



April 2020

Three-Month Supply of Food

There are two parts to food storage that we have been asked to prepare. First, we have been asked to build up a three-month supply or 90-days' worth of food we eat on a regular basis. Second, we have been asked to build up a year's supply of long-term storage items that we can use to sustain life. So what is the difference between the two? What is the best way to follow this council?

The three-month supply is more inclusive of a variety of foods that can be stored. These include canned goods, dried or freeze-dried goods, bottles, and boxes. If you consider most of the aisles in a grocery store (not the fresh and frozen sections) then you have an idea of what you can store. Some people count the things they have in their freezer. That is OK as long as you have a plan for what you will do if power goes out. Basically, if something happened so that you could not go to the grocery store or the restaurant you would have food, and life could go on as usual for three months while you discover some ways to add to your diet. The reasons you may need such a supply are varied, such as a pandemic, civil unrest, transportation difficulties, natural disaster, loss of income or tight finances, famine, loss of power... This supply is meant to hold you until normalcy can be reestablished or until you can find ways to supplement your supply such as a garden, raising small animals, or assistance from outside the area can be distributed. While you can and should use items from your year's supply as you use and rotate the things you have stored in the three-month supply, the year's supply is different.

The year's supply is made up of the basics that store a long time and that can help sustain life. This includes grains, legumes, salt, oil, milk powder, and sugar. These things can be stored a long time if they are stored properly (20–30 years in cans—much less in buckets), and are basic things that would be difficult to get during a serious long-term crisis. It is best to plan on growing some of your own food to supplement such a supply. Those who lived through wars and the Great Depression found ways to grow fruits and vegetables or raise chickens, goats, and rabbits, but they did not have a good way to obtain the basics listed in a long-term supply. These were the things that were rationed. Next month we will talk more about this.

How to Build a 90-Day Supply

1. Figure out what you can buy in the aisles of the grocery store that your family will eat. Many experts recommend that you actually find 10–12 meals (each for breakfast, lunch, and dinner) that you can make from shelf-stable goods that your family likes, and store the ingredients for these (at least 10 of each). Make a list of these meals and the recipes as needed in a notebook or something that you have hands-on access to. Make a list of all the ingredients you need to fix each meal. This is kind of a lot of work up front, but it does save time in the end and can be an efficient way to have what you need without over-spending or letting things go bad. ***This is a really good thing to be doing right now when you are fixing meals at home and thinking about what you would like to have that you don't, or what is working well. Consider how you could make the meals balanced and nutritious. This makes sure the bases are covered and you have all that you need to fix meals for 90–100 days.
2. Find a place in your home where you can store these goods in an organized manner. I have seen people use under-bed plastic boxes, designated pantry shelves, a special inexpensive cabinet in the kitchen, the closet of their guest room, or other space they can spare. I personally recommend having two spaces for this, one that you are taking items from

as you use them, and one that is for adding new ones to as you buy to restock the supply. That way you don't buy and use new goods while neglecting the first batch. Focus on using all of the first batch of items up before you start using the restocked ones. Keep a list of what you use so you know what to buy at the store next time. ***This is also a good preparedness activity for right now when you shouldn't be out much. If the place you choose to store your goods is cool and dark it will help things store better and longer.

3. When steps 1 and 2 are organized, you are ready to start buying the things on your list. Please note that we are not counseled to panic, go crazy, and go into debt to gather supplies. If a lot of people are grabbing supplies in huge amounts it causes others to panic and buy unwisely. Soon families are unable to gather the things they need and use. Sometimes this even inspires laws that prohibit storing of food. This has happened in other countries and places. Be considerate as to how you gather your supplies. The best practice is to collect the things you have planned at a reasonable pace by adding what your budget will allow each month. You are more likely to use and incorporate the food you buy into your regular diet if you do it in a steady and consistent manner rather than all at once.
4. *Once you have these meals organized in your storage or pantry area it is really nice to have them as a go-to when you are just trying to get your family fed and you haven't had a chance to shop, when money is a little tight at the end of the month, or you want something quick without thinking hard about what to fix. When my family was young and I was trying to practice some of these principles, my favorite go-to meal was spaghetti. Other people like tuna casserole or chili. Having your three-month supply doesn't mean that you have to live on these meals all the time. Most things in your supply will last a year or more. If you use these meals at about the rate of two or three a week and replace the things you have used when you shop, you will be able to keep this supply rotated well and it will be easier than you might imagine to keep a three-month supply manageable. You will find that

some things store longer than others. That doesn't mean you can't use the things that last 6 months. It just means that you buy them and use them more often or put them on a list of extras. I like to have a bag of marshmallows on hand for Rice Crispy treats. These are extras, and I have to make sure that I use and replace them within about 6 weeks to two months.

5. It is nice to buy in case-lot sales, but if your family is not using the things you buy regularly enough to use them up this may not be the most practical thing to do in the end.

Some extra tips to three-month supply:

- It is wise to keep anything you are putting on a pantry shelf in containers that don't allow weevil, moths, or mice to multiply and spread through your pantry or other area. Bags and boxes are not good for storage areas. This includes unprotected Mylar. Please see the container section under April in the 2019 preparedness guide on ProvidentPapers.com. Pests can destroy the things you have in storage quickly.
- Organized rotation is the key to being successful at maintaining a supply at the lowest cost and the most benefit to you.
- Times of crisis are not good times to cut calories. In fact, you need the best nutrition you can get. Many people also recommend planning dessert or treats like cookies into your list of items, and have enough to make something once a week or for special occasions like a birthday. (That is 12–15 treats)
- Make this plan a part of your life forever going forward. If you do, then you will not need to worry whether you have what you need if something like we are experiencing with COVID-19 comes up.
- You can't store fresh produce very well. Dehydrated vegetables are more palatable to some people than canned. I have put an article in the recipe section of [ProvidentPapers.com](https://www.providentpapers.com) to help you. Sprouts can be a nice addition to what you have within four days.

Paper/Disposable Goods Supplement

I have never seen anything published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints that asks us to store a year's supply, or even a three-month supply, of paper or plastic goods. As I have observed what has happened in the COVID-19 crisis as people have fought over toilet paper and all of the paper goods shelves have consistently been stripped empty, I think this is a topic that should be addressed. I have even seen some "emergency experts" recommend storing a lot of these things.

One of my friends in elementary school was really excited when she got a box of Baggies for her birthday. I think we all have disposable goods that we really like. However, these things are luxuries—not necessities. They should not be the first things we store or grab in an emergency.

While you may want to store enough toilet paper to last your family for maybe 6 weeks, and paper plates, cups, and utensils; or garbage bags, diapers, feminine products, and sandwich bags may be good to have in the event that we have a very short-term need for them (like your water or electricity being out for a day or two), paper goods should not be high on your priority list of things to have for a year or even 100 days. Here are some reasons why.

1. They take up a lot of space. If your house is so big that you can afford to dedicate space to a year's supply of paper goods without causing difficulty for your family it is unusual. There are usually better and more cost-effective uses for your home space. It is more important to have food, water, clothing, bedding, hygiene, and first aid supplies.
2. Disposable goods are fine to use as long as there are active sanitation services. However, in the event that we do not have regular and reliable garbage pick-up they become a liability. They often pile up in garbage bags attracting animals (like rats, mice, raccoons, skunks, then snakes...) bugs, bacteria, and stink. This becomes a serious sanitation issue.

3. The second method of disposal that people think of is burning. We live too close together for everyone to be burning their trash, especially plastics, printed or coated paper, or Styrofoam products—especially if they are combined with food or human waste. This could easily become a serious hazard that threatens all of us as well as our environment. Burning trash in a residential area is not appropriate even in a disaster. We live too close together, and if everyone did that, the amount of chemicals released becomes a serious matter, and even health or life threatening. Here are a few references to this problem in case you want to read about it:

<http://parakore.maori.nz/assets/Resources/How-To-Recycle/homeburning-plastics.pdf>

<https://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2018/03/31/burning-plastic-waste-harmful-to-health.html>

<https://www.no-burn.org/burning-plastic-incineration-causes-air-pollution-dioxin-emissions-cost-overruns/>

4. Fire is one of our greatest threats as a secondary disaster. It is illegal to have an open fire during many parts of the year. It is illegal in Alpine to have an open fire without a permit, in certain areas, or after dark. Think what a nightmare it would be to have a fire start in any crisis where we do not have adequate water, broken water lines, or our services are limited. This is a time to be extremely careful with any kind of burning, not a time to increase our risks and problems by using and burning paper products and waste. This is not like camping.

So what can you do about all the needs paper products cover? I have to admit that paper towels and zip-lock bags are two of my modern pleasures. Back when I was pinching pennies until they screamed, these were my splurges. However, in a crisis where we don't have garbage service they will become an extreme luxury for special circumstances at our house.

Many people throughout the world are looking at alternatives to disposable products. In some areas it has become a social issue to convert from disposables. That makes it easy to find reusable

products for sale on line, and also instructions to make them. There are all kinds of good resources and advice for alternatives on line, and many people are using them every day and liking them. Here are just a few to think about. My recommendation is to store a minimum of paper products and then have the reusable alternatives tucked away for a time of need, or simply practice using them now.

Diapers—Washable diapers have come a long way since I had kids. They can actually be cute and very handy.

Feminine products—Everyone has their favorites. Glad rags and menstrual cups are two ideas of backups to put in storage.

Toilet paper—One preparedness expert suggests cutting up old phone books or black and white catalogues and tearing out a page at a time, wadding it up to soften it. A friend of mine suggested a squirt bottle and soft, washable rags. The trial size of dish soap bottles are a good size for such a portable bidet.

Paper plates and plastic utensils—It is a good idea to store mess kits or a pie tin and inexpensive metal utensils for each family member. There are washable plastic cups or even a vegetable can to drink out of in a pinch.

Plastic bags—baskets, buckets, reusable sandwich bags and drawstring bags....

Plastic containers—A plate and bowl work well to form a covered dish. Sometimes I think back to what my grandmother used or what I have seen in other countries.

I have to admit that I like many of the plastic conveniences. However, we are smart. We can use other things if we need to. This is a good time to consider what you can do to be prepared while avoiding buying a mountain of disposables from the paper aisle.