



What's in my Pantry?

by Kevin Estela



The author keeps a variety of spices to make ordinary food more palatable. Quality olive oil, coconut oil, balsamic vinegar, apple cider vinegar, oregano, cumin, garlic salt, sea salt, and whole peppercorns to name a few.



Always have a backup plan. The author keeps 10 gallons of water, a week's worth of freeze dried food and a "predator pack" with the means to hunt, fish, and trap food not far from the front door.

Cases and cases of M.R.E.'s, boxes of nitrogen-packed freeze dried food, 55 gallon barrels of water... you won't find those in my pantry. You see, I'm a practical prepper. My whole philosophy of food storage and rotation revolves around the ability to easily extend the availability of what I normally eat. M.R.E.'s are not on my daily menu. My food preparation and food storage sustains an active and healthy lifestyle I try to have. Therefore cans and cans of unhealthy processed foods aren't found in my cupboards as they aren't part of my normal diet. My pantry is based on my lifestyle, not a diet. Diets are usually temporary while lifestyle changes are permanent. Also, the food purchased is easily transported and stored. That 55 gallon barrel of water that weighs over 400 lbs. is nowhere to be found in my storage. Good luck attempting to move it around the home. The title of this article is not "What is not in my Pantry" but rather what is. Allow me to explain how I am preparing for tough times.

I first started preparing my pantry for a food shortage, urban crisis, or general emergency when my disposable income grew. I was a longtime student and substitute teacher while becoming a teacher and didn't have the funds to support my knife, firearm, and gear addiction as well as my emergency food needs. Once I became a teacher and started making millions ... ha ha, I wanted to see if you were paying attention! I started

receiving regular paychecks and had some money to spare, so I began to slowly build up my supplies. All it took was buying an additional can or bag of food during grocery shopping and in time, the cost of a year's worth of food was unnoticed. I don't recommend buying everything all at once as it becomes a financial hardship to resupply your collective food preps. Instead, be vigilant and rotate food supply by consuming what you have and purchasing more incrementally.

Preparing a well-stocked pantry can be daunting. My strategy was to establish the most basic needs first with caloric intake covered then splurge more on flavor and variety. Assuming I have a 2500-3000 calorie

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A bucket of the best sweetener in the world, raw honey. Also pictured, a bucket wrench to assist in opening stubborn lids.

daily intake to maintain weight, I need roughly 76,041 to 91,250 per month or 912,500 to 1,095,000 calories a year. Staple foods are easily stored and are cheap. Years ago, a popular emergency supply store sold a combination of three ingredients called B.F.M. or Basic Food Mix. This combination contained just about all of the essential nutrition a person needed. The combination was composed of 2 parts lentils, 1 part peas, and 1 part rice. This dry mix is relatively bland in flavor but it will keep you kicking and it is very inexpensive and easy to store. One addition to this B.F.M. is quality olive oil for fat content. Add cans or foil packets of tuna for protein and you have yourself the start to a great meal. I started buying a little of each of the 3 basic components every time I hit the grocery store. One month lead to two and so on. As a rule of thumb, I never fully disclose the level of preparation I have for basic operational security. Once I established what I felt was my life raft or last ditch emergency food, I moved onto the more elaborate and exotic food.

There is no secret I like good food. I'm the guy who goes on vacation and has more pictures of food eaten than he does landmarks, accomplishments, or self-portraits (I generally don't have many self-portraits since getting my forehead in the frame is difficult.) As humans, we need a diverse and balanced diet and my pantry reflects the desire to literally and figuratively spice up my food. For example, on one day canned salmon can be mixed with curried spices and raisins to give it an Indian flavor and the next day it can be pan seared in olive oil with a reduction of balsamic vinegar as a glaze for a distinctive Mediterranean vibe. There is no rule that states survival food can't taste good. Human interest in diversity can be problematic and cause food

boredom. Imagine your most cherished pleasure food. Be it cookie dough ice cream, filet mignon, or pickles, eating it for each meal of the day over and over would cause you to lose interest in it. This is why I make sure I have plenty of spices stored. Of these spices, I have coarse sea salt (no iodized salt please), balsamic and apple-cider vinegar, whole black peppercorns, cayenne pepper, curry powder, and cumin. I have others but these basic spices are stocked in quantity to ensure there is always a good supply handy. Don't wait until it is too late to learn how to cook with what you have. Experiment ahead of time and learn what you can easily make and enjoy.

One food item I truly find useful as a survival food and one with the ability to take on many forms is quinoa. It has been called a pseudo-cereal as well as the food of the Gods since the Incas enjoyed it. I find it is extremely easy to prepare at home and in the field and have eaten it with honey, nuts, and dried fruit for breakfast as well as with parsley, sweet potatoes, onions, and peppers as a side for dinner. While not relatively inexpensive, it doesn't have the price tag you would think it should have since another nickname is "vegetable caviar." Quinoa is my staple food of choice over rice and pasta. If you haven't tried it yet, you're missing out.

To satisfy my sweet tooth, I have 5 gallons of honey. I purchased this back in April of 2010 and thankfully, it never goes bad. It is raw honey direct from a bee keeper and is not the homogenized variety commonly found in stores. It may crystallize but it will still taste like honey. I generally take what I need and store it in recycled jars



Basic Food Mix or B.F.M. is easily purchased and stored. Just in the three bags pictured is 6150 calories. Add oil, tuna or another canned meat to increase the nutritional value.



Salmon burgers are easy to make. Mix in a Ziploc bag one can salmon, one egg, and breadcrumbs or cracker crumbs and maybe some fresh parsley if available. The author does almost all of his cooking on Lodge seasoned steel pans.

from jellies and sauces. It may be heavy but I know it will last a long time given how frequently I use it and how little of a dent I've put in the 5 gallon bucket. Aside from the taste, I find local honey helps with my allergies if I consume it in tea. Also helping my sugar craze is a healthy selection of various dried fruits such as raisins, goji berries, unsulphured apricots and cranberries.

Also found near my kitchen is my predator pack, a one week food supply in a 5 gallon bucket and a couple of 5 gallon plastic military water cans. My predator pack contains more than enough equipment to procure food from hunting, fishing, trapping and snaring. The contents include a breakdown .22 rifle, ammo, collapsible fishing pole and reel, tackle, gill net, rat traps, snare wire and more. This kit contains all these resources in a modular pack meant to complement what I normally have in my day pack. The week's worth of food are Mountain House entrées and breakfast granola. While I would prefer not to walk away from home, I also know there may come a time when I temporarily have to. Rounding off these preps is a large jerry can of water to provide hydration as well as the water necessary to make the Mountain House freeze dried foods.

Stockpiling food does no good to the survivor who has no means to open it and prepare it. I always have a manual can opener, bucket wrench, and plenty of extra fuel for my camping stoves. I have water stored and know of a very reliable spring-fed water source nearby that can be exploited easily. I purchase 1.5 gallon bottles on sale, use the water then rotate tap water every year staggering when I have to change out the contents of each bottle. I use a dry erase marker to keep track of

when the water is good until. I also recommend having a good supply of disposable paper plates and utensils if water supplies are limited in your area. The water wasted cleaning dishes adds up and this could be better used staying hydrated or reconstituting food.

This article would not be complete without mentioning how I have emergency food stored. I only recommend it to be stored in a temperature stable, rodent and vermin free, inconspicuous place away from sunlight. Friends and family who visit me don't necessarily need to know the extent of what I have or where I have it. Also, packing your living room with friends is easier if you don't have buckets or bins of food taking up floor space. My food is stored in my cupboard like any other and visitors assume it is your basic bachelor pad contents.

The contents of my cupboard will not necessarily become the contents of yours. I highly recommend you think about your food preparation logically. Purchase food that will keep you kicking. Think about your basic needs first, meet them, then expand on those and meet your luxury food desires. Learning to prepare is a skill



In case the power goes out, make sure to keep your camp kitchen gear handy. To make cleanup easy and to save on water, have a supply of disposable plates/utensils.

Right: Quinoa is extremely versatile and a great alternative to rice or pasta. Pictured is a breakfast variety the author makes with dried cranberries, dates, sliced almonds, and almond milk.



akin to knowing how to select the right gear to bring for different environments, what rifle and ammo to use on various game and what bait or lure to use to hook the big one. Everyone has to eat but the level of skill you bring to the metaphorical table (or is it literal table in this case?) will determine how well you eat and the level of morale you have.

Finally, remember that you can't prepare without good financial habits. Don't live beyond your means and make sure you have money set aside in a rainy day fund. Avoid purchases when you can ask yourself "Do I need this or want this?" and can only reply want. Think about what gear you own and then about the amount of food you could have acquired if you directed your funds to that purpose. Having a dozen collectible

knives won't make you any less hungry but a few collectible knives and a Rubbermaid bin of vittles will.



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