



Building Up Your Food Supply



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Next to water, which we covered in our first installment, food is bar none the second most important consideration during a survival situation, perhaps with shelter taking a close third place. This week we'll expand upon the concepts that we introduced to you in the Family Survival System eBook. For those that haven't seen it, we'll give you a little background.

As with water, it's recommended by several federal and countless state and local agencies that each home possesses an emergency food supply. Like water, the number usually thrown out there is 72 hours or three days, but if you think about that for a moment, that should be as much food as a normal family home has on hand anyways! Three days worth of food isn't much at all, but remarkably, some families continue to keep the pantry bare and head to the store every other day to buy food for dinner. As a nation, we've really gone away from being self sufficient, and the trickle down effect goes all the way down to our food, and more importantly, our food supply.

To understand why three days worth of food in a survival situation is nowhere near adequate, you need to understand the way our supermarkets are stocked. Supermarket chains, on average, *also keep a three day food supply* of the most common items they keep on their shelves. Things like milk, bread, eggs, meat, and other perishables are stocked about three days deep, and that's it. There are a few reasons for this:

- The American shopper desires ultra fresh food on a near constant basis.
- An elaborate supply chain keeps supermarkets stocked via massive central distribution centers which house the stock for multiple supermarkets in a given area. These distribution centers rely on a daily fleet of diesel powered trucks that need to deliver the food to the supermarkets so they can restock.
- Due to the efficiency of modern food distribution, a JIT (just in time) model has developed over time whereby at any given time a great portion of the nation's food is currently rolling down an interstate highway on its way to a supermarket. If that truck doesn't make it, *the supermarket will be severely impacted.*

It's a great system when it works, but it can easily be overwhelmed by natural or manmade disasters, acts of terrorism, or a multitude of other events. The message we are trying to send to you is that *you should not rely on your local supermarket to feed you during a disaster* – they may not have the food!

HOW SHELVES CAN BE PICKED CLEAN AS A BONE

Even a casual trip to the local supermarket is likely to dazzle and amaze you with the sheer quantity of food available. In America, we eat like no other nation. We've never (at least in recent memory) gone hungry, but we are simply one panic event away from bare shelves. Here's how it happens:

- Supermarkets study intense data and conduct extensive population studies before they decide to put a store up in a certain neighborhood. Once they are convinced steady, reliable traffic will visit the store, they build it.
- When the initial shelves are stocked initially, they will put a “standard” amount of food in the stores based upon the performance of other stores, their historical data, and some educated guesses.
- Since this is a new store, they’ll probably have a buffer of sorts in the stock room in the back, just in case there’s a shortage.
- As the store matures, management will finely tune the ordering process as real data comes in. They’ll see what people actually buy, and then they will stock accordingly.
- Store managers and stocking personnel operate on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, they must have enough food on hand to sell, plus a little bit extra in case there’s a rush. On the other, they can’t stock too much extra food – first off, they only have so much room on the shelves, with very little in the back, and also, they don’t want the food to get too stale. They need constant turnover to keep everyone happy, and thus they play a fine balancing act of keeping stock on hand, keeping it fresh, and keeping new stock coming.
- A disaster or panic attack throws a massive wrench into the works. Even if the store isn’t affected by the disaster itself, it will soon be affected by the ramifications.
- Remember when we spoke about the population studies? Well to simplify the topic, supermarkets are set up so that the area’s populace can come and shop at the store one or two days per week. So in essence, *some* of the local people come to the store *some* of the time.

- Again, a disaster changes all of that when *all* of the local people come to the store at once. You see, a store is only set up to feed a tiny fraction of the local populace on a regular basis, and it must be supplied constantly to keep the illusion of full shelves alive!
- So a disaster strikes, and suddenly people go into panic mode. They descend upon a store, max out credit cards, fill their carts, and totally purge the store of anything useful. Resupply isn't usually possible because the disaster often affects the highways that the supply trucks need to travel on in order to deliver food. Sometimes, a disaster even affects fuel production to the point where a fuel shortage exists and trucks can't run!

In short, while you do your local shopping regularly and the store seems to be well stocked, it really is a persistent illusion. **You need to have your own stockpile!**

HOW ABOUT FEMA OR THE GOVERNMENT?

Besides blindly trusting in the supermarkets, people put lots of faith in the government for help. Truly, the government does have vast food resources in place, with entire warehouses full of emergency food and other supplies. After all, it is the government's job to plan for the needs of its citizens, but just *how many* of its citizens it can feed leaves to be seen. Like the supermarket, the government is banking on the fact that the whole nation will not be affected at once – they too can only feed some of the people, some of the time. They don't have the ability to feed the whole country – or even a state – *or even the residents of a large city for any extended period at all.*

There are other disadvantages to depending on government handouts:

- Probably 90% of the population has the idea that the government is going to feed them. You'll have plenty of competition!
- Government response to a disaster is always delayed by several days to several weeks, depending on the scope of the disaster.
- Governments tend to issue disaster style rations rather than real food. It'll keep you alive, but it's hardly nutritious.

WHAT WE ARE SUGGESTING

What we're saying is pretty straight forward – you should have a *minimum three month supply of food* on hand at home. If your jaw is once again dropping much like it did with the water supply, don't worry just yet. And on that note, why are we recommending a 30 day water supply and a three month food supply? There are two reasons:

- Keeping three months worth of water on hand isn't physically possible for most suburban or urban families from a space perspective. It weighs too much and it takes up too much space unless you have purpose built tanks.
- Water is available for filtration and purification if you know where to look for it. Thus, you need not necessarily store it - it can be found.

The last point here is the clincher. Take a walk through the bush. You are far more likely to come across some water to drink than some readily edible food. Most people know where the local lake, stream, or river is, and that water can

be purified. Most people, however, don't have a clue on how to find or grow their own food. **Therefore, you need three months worth of food.**

So what does a three month food supply look like? Does it look like three months worth of your normal grocery shopping?

Not really, actually. The food you normally buy is mostly made up of perishables, which of course doesn't work from a survival standpoint. How about six months worth of MREs (Meals Ready to Eat) or freeze dried survival food? Well for starters, military rations are designed specifically for super active troops fighting battles, which you may or may not be. They are not designed to be eaten regularly – i.e. for weeks on end. They are designed to be supplemented with normal food. Even in the military (ask me how I know) the MRE is normally a two times per day meal, with the third meal of the day usually a hot meal. The only time 3 meals per day of MREs happens is on things like multi day reconnaissance missions, and similar operations, then the boys go back to the FOB (Forward Operating Base) or COP (Combat Outpost) and resume eating normal food (or what passes for normal food in the military!).

Freeze dried foods suffer from the fact that they need water in order to be made, which is a fatal flaw. *You do not want a "just add water" style food when there is no water!* This is why we suggested canned foods and rice in our main guide. To refresh, the list we selected was:

1. Canned Soup
2. Canned Meat
3. Canned Vegetables
4. Canned Fruit
5. Rice

Remember, we picked these because:

- Cans last practically forever
- These are the foods your family most likely already eats some of
- The canned foods are mostly packed in water, meaning not only do you NOT have to add water, but they also provide a refreshing drink in every can as well.
- It's inexpensive to stockpile food in this manner compared to buying purpose built survival food – consider that a can of soup costs a couple bucks, while a case of 12 MREs, which is essentially twelve meals, costs \$80-90 for 12, which is very expensive for what you get.

What we didn't speak about in the Family Survival System eBook was in what ratios these foods ought to be bought in, and how to plan out a three month food supply, so without further ado, let's look at that.

HOW TO ACQUIRE A THREE MONTH FOOD SUPPLY

As with the water guide and for that matter all guides hereafter, we're going to assume that your family is comprised of four (4) persons. As with the water guide, we aren't going to differentiate between kids and adults – with the caveat that if you have infants, you will need to add things like baby formula into the mix. For simplicity's sake, we're going to assume four adults. This will give us some cushion for leftovers.

If you are totally boggled by what three months worth of food looks like, don't worry, we'll guide you through. Here's your checklist:

- First, you're going to assume that if your family gets just one square meal a day at the minimum, it will be a hearty soup that's got vegetables and meat in it. This is a great mix of protein and carbs.
- Take the number of people in your group (4) and multiply that number by 90 days. The result is 360. So that means (you guessed it) that you need 360 cans of soup, and that's what you will build your stockpile around.
- Realizing that a six month food supply isn't built up overnight, you purchase seven cans of soup extra each week you go shopping, for 52 weeks – one year. This will add about \$20 to your weekly grocery bill.
- You will specifically look for soups that have both meat and vegetables in them, and with the *lowest possible sodium content you can buy*. You want low sodium because first of all too much is bad for you, and secondly, it just makes you dehydrated faster.

- When you bring the first group of cans home, you will put them at the *very front* of a shelving system in a cool, dark place.
- With a sharpie, note on the can the date you bought it.
- Put subsequent groups of cans behind the first group, so that the oldest is first, and the newest is all the way in the back.

After one year, you will have accumulated 364 cans of soup, *which is three months at **one** meal per day*. If you're saying to yourself – wait – I eat more than one meal per day, don't worry just now. We'll get to that. After year one, here's what you do next:

- Year two involves buying seven cans per week of alternating foods.
- On week one of the second year, you will buy seven cans of vegetables.
- On week two of the second year, you will buy seven cans of fruit.
- On week three of the second year, you will buy seven cans of meat such as SPAM, tuna, chicken breast, or other meat product.
- Repeat the last three steps, alternating between veggies, fruit, and meat.
- As with the soups, you will note the date of purchase on each can with a sharpie.
- Oldest goes in the front, newest goes in the back.

At the end of year two, you should have your second meal of the day taken care of for three months of food supply. Remember, you haven't touched your soup yet. Now, onto the rice.

- You will strive to accumulate one serving of rice per person per day for the three month supply.
- You realize that one serving of rice is a quarter cup, which grows into one cup after being cooked.
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of rice x 90 days = 22.5 cups x 4 persons = 90 cups
- One cup of rice = .44 pounds of rice; 90 cups therefore = 39.6 pounds
- You run to the store and pick up two 25 pound bags, or one 50 pound bag of rice, as needed.
- You stick to white rice, since brown rice is full of oils that cause it to go rancid faster than white rice.
- You then purchase two (2) *food grade* five gallon buckets.
- You evenly distribute the 50 pounds of rice between both buckets, noting that one 5 gallon bucket holds approximately 35 pounds.
- You purchase two packets of desiccant and place one in each pail.
- You purchase two Gamma Seal brand lids, and place them on the buckets, writing the date of packaging on each bucket.

That's how you build up three months worth of food supply in a two year period. Of course, you can buy it all faster should the budget permit. Now, let's talk a little bit about some caveats, disclaimers, and pointers:

- Never trust the heavy plastic bags that rice comes packaged in to keep it free from rodents, who can smell the rice within, and who will rip the bag and make a mess within, not to mention contaminating the rice.
- All food gets stored in a cool, dark place.
- Three meals per day in a disaster situation is a luxury. If need be, you can extend your 3 month supply by only serving two meals per day, but never go to one meal per day, since the calories will be inadequate for an active person.
- The day you purchase your last food item, begin consuming the soup, and continuing to buy new soup to replace it. Start with the oldest first.
- Buy only the foods your family likes! There's no point in stockpiling food no one will eat.
- Have a plan to augment your disaster supply with fresh game, bartered goods, and a survival garden to keep things interesting.
- Keep canned goods up off the ground in case of flooding. Rusted cans represent a health hazard!

Overall, the biggest tip we can tell you is **START NOW** while supermarkets have food available and while the prices are still reasonable. Remember, if budget is an issue, you can buy in bulk from discount sources, coupon, and shop smartly. However you do it, start now!