat out of your storage.

Some areas have case lot sales, and if one comes along, use that month's money to buy a case or two of a vegetable or fruit your family likes.

It's possible that you will be able to barter some of your basics with friends or neighbors for fruits or vegetables when the need arises. If you've bought a bunch of those \$1 bottles of spices from dollar stores, you might very well be the only one in the neighborhood who still has garlic salt, cinnamon, chili powder, and other spices that enhance the culinary experience! Their value will increase many times over what you paid for them!

Do the same with those 1½-lb. cans of salt I recommended you start stocking up

on! Don't barter the whole can! Measure some out into something smaller, like an empty and washed/dried vitamin bottle, and trade it for a half a dozen tomatoes from a neighbor's garden, or a head of lettuce and some carrots.

It's taking a chance, I know, to assume one could work out a barter arrangement, but it's a possibility.

Chapter 6

What to buy and how to use it

In this chapter I'm going to take each of the basics and discuss how to use it. I'm sure you'll think of other ideas, but there are people who won't have any ideas! In this day and age it's not that uncommon to never have used raw ingredients like flour. That's where we'll start!

Flour

What can you do with flour? You can mix it with baking soda and salt, add a little shortening or similar fat, and a little water, and you'll have biscuits. Pancakes are almost the same recipe except you use cooking oil instead of shortening, and eggs and/or sugar if you have them.

Don't have baking powder? Flour, salt, and fat are the basic ingredients for tortillas. That's about as simple as it gets!

You can allow a flour and water mixture to gather natural yeast from the air and it becomes sourdough starter. It helps to have a friend or a book to give you advice about it, but you can experiment too. Then you can make bread without yeast. If you have things like salt or sugar, you can add them to the bread to make them tastier. But it can be done with just flour and water. Just remember that edible doesn't always mean tasty!

It's not hard to make a decent "white sauce" or gravy with just flour and water. Salt and pepper make it appealing, other spices can make it delicious! Bouillon cubes are a great stock-up food (yes, I know, they're full of sodium and usually have MSG in them!) to add to flour gravy. Or just boil up the bones of whatever critter you've raised, hunted, or fished for, and make your "gravy" or sauce with that and flour.

With flour on hand you can whip up simple cakes, muffins, and cookies. If you stumble across wild berries you could use flour to make a crust (Flour, Salt, Fat, and water are the basic recipe) and have a pie.

No pie pan? Tear off pieces of the dough, flatten them with your hands, put some of the fruit on the dough, fold over and crimp the edges. Now you have a bunch of little "personal" pies! If you have sugar, add a little to the fruit if you want. You might even have a can of cinnamon, which means you could sprinkle some of that on the pies!

If you have meat and/or vegetables you could make a pot pie. Mix them with whatever spices you like, or just with salt and pepper, or nothing at all, and make them like fruit pies.

Be creative. If you don't have the right pan for the job, try a different one. If you need recipes, go to the websites I posted above, or do a search on your own. You might already own cookbooks or can get them from the library.

Sugar

You can add sugar to biscuits or bread to make sweet rolls or muffin-type desserts. Fruit cobblers are yummy, and can be made by adding it to the fruit, then making a sweet biscuit dough to put on top.

Even if you don't have pectin you can make fruit syrups by crushing fruit and boiling it, gently, with sugar. A little bit of cornstarch will help thicken it if you're having problems with thickening.

Sugar has been used as a preservative. Sugar inhibits bacterial growth. It's most often used to preserve fruit, but can also be used to preserve meat. If you're interested in learning more about this, search the internet and you'll find a lot of information about it.

Gather wild rose hips, mint leaves, raspberry leaves, or other wild plants for tea, and sweeten with a little bit of sugar. Some people recommend storing honey because it's "healthier", and no doubt it is, but it's also more expensive. Don't feel bad about storing and using sugar.

When gathering wild plants make SURE you know what you are picking. Don't take a chance or eat anything you've had to use guesswork on to identify. It's not worth getting sick, or worse. This is especially true regarding mushrooms.

Rice

Rice is a very versatile food. You can use it in sweet dishes or main course meat or veggie type dishes. You can mix just about anything with it and it'll taste good.

I'm talking about plain white rice. Brown rice is indeed more nutritious and has fiber, but it's also more expensive and doesn't store as long. The oils in brown rice make it go rancid fairly quickly, unless you can store it in a freezer.

White rice will keep forever if you keep it dry. The 'hows' of storing food like rice will be covered in Chapter 7.

Rice can also be ground into flour. It doesn't have gluten in it, so it doesn't make good yeast-type bread. It's often mixed with other flours, such as potato flour, but can be used by itself.

Here's a pancake recipe from <http://allrecipes.com/recipe/rice-flour-pancakes/>:

Ingredients

- 3 eggs
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup rice flour

Directions

Beat the eggs in a mixing bowl; stir in the milk, vegetable oil, and salt. Whisk in the rice flour until no dry lumps remain. Cover the bowl and let stand at room temperature for 1 hour or in the refrigerator overnight.

Heat a lightly-oiled griddle over medium-high heat. Drop batter by large spoonfuls onto the griddle and cook until bubbles form and the edges are dry. Flip and cook until browned on the other side. Repeat with remaining batter.

Rice is a soft grain, so it can be ground even with rocks if you don't have a grain grinder. Find a large flat rock with a somewhat smooth surface. Now find another rock, about the size of a soup can, that fits comfortably in your hand. Clean the surfaces you will be using. Put a tablespoon or two of flour on the big rock and grind at it with the other one. You can push, pull, slide, make circles, whatever you want, to grind the rice. You'll figure out your favorite method as you go.

Or just cook the rice as grains. There are so many ways to use rice it's hard to make a list. We cook up a big pan of it and use it for many things over a few days. We might fry some up with eggs, onions, and peppers one morning, with a sprinkle of spices on it, and later in the day mix some rice with fruit and cool whip. For dinner we might make a homemade stew out of garden vegetables and venison, and pour it over rice.

Homemade tortillas are very easy to make, as mentioned in the flour section above. You can make burritos or enchiladas, and use rice to stretch the meat, cheese, and/or beans you put inside them. Or you can make them like Hot Pockets, and put rice in along with meat, cheese, and/or vegetables.

Another delicious idea is to mix rice with pie filling or even jam or jelly, and roll it inside tortillas or crepes. Crepes are thin, sweet pancakes that can be rolled around a filling much like a tortilla.

My husband's take on the whole thing is that he would store rice before he would store flour. He said he can cook up rice and add it to everything, such as vegetables from the garden or woods, and "a couple of squirrels". He would need recipes to make things with the flour.

If your line of thinking goes along with that idea, then buy rice first, and store more of it than flour.

Beans

Some people don't like beans, and others don't care for the flatulent side effect of