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Get Prepped Newsletter: September 9, 2011

Posted By [Tess Pennington](#)

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MESSAGE FROM TESS

Over the last 18-weeks, we have accumulated enough food and water for a month-long emergency. This is a great start at being prepared! This week, we are taking our preparedness one step closer towards long-term preparedness and will begin concentrating our efforts on those needed items to sustain us for longer-term emergencies. That includes bulking up our emergency food supplies, accumulating needed tools, and learning those vital skill sets to help us become more self reliant. So stay tuned because we are going to be delving into a lot of information in the coming weeks.

Did you notice the mix-up in the *Get Prepped* newsletter last week? I put the wrong week in the 52-weeks series. To clear up any confusion, we are officially on week 19. Please feel free to peruse the archive of previous newsletters to catch up. You can [view](#)^[1] them at Ready Nutrition.

If you haven't already, follow us on [Twitter](#)^[2] or see what we are doing on [Facebook](#)^[3]. I love to interact with my readers, because, after all, we are all in this together! Don't forget to share the prepared love and invite your friends and family to read [Ready Nutrition](#)^[4] and help build our community.

Regards,

Tess Pennington

PREP OF THE WEEK

Week 19 of 52: Food Storage Tools

When emergencies last longer than originally intended, your basic needs such as food and water become the highest priority. Food and water security is one of the greatest advantages for being prepared for longer-term emergencies. In order to understand the importance of having a long-term food supply, you need to begin seeing food as a [necessary investment](#)^[5] to your family's well being. When I first began storing a long-term food supply 3 years ago, the price of food was still relatively cheap for most of the foods I bought. Because of that investment that I made, I am still living off the food that I bought 3 years ago and have saved a lot of money as a result of the increased food prices.

It is best to store dry goods for long-term storage. Dry foods that we typically see in our pantry such as grains, rice, beans, oats, wheat, corn kernels, powdered milk, sugar, salt, baking powder, etc. are the best types of foods to store. Also, having an understanding of how long certain foods last can help you in your food supply endeavors. This [guideline](#)^[6] can help you determine how long your stored foods will last.

Usually, foods that are purchased at a grocery store are packaged for short-term use. Therefore, if these foods will become part of your long-term food supply, they will need to be re-packaged. Since there are many techniques used for re-packaging food, I will discuss the

techniques that I use in my own preparedness supplies. Feel free to do some research on your own to learn different ways to storing food.

- **Multi-barrier system** – Many preppers like to choose a multi-barrier approach to store their food. This barrier system will keep natural elements such as sunlight, moisture and air out of the container when sealed. The multi-barrier method uses Mylar bags (also called food liners) to initially seal the dry food and then the Mylar bags are placed in a food grade plastic container. There are different sizes of Mylar bags that can be used. I have small Mylar bags to use for my short-term food sources and large Mylar bags that fit into 5-gallon plastic containers to use for my longer-term food sources.
- **Vacuum sealing method** – I use this method for short-term food storage by vacuum sealing dry food in food sealer plastic packaging and then I add the sealed plastic packages to Mylar bags. Then, I seal the Mylar bag. This is a little more work, but when I go to grab the food, I know that I have taken every precaution at ensuring it's quality.
- **Mylar bags technique** – Some people only use Mylar bags to store their foodstuffs. I use this approach in my short-term food supply because the food is usually in smaller quantities and will be used more frequently. However, there is some risk to using this method because it can leave the food supply vulnerable to natural elements and also to insects.

To learn more about sealing food appropriately, [click here](#) ^[7].

In order to have these foods stored properly, you need to right tools. The tools that I have suggested below are used for short and long-term food storage preparation. These necessary investments will ensure that your food sources are protected from your [food's worst enemies](#) ^[8].

Food Storage Containers – Any large quantities of food that you plan to store indefinitely should be stored in food grade containers. These containers will not transfer any non-food chemicals into the food, nor are there any chemicals within the container that are hazardous to humans. Typically a food grade container has a #2 by the recycle symbol or the acronym "HDPE" stamp on the bottom (HDPE stands for "high density polyethylene"). Before any food is to be stored, clean the containers with soapy water, rinse and dry thoroughly. 5-gallon plastic containers are the most popular amongst those who store bulk quantities of food. Also, ensure that you have an air tight lid.

Mylar Food Liners – Research has shown that over time, slow amounts of oxygen seep through the walls of plastic containers. Consequently, over time natural elements, and even insects can find a way inside the container. To add additional protection, adding a food liner, such as Mylar bags will ensure that there are multiple barriers for the food to be protected in. These food liners come in an assortment of sizes.

Food Sealers – Food vacuum sealers remove and lock out air and moisture using specially-designed bags and canisters. This ensures that the longevity of the foods are preserved for as long as possible. Using food sealers are a great way to ensure that all oxygen is removed from food sources before it is placed in a long-term environment.

Oxygen Absorbers – Using oxygen absorbers greatly prolongs the shelf life of stored food. Because it absorbs the oxygen from the container, it inhibits the growth of aerobic pathogens and molds. Oxygen absorbers begin working the moment they are exposed to oxygen. Therefore, it is best to work as efficiently as possible. Oxygen absorbers come in different sizes, so pay attention to the size needed for the container. Typically, 2,000 cc's of oxygen absorbers should be added to one 5-gallon bucket. Oxygen absorbers are not edible, not toxic and does not effect the smell and taste of the product.

Desiccant Packets – Desiccant packets moderate the moisture level when placed in a food container. *They do not absorb the moisture.* Please note that desiccant is not edible. If the packet somehow breaks open and spills onto the stored food, the entire contents of the container must be thrown away. There are certain food items that desiccant should not be added to, specifically: flour, sugar and salt. These items need a certain amount of moisture to stay activated, and if desiccant is added to it, they will turn into a hard brick.

Heat Clamp – A person can use a heat clamp to seal the Mylar bags, or they can seal their Mylar bags with a simple at home iron put on the highest setting. The heat clamp is usually around \$85 and is specially made for sealing Mylar bags. If the home iron method is used, ensure that you use a hard surface such as a cutting board or book to iron on and slowly go over the Mylar bag. Note: if using an at home iron to seal Mylar, this method must be done gently and slowly or the Mylar will be damaged.

Where To Purchase These Products?

- [The Ready Store](#) ^[9] – For smaller scale purchases
- [Amazon](#) ^[10] – For smaller scale purchases
- [Ropak](#) ^[11] – For large quantity purchases
- [Sorberent Systems](#) ^[12] – For large quantity purchases
- Latter Day Saint Food Storage Warehouses
- Call around to different restaurants around your area and see if they have any food grade containers with lids that you can have. Typically, restaurants are happy to give these away as they have no need for these containers after they are used. This could save you a lot of money investing in food grade containers.

Storing food is a continual process of using, rotating and resupplying. If a person invests in a food supply, the food should be used and more food purchased to resupply the storage shelf. Think of your food supply as a small store where the foods in the front has the shortest expiration date and the ones in the back have the longest.

A little preventative maintenance can go along way in terms of food storage. Understanding the different methods for storing your food supply for short or long term storage will help you get the most out of your food investment.

Preps To Buy:

- Mylar Bags (in different sizes)
- Oxygen Absorbers
- Desiccants
- Plastic Food Storage Containers
- Food Vacuum Sealer with plastic liners
- Heat Clamp or Iron

Action Items:

1. Find a safe, dry area in the home to store your longer-term food supplies. Those who are tight on space can use creative methods such as shelving units high in their closets, extra bedrooms or closets. As long as the space is dry, is free from temperature fluctuations, and is large enough to store the foods, it can be used. *It is best not to use a garage or attic as a food storage area due to the drastic temperature fluctuations that occur in these areas of the home.*
2. Make a list of what types of long-term foods you plan on storing for your long-term food supply. Those that have family members with special dietary needs should do further research on which types of foods they will need.
3. Practice using your food storage tools on short-term foods to ensure that you understand how to tools work.

WHAT WE'RE UP TO

In Our Home:

What a difference lower temperatures can make! My energy level has doubled now that the temperatures have gotten below the triple-digits. I see people walking around the

neighborhood more, and they seem friendlier too! Autumn is my most favorite season and I am happy to see it making it's way to us. We have survived the dog days of summer.

Family Preps:

This week, I took a break from buying any new preps. Instead, I have been working on cleaning up my house and doing some needed Fall cleaning.

In the Garden:

I finally moved all the compost that I made over the summer into my garden plots. I also added some green sand and organic fertilizer to start my Fall gardens. This weekend, I am planting some broccoli, green beans, squash, and beet seeds in jiffy pots. Once the weather gets cool enough, I will start setting them out.

RECENT ARTICLES

[30 Most Popular Herbs for Natural Medicine](#) ^[13]

STATS AND FACTS

Those that are beginning to store food for longer-term emergencies may be unsure of how to correctly seal food. I can assure you that the more you do it, the easier it gets. There are some great YouTube tutorials on sealing long-term food storage that you can watch, or you can see me demonstrating how to seal up food in this [video](#) ^[14].

Follow these 10 easy steps when sealing food in Mylar bags:

1. Place the Mylar bag into the 5-gallon container.
 2. Add your oxygen absorbers or desiccant to the bottom of the bag to ensure all sections of the container are protected. Also, remember you will be adding an absorber at the top of the Mylar bag as well.
 3. Begin pouring contents into the Mylar bag.
 4. When you have poured the contents into the Mylar bag and have hit the middle section of the being filled, shake the Mylar bag from time to time to make sure the food gets into the crevices of the bag.
 5. Continue adding food to the Mylar bag until you hit your desired amount. I usually stop 3/4 to the top.
 6. Next, begin folding the Mylar down in order to get trapped air to escape out the gap.
 7. Once the air is out, begin sealing the Mylar. A person can use a [heat clamp](#) ^[15] or they can seal their Mylar bags with a simple at home iron put on the highest setting. If the home iron method is used, make sure you have a hard surface such as a cutting board or book to iron on and slowly go over the Mylar bag. Note: this method must be done *gently and slowly* or the Mylar will be damaged. Seal straight across the Mylar bag in a straight line. Leave the last 2-3 inches unsealed in order to push the last remaining air out of the bag.
 8. Once the trapped air has been pushed out, seal the last 2-3 inches.
 9. Push the sealed Mylar bag into the container. Optional: Add another oxygen absorber on top of the sealed Mylar bag. Place the lid on the container and make sure the lid is on completely.
 10. Store in a dark storage area, where temperatures, moisture levels and sunlight do not fluctuate.
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LETTERS TO TESS

One of the perks of my job at Ready Nutrition is to address questions and/or concerns that you may have with your prepping endeavors. Feel free to ask anything that is on your mind because no question is too big or small. You can email questions to:

getprepped@readynutrition.com ^[16]

This week's question addresses prepping with wheat allergies:

Tess,

I am allergic to the gluten in wheat products. I want to be prepared, but do not know what substitutes I can use for storing wheat. Can you give me some suggestions?

Thanks so much!

Linda

Answer:

Hi Linda,

Wheat allergies are one of the top 10 allergies in the United States, so you are not alone. There are many gluten-free alternatives that you can store for your long-term food supply. In an [article](#) ^[17] that I wrote on this subject, I listed the following as alternatives to wheat:

- Arrowroot Flour- This type of flour is ground from the root of the Arrowroot plant. It is tasteless and ideal to use as a thickener.
- Brown Rice Flour – Brown rice flour has a higher nutritional base compared to white rice flour. It is much heavier in comparison to white rice flour. And is suggested not to buy this in bulk as it is better used when it is fresh.
- Buckwheat Flour – The small seeds of the rhubarb plant are ground to make this flour type. It has a strong nutty flavor that tends to overpower itself in the recipes.
- Corn Flour – Corn is ground into a very fine powder. It has a bland taste and is therefore good to use for multiple recipes.
- Corn Meal – Cornmeal is much heavier and courser than corn flour.
- Nut Meals – Such as almonds, hazelnuts or walnuts can provide rich flavor as well as a good flour substitute for cookies and cakes. Their shelf life is brief and should be stored correctly. Most nut meals require a bonding agent such as eggs. Note: chestnut flour has a longer shelf life.
- Potato Flour – potato flour is not potato starch flour. It does have a stronger flavor compared to other wheat alternatives. Due to the heaviness, a little can go a long way. The shelf life for this type of flour is not very long, so long term storage could be a problem.
- Potato Starch Powder – This has a lighter potato flavor which is hardly detectable in recipes. This type of flour keeps very well.
- Quinoa Flour – “The Mother Seed” as the Incas call this has a large variety of vitamins and is high in protein. Quinoa flour is not readily available in many stores, so locating this could pose a problem.
- Soy Flour – This flour is a fine powder ground from soy beans. It adds a pleasant texture to different recipes and is also high in protein and a good vitamin source.
- Tapioca Flour – Tapioca flour adds chewiness to baking and is a good thickening agency. It also stores well.
- White Rice Flour – this type flour does not have a high nutritional value. The taste is bland and ideal for recipes that require light texture. The shelf life is adequate as long as it is stored properly.

Keep in mind that the consistency and taste of these flours will be different compared to wheat. Also, more of the alternative flours will need to be added to recipes. Try substituting 1 cup wheat flour with one of the following:

Barley 1-1/4 cups

Oat 1-1/3 cups

Rice 3/4 cup
Soy 1-1/3 cups
Corn 1 cup
Potato 3/4 cup
Rye 1-1/3 cups
Tapioca 1 cup

I hope this is helpful. Thanks so much for your question, Linda.

Regards,

Tess

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- [8] food's worst enemies: http://readynutrition.com/resources/meet-your-emergency-foods-worst-enemies_06042011/
- [9] The Ready Store: <http://www.thereadystore.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=food+buckets>
- [10] Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/s/?ie=UTF8&keywords=wondermill&tag=googhydr-20&index=aps&hvadid=2692217161&ref=pd_sl_278c6onjl_b#/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=mylar+bags&rh=i%3Aaps%2Ck%3Amylar+bags
- [11] Ropak: <http://www.linpac.com/Our-Companies/LINPAC-Ropak/>
- [12] Sorbent Systems: <http://www.sorbentsystems.com/>
- [13] 30 Most Popular Herbs for Natural Medicine: http://readynutrition.com/resources/30-most-popular-herbs-for-natural-medicine_06092011/
- [14] video: http://readynutrition.com/resources/fox-news-demonstration-long-term-food-storage-basics-how-to-pack-rice-wheat-beans-and-dry-goods_04042011/
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