FORTUNE FAVORS THE PREPARED · FOOD ONE-PAGER

How to Start a Food Storage Plan

Don't start with a pallet of buckets. Start with the food you already eat.

1. What are you preparing for?
2. How many people – any special diets?
3. How much space do you have?
4. What does your family actually eat?

1 Build it in stages – a marathon, not a sprint

	3 days the minimum	**2 weeks** longer outages	**1–3 months** pantry depth	**6 months – 1 year** long term
Covers	Storm, tornado, short power outage, an evacuation bag	Days without power or stores; a regional disaster	Job loss, illness, a supply-chain shortage	Extended outage or systemic failure
Store	What you eat that needs no cooking; freeze-dried meals or MREs to grab and go	Extra cans and boxes of your normal meals; a way to cook without power	Your normal meals plus flour, rice, beans and ingredients to stretch them	Bulk staples repacked in mylar; #10 cans; freeze-dried; home canning
How	Check what's on hand today	Buy a little extra every shopping trip	Plan a week of meals; learn to cook from scratch	Buy in bulk, repack, label and inventory

Ready.gov: enough food, water and supplies for **several days**; extension services suggest **one to two weeks** for longer outages. Then set the next goal: 1 month, 3, 6, a year. Read more: Food Storage Quick Start · Why You Should Start a Food Storage Plan

2 Store what you eat

- **Buy one extra.** An extra can or box every trip adds up fast – and costs far less than buying it all at once.
- **Prepared, not hoarding.** Build it slowly while things are normal. Panic-buying in a crisis empties shelves for everyone.
- **Test before you stock up.** Try a pack of any freeze-dried meal or powdered milk before you buy a case.
- **Read the portions.** "Serves 2" is often one adult meal. Many "72-hour kits" are one flavor, one packet per course.
- **Plan for every diet** in the house: allergies, babies, medical diets, pets.
- **Rotate.** First in, first out: newest to the back, oldest to the front, and eat from your stores.

3 How long does it keep?

Canned, low-acid meat, vegetables, soup	2–5 years for best quality (USDA). Store below 85°F; toss dented, bulging, leaking or rusted cans.
Canned, high-acid tomatoes, fruit	12–18 months for best quality (USDA).
Home-canned	About 1 year for best quality – can what you'll use in a year.
Dry staples, sealed mylar + O_2 absorber, #10 cans	Wheat, white rice, pinto beans, rolled oats: **30 years** (Church Home Storage estimates), kept cool and dry.
Sugar, salt	Indefinitely if dry. **No oxygen absorber** – sugar turns into a brick.
Freezer	Months, but only while the power is on (see ⑥).

Not for long-term storage (too much oil or moisture): brown rice, whole-wheat flour, milled grains other than rolled oats, nuts, granola, brown sugar, barley, eggs. White flour keeps far less time than whole grain.

4 How much? The basic math

A common planning figure (Church Home Storage): per person, per month, **25 lb of grains** (wheat, rice, oats, corn) and **5 lb of dry beans**.

1 person · 3 months 75 lb grains · 15 lb beans
4 people · 3 months 300 lb grains · 60 lb beans
4 people · 1 year 1,200 lb grains · 240 lb beans

That's the base. Add oils, sugar, milk, canned meat, fruit and vegetables, spices – and the water to cook it.

5 Buy in bulk and repack

- **Buy** 25–50 lb bags at warehouse clubs (split a membership with another family) or a Church Home Storage Center – open to everyone.
- **Freeze** grains and flour for a few days to kill insects. Freezing may not kill eggs: let it warm a day, then freeze again (USU Extension).
- **Pack** in 5-mil or thicker mylar bags with an oxygen absorber. A 1-gallon bag holds about 7 lb of rice or wheat – smaller bags are easier to use and share.
- **Seal** with an impulse sealer, or a household iron with the bag edge over a board. Next day it should be hard – if it's still soft, it leaked.
- **Label and store** contents and date in permanent marker; number the bins and keep an inventory. Cool, dry, off the floor; metal cans against mice; buckets no more than 3 high, boards across the rims.

Storing whole wheat? You need a way to grind it. Buy a good heavy-duty hand grain mill, and spare parts – a cheap one won't last.

Do it as a group. Share a warehouse membership, a sealer and a monthly "packing party", and split bulk orders.

6 When the power goes out

Keep the doors shut
USDA safe-hold times
Fridge: about **4 hours**. Full freezer: about **48 hours** (24 if half full). Fill empty freezer space with jugs of water.

Eat in order
Fridge, then freezer, then the pantry
If it will be days, cook off freezer food as it thaws. Throw out perishables that sat above 40°F for over 2 hours.

Cook and drink
Without the grid
A way to cook without power, fuel for it, a manual can opener – and water: at least 1 gallon per person per day.

7 Start here

1. **Plan** Who you feed, special diets, where it will go.
2. **3 days** Food you eat that needs no cooking. Check today.
3. **2 weeks** One extra of everything, each shopping trip.
4. **Rotate** Date it, first in first out, eat from it.
5. **3 months** Bulk rice, beans, oats; learn scratch cooking.
6. **Long term** Mylar, #10 cans, canning, a grain mill.

Start today. An extra can of the kids' favorite this week is a start; "next month, when I have more money" isn't. **Track it:** Ready Ledger keeps your food inventory and shows how many days of supply you have. Read more: Buying in Bulk · Water · Ready Ledger

All the food guides
fortunefavorsthepreprepared.com/food/
Start with Food Storage Quick Start and Buying in Bulk.
Checked against USDA FSIS, Ready.gov, CDC and USU Extension, November 2026.

Remember, Fortune Favors the Prepared
Semper Paratus, Semper Gumby