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Three-Month Supply

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A few years ago the counsel to gather a three-month supply of food you use on a regular basis came out. A lot of people were confused by this. Many thought it meant that we only needed to have a three-month supply of emergency food. Scratch that idea if you are one of those people, and let me clarify this for you.

1. Nothing has changed with the counsel to have a year's supply of long-term food storage. While some of your long-term storage can be used in this 3-month supply, this supply is above and beyond some barrels of wheat and maybe some honey or powdered milk.
2. Unlike something you might put away and almost forget about, the three-month supply should be used and rotated regularly so it stays current and it is normal for your family to eat it. That means it is more like having your own mini grocery store in your pantry, storage room, or wherever you decide is best to keep it. Just be sure that it is easily accessible so you can and will use it.
3. While some people like to count their freezer full of meat or other things as a three-month supply, that is a little risky unless you have the ability to quickly preserve the food in your freezer in a crisis or in the event there is an extended loss of electricity.

Why a Three-Month Supply?

Why has a three-month supply been added to the counsel we have been given in the past? The Humanitarian and Relief departments

of the Church have found that many people have needed a three-month supply of foods they are used to most when they have needed to use their food storage. Here are some things that might be resolved or worked around within 3 months. These things happen all the time to people around us and are much more likely than a long-term disaster or end-of-days calamity.

- Local or short-term natural disaster
- Loss of employment
- Illness or disability
- Unexpected financial difficulty or expenses
- Local strike in trucking or other services
- Social unrest in an area

When these types of things happen life has to keep going. These times can be stressful enough and people don't need the extra stress of focusing on surviving only on long-term storage. Being able to get by for three months without depending on the government, the Church, or plunging into debt is part of being self-reliant and preserves more options and agency for the people involved. Consider what our society would be like if everyone was prepared with a supply of food, clothing, and financial reserves.

“We Don't Eat Like That!”

I hear this a lot, and I understand this comment, especially after I made two weeks' worth of menus using only shelf-stable foods. I don't eat like that either. People did before 1960, but we are so blessed with all kinds of fresh foods at our grocery stores as well as refrigerators and freezers to keep it in, that many people (especially in a stake like ours) seldom open a can or box. They buy meat, produce, dairy, and bakery items once or twice a week and they may even eat out often.

Still, this is counsel from those who represent the Lord. A few years ago when I decided to reevaluate my food storage and preparedness I wrestled with this issue. I concluded that I had three choices. They were:

1. I could blow off the counsel we have been given and just keep doing what I was doing and hope that I didn't need such a supply. After all, I had lived along the Wasatch Front for more

years than I want to write and we had never had a serious earthquake or crisis.

2. I could buy a three-month supply. Then I could donate what was close to expiration every year to the food bank and buy fresh again at the next case-lot sale just to be obedient.
3. I could buy a three-month supply and find ways to work it into our regular meals while replacing it as I used it.

I chose the third option. We do not eat food-storage-style all the time. In fact, I have to really work at using my supply before things expire and that often gives me at least a year or two. It does take effort, but I also love that I don't have to run to the grocery store every time I want something I didn't buy when I planned my menus. While it did take adjustment, I find we seldom buy prepared foods or eat out now. It actually saves me money and time to have and use a supply like this. In the end, I think it is worth the hassle. You might like a different option better, but in past counsel, the Church leaders had a desire for us to learn to cook with basic foods. There are some good arguments for that too.

A Great Place To Start

On ProvidentLiving.org the Church recommends starting your food storage with a three-month supply. It is a good idea to get this under control and then build a long-term supply if you are just starting out or revamping. This type of supply is the most practical, useable, and can be built up as quickly as you can afford in money and space. Even a couple of extra cans of food a week will add up and help you to be prepared. When you buy a can of spaghetti sauce or soup, buy an extra. It's already something you're using. Watch for sales as you go along and you will actually pay less for that extra can than always buying it at full price when you need it.

What Do I Store for a Three-Month Supply?

Store things you and your family like to eat! This is the fun part. A short-term supply is a lot different than a long-term supply. You can store anything that is shelf-stable. These are the things on the inside aisles of most grocery stores (excluding the freezers). That includes a lot of things. You can store canned, bottled, and packaged foods, condiments, mixes, dried foods, even cocoa and chocolate! You just need to be aware of how long they last and

make sure you use them in time. While some things like canned goods can last two or even three years, crackers and nuts last only a few months.

As you are choosing foods, be aware of variety and nutrition. Fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats can all be found in short-term shelf-stable items. Contrary to belief, it is not necessarily expensive to have good nutrition.

***Special note—If you store packaged foods, I highly recommend that you put the packages in airtight containers like buckets to protect from rodents and bugs. You can remove the package from a box and tape the instructions to the side. I often put things in large plastic PET 1 bottles or canning jars. It avoids a lot of problems to do this. If one jar gets weevil or moths, it doesn't easily spread to your whole pantry. Dollar stores have some colored, clear bottles called refrigerator bottles that hold about 6 cups and work well to store things like pasta, rice, dried fruit, beans, granola, and packets. I put things like cake mixes, Jell-o, pudding, cold cereal, chocolate chips, and coconut in buckets with a removable tight-fitting lid or gamma lid. You want to be able to put the lid on and take it off easily when dealing with items you are supposed to be using. Although it is a bit more expensive to buy the 2–2½ gallon buckets I love this size to work with.

Notes from Red Hen

Dear Speckle,

It is a good thing that spring is almost here because we are almost out of our stockpile of food. We have just enough seed to plant this year. The worms have come out with the rain, but it is still kind of cold to find good bugs. Personally, I am not comfortable having only enough seed to plant for one year because things can happen to a single crop and then you can starve for the next year. I am going to work this year to have enough seed that we can have a backup if something goes wrong.

Has your situation improved since the farmer's son failed in his duty to care for you?

— Love, Red

