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5 Ways to Stretch Your Meals SHTF Style

Posted By [Tess Pennington](#)

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As our economy plunges even further into a Depression-like era, we will need to become more creative in our meal preparations. Making due with less ingredients, all while wanting our meals to be just as filling is quite a conundrum. Likewise with our preparedness endeavors, we must get smart in the way we prepare our meals. Learning ways to stretch our food supplies and fill up our stomachs will not only create a more frugal lifestyle, but will also allow us to make the most of our food investments.

Here are five easy ways to make your meals more filling:

Bring on the Fiber!

Fiber rich food sources such as beans and lentils are ideal to have in your food supply. Beans are the quintessential prepper food because they are cheap, nutritious, can store well and will fill you up like no man's business. Throwing in a 1/2 cup of beans to a soup, casserole or cooked as a side dish will fill up those hungry bellies. Some other fiber rich foods you can find in your garden are:

- Corn
- Mushrooms
- Apples
- Pears
- Berries
- Peas
- Oranges
- Dried Figs
- Legumes
- Bamboo
- Chicory

Whole Grains

Some other high fiber food sources are whole grains. Although, the category of whole grains is quite broad, this group has countless more nutrients and more soluble fiber and protein compared to refined grains such as white bread. Fiber and protein are two components that work inside your body to fill you up and keep you full for a longer time.

Whole grains can be ground up into a flour or added to dishes for added texture. For instance, introducing flour or potato dumplings to a soup or stew can be a wonderful additional to a meal. Some whole grain favorites are:

- Wheat
- Flour
- Couscous
- Quinoa
- Oats

Go Nuts

Nuts are another natural food source you could have in your food reserves. Almonds especially are rich in monounsaturated fatty acids and protein. Just one handful of almonds will keep you full for a long time. Really any nut will fill your stomach up and can even be [ground up into a flour](#) ^[1] or added to a dish or a salad to add flavor and crunch. I love adding almonds to my rice dishes.

Save Your Trimmings

Vegetable and meat trimmings can be saved in the freezer to make your own broths and stocks for later use. Toss your peeled veggies in a labeled freezer bag or if you have leftover chicken or meat parts, toss them in the bags. When you are ready, cover with water, and simmer on low for an hour or two to make a delicious soup or stew.

The starches from some “white foods” will bring some sustenance and keep morale up during an extended emergency. Simply by adding a slice of bread or bread crumbs to a meal or a soup, it will instantly thicken the meal so that more can go around. Even the water used to prepare some of the following foods can be reused as a soup thickener because of the starch present in the water.

Some filler foods are:

- Potatoes
- Bread – whole or crumbled
- Crackers
- Pasta
- Rice
- TVP (Textured Vegetable Protein)

The economy is putting us all to the test in terms of making our meager budgets work for us. It's time to get creative with our meals and learn how to bulk up our dishes with our existing food supply.

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[1] ground up into a flour: http://readynutrition.com/resources/prepping-with-wheat-allergies_07112009/

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