

The Ready Life *presents...*



THE ULTIMATE EMERGENCY FOOD STORAGE GUIDE

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www.TheReadyLife.com

Emergency Food Storage: The Simple Progression That Keeps Your Family Safe

Our goal for you is to walk away with a working pantry plan you can actually use—without wasting money on food your family won't eat.

A hundred years ago, your great-grandmother didn't "prep." She lived prepared—because she had to. Jars on the wall. Root cellar was full with enough margin to survive a bad harvest, just in case because that happened... and also be able to help a neighbor in the process.

That picture is SO different from today. We are only one disruption away from bare shelves. And that's not a 'far-away' potential. We've already seen this in our lifetime. And most families don't have a plan to meet this challenge. Let's fix that with our first question:

If something hits this week... how long could your family eat on what's already in the house? And could you cook it without the grid?

This guide is built to help you reach a place where you can answer that question with a resounding YES! And this workbook is for you, even if you're starting from scratch, with nothing stored or organized yet.

Your Emergency Food Goal Ladder

You'll work up this ladder in order:

1. **2 Weeks** (big peace-of-mind jump for the least money)
2. **30 Days** (a real buffer)
3. **90 Days** (now you're stable)
4. **6–12 Months** (a scalable rotating pantry system)

Rule: Don't skip rungs. The fastest path to a 1-year pantry is **a 2-week plan you actually do.**

The 2 Key Ingredients for making this simple and a real success.

1) **Rotating Pantry** - Store what you eat. Eat what you store.

If your pantry isn't rotating, it's just a museum of expiration dates.

2) **A Menu** - If you don't have a menu = you're just guessing. And guessing gets expensive really fast. If you have a menu, then you answer two questions:

- WHAT food should we store?
- HOW MUCH of it do we need?

STEP 1

PANTRY CHECK

Before you buy anything, get an estimate of what you already have.

Step 1: Take a quick inventory of what you already have.

Start by figuring out what you already have. This can save you time and money by just building on what you already have in your pantry.

Pantry Reality Check Worksheet

A) What you already have (rough estimate)

Write down some of the items you spotted in your cupboards/pantry:

- Breakfast items: _____
- Pasta/rice/other starches: _____
- Canned meats/beans: _____
- Canned veggies: _____
- Canned fruit/applesauce: _____
- Soups/chili/stews: _____
- Baking basics (flour/sugar/yeast/oats): _____
- Oils/fats: _____
- Condiments/spices: _____
- Snacks: _____
- Baby/kid essentials (if applicable): _____

C) The Big Number

- People in household: _____
- Meals per day you plan for: _____ (usually 2–3)
- How many days could you realistically feed everyone on what's here? _____

Key insight: Most people discover they have “food”—but not **meals**.

PART 2

GET 2 WEEKS OF STORAGE

This is where momentum is born. The goal isn't perfection—it's about getting you some much needed traction.

Step 1: Write a quick list of meals your family likes

It's really easy right now to think about all the 'healthy' favorite meals your family enjoys. Lasagna anyone? That's not what you are looking for right now. We aren't dieting, dreaming big, or listing 'wishful' meals. These are meals you actually ate last week. Mac N Cheese. Peanut butter & Jelly sandwiches. Bean and rice burritos. Real meals that you actually eat regularly because they are easy, quick, and your family enjoys them. Write your breakfasts, lunches, and supper meals down below.

Breakfasts/Snacks

Lunches

Suppers

1. _____

1. _____

1. _____

2. _____

2. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. _____

3. _____

4. _____

4. _____

4. _____

5. _____

5. _____

5. _____

6. _____

6. _____

6. _____

7. _____

7. _____

7. _____

8. _____

8. _____

8. _____

9. _____

9. _____

9. _____

10. _____

10. _____

10. _____

Now look through those meals above and circle all the meals that are the MOST shelf-stable. You want stuff you can stack in your pantry. Spaghetti noodles & pasta sauce would be a GREAT example. Try to think about nutritious & protein rich options when you plan your trip to the store. This is your 1 week menu that we are going to use to scale up later.

Step 2: Create your 1 week menu

This next step matters more than anything else. What you build here becomes your foundation for the rest of the workbook, so take a minute and choose meals your family actually enjoys and will realistically eat. It's fine to repeat meals (we do granola multiple times a week). Now fill in your menu as accurately as you can.

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Sun			
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			

Step 3: Eat your menu...

It sounds silly, but do yourself a favor and eat those meals in the next week and write down how much food you actually ate at each meal. It's so easy to underestimate or overestimate how much we actually eat for a meal.

Day #1: _____

Meals/Ingredients:

Notes _____

Day #2: _____

Meals/Ingredients:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Day #3: _____

Meals/Ingredients:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Day #4: _____

Meals/Ingredients:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Day #5: _____

Meals/Ingredients:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Day #6: _____

Meals/Ingredients:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Day #7: _____

Meals/Ingredients:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Step 3: Plan your \$50-\$75 grocery run

Now that you have a list of all your favorite family meals, now we need to make this practical. You've circled which meals are the most shelf stable. Now go back and do one more pass to make sure you have ingredients that will give you a little balance. Then we will work on our shopping list.

Focus on these categories first:

- **Carbs you can store** (rice, pasta, oats, potatoes, flour, tortillas)
- **Protein** (beans, lentils, canned meat, peanut butter, etc.)
- **Meal builders** (sauce, broth, canned tomatoes, seasonings)
- **Fat** (oil) — makes calories and cooking work
- **One morale item** (hot cocoa, cookies, instant pudding, etc.)

Here's an Example of what your \$50 Cart could look like

(Use this as a pattern—swap for what your family eats.)

- Rice (bulk bag if possible)
- Pasta x2-4
- Oats
- Dry beans or lentils
- Canned beans x4-8 (fast meals)
- Canned tomatoes / pasta sauce x2-4
- Broth or bouillon
- Peanut butter (or other shelf-stable protein your family uses)
- Cooking oil
- Salt + 1-2 key spices
- "Morale" item (like chocolate!)

Notes:

Step 3: Head to the Store

Now you have an idea of the meals you like. You want to work on making a list that would double that one week. If your family usually uses half a box of pasta for one meal, then one box would give you two meals.

1.	_____	cost: _____
2.	_____	cost: _____
3.	_____	cost: _____
4.	_____	cost: _____
5.	_____	cost: _____
6.	_____	cost: _____
7.	_____	cost: _____
8.	_____	cost: _____
9.	_____	cost: _____
11.	_____	cost: _____
12.	_____	cost: _____
13.	_____	cost: _____
14.	_____	cost: _____
15.	_____	cost: _____
16.	_____	cost: _____
17.	_____	cost: _____
18.	_____	cost: _____
19.	_____	cost: _____
20.	_____	cost: _____
21.	_____	cost: _____
22.	_____	cost: _____
23.	_____	cost: _____
		total: _____

PART 3

SCALE IT UP..

Now it's time to take your food storage to the next level.

There are theories going around about different ways to figure out how much food storage your family needs, but what we use and what we teach is a really simple way that just plain works.

In our course [Food Storage Planning](#) we walk you through how to set up your own meal storage plan that you can easily scale up to 1 month, 3 months, or even a year.

We walk you through storage options, basic food preservation skills, and how to master your bulk orders to cut the cost of your pantry dramatically. If you are already a member of [The Ready Life Academy](#), then just click the picture below to go straight to the course.

If you are going to tackle this on paper, then follow the next two sections.



[Courses](#) > [Food Storage Planning](#)

Food Storage Planning

In this course, you'll learn how to calculate and stock your pantry with the right AMOUNT of the right KINDS of foods your family actually likes and uses.

[Resume Course](#) →

Pick up where you left off!

Why Store Food?

1 of 15 completed

Step 1: Finalize your menu

In the last section, you built a one-week menu and used it to buy two weeks of food. That works, but if your family wants more variety, a two-week menu makes a better foundation—this doesn't limit what you eat day to day, it just gives you a simple "default plan" you can use to build, maintain, and scale so you always have enough food when life gets shaky. If you want that approach, fill in your two-week menu below; if not, stick with your one-week menu and skip to Step 3.

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Sun			
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sab			

	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Sun			
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sab			

Notes:

Step 2: Make a Grocery List for your 2 weeks

Now that you have decided your menu, you need to make a grocery list for those two weeks.

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 23. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 24. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 25. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 26. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 27. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 28. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 29. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 30. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 31. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 32. _____ |
| 11. _____ | 33. _____ |
| 12. _____ | 34. _____ |
| 13. _____ | 35. _____ |
| 14. _____ | 36. _____ |
| 15. _____ | 37. _____ |
| 16. _____ | 38. _____ |
| 17. _____ | 39. _____ |
| 18. _____ | 40. _____ |
| 19. _____ | 41. _____ |
| 20. _____ | 42. _____ |
| 21. _____ | 43. _____ |
| 22. _____ | 44. _____ |

Step 3: Scale it up!

You've got your menu, the grocery list is ready, now let's decide your next step. Do you have a budget for 1 month of supplies ahead of time? How about 3 months?

- 1 month (1 week menu x 4 = 1 month **OR** 2 week menu x 2 = 1 month)
- 2 months (1 week menu x 8 = 2 months **OR** 2 week menu x 4 = 2 months)
- 3 months (1 week menu x 13 = 3 months **OR** 2 week menu x 6.5 = 3 months)
- 6 months (1 week menu x 26 = 6 months **OR** 2 week menu x 13 = 6 months)
- 9 months (1 week menu x 39 = 9 months **OR** 2 week menu x 19.5 = 9 months)
- 1 year (1 week menu x 52 = 1 year **OR** 2 week menu x 26 = 1 year)

This is where the math begins. You need to decide which one you want to work toward right now, and then multiply your grocery list by the number you've picked. I recommend starting with wherever you are currently at and then pick the next milestone and work toward that goal next.

Step 4: Money Saving tips...

Now you know how to *calculate* your food needs. But does that mean you should sprint to Costco tomorrow and buy a year's supply of food? For most families, the budget screams a loud **NO**. The goal isn't to panic-buy. The goal is to scale up—without debt—until your pantry becomes a system.

Scale Up With Micro Goals

Start by stretching your normal routine.

- If you shop daily: aim for once per week.
- If you shop weekly: aim for one bigger trip per month.

Each month, buy just a little more than your normal amount—maybe an extra week, an extra two weeks, or extra of whatever staples are on sale. That's how you get ahead without blowing your budget.

And yes—your pantry won't grow evenly at first. You might end up with 3 months of oats but only 1 month of everything else. That's not a problem. That's smart.

One warning: when you build a surplus, don't "skip" shopping next month. Keep buying your normal monthly amount (or more if you can) so the surplus stays and keeps stacking.

Once you hit your goal, you don't stop—you simply maintain it: Use the oldest first, replace what you used, and put the newest items to the back.

What About Perishable Ingredients?

Perishable items are a bit more of a challenge, especially when you are thinking about any kind of power outages. No power, no fridge or freezer. So with that in mind you have two simple options:

1. Store shelf-stable versions of perishable items long-term — such as canned, dehydrated, powdered, etc. And keep buying fresh monthly as normal—just rotate your stored versions before they expire.
2. Make shelf-stable versions part of your normal diet and supplement with fresh items when you can grow them or buy them.

Either way, the big win is the same your long-term stability comes from shelf-stable foods—not the freezer.

Buying in Bulk Cuts Costs

Bulk buying is one of the fastest ways to build storage without overspending.

- Bulk distributors —
 - [Azure](#) (if you live on the western side of the US)
 - [Country Life](#) (if you live on the eastern side of the us) To get 10% off your order, use CODE: **TRLA10**
- Local Grocery Store — I often buy bulk foods through my local grocery store—sometimes it's even cheaper than ordering online. Look for a store with a bulk section where you can scoop your own quantities. Then ask customer service who manages bulk orders and see if they can special-order a 25- or 50-pound bag of your staple foods. Most stores will discount bulk orders.
- Online Outlets — Sometimes I've found Amazon or other online retailers to have better prices. So if something you need is a little on the pricy side, look around and you might save yourself a good chunk.

PART 4

COOKING WITHOUT POWER

If you can't cook when the power is out, pantry staples won't help you.

There are a number of different ways to cook food when the power is out. Depending on your situation, you can look through these different options and choose the ones that would suit your lifestyle best.

Step 1: Off Grid Cooking Options

- Propane stove (like this [Coleman Camp Stove](#))
- Butane stove ([like our MSR pocket stove](#))
- Grill
- [Dutch oven](#)
- Wood cook stove (Check out our workbook on Heat)
- [Solar oven](#)
- Other: _____

Step 2: Fuel — have enough stored

Fuel disappears fast—especially if you're boiling water or cooking your food. So make sure that you have plenty on hand of whatever method you choose above.

Fuel Inventory:

Propane cylinders / tanks: _____

Butane canisters: _____

Charcoal: _____ (bags)

Wood: _____

Other: _____

Step 3: Take it for a test run

One of the biggest challenges is that when people are under stress (such as an emergency, blackout, etc) it's hard to solve problems. If you haven't already figured out how to cook with your off grid cooking option, then practice using it a few times to become familiar with it. Then you can work out any challenges or learn how to use it when you aren't under stress. Pick a date, put it on the calendar, and give it an old-fashioned try. Have fun!

Cooking method used: _____

Meal cooked: _____

What went wrong / what surprised us: _____

What we'll do differently next time: _____

Notes:

PART 4

THE FRIDGE/FREEZER PROBLEM

When the power goes out, your freezer becomes a countdown clock.

I can't count how many times I've heard about all the hard earned and worked for food gets lost during power outages because it was all stored in the freezer.

Because of that, even though I live off the grid, I try to invest in food preservation methods that don't require the freezer — canning, dehydrating, root cellaring. But there are some food items that just don't taste as good unless they are frozen... peas for example. Canned or dried peas just aren't frozen peas.

The Fridge & Freezer rules

When the power cuts off, here are some rules that you can easily apply to help save your precious frozen and refrigerated food.

1. Stop opening fridge/freezer unless absolutely necessary.
2. Keep freezer full (freeze water jugs or make freezer meals to add thermal mass)
3. Open only once per day: pull 24 hours of food out, then shut it
4. Use winter if available: protected cooler outside
5. Generator option: run the generator for a few hours each day to pull temp in your freezer down.

PART 4

THE ULTIMATE FOOD PLAN

From “Emergency Food” to real independence.

Now you know how much of each ingredient you need to end up with the salsa, applesauce, and canned corn your family actually uses. The next step is sustainability—growing or raising as much of that as you can.

Most people plan a garden by guessing. But you’re not guessing anymore. You have real numbers behind what you plant. It won’t be perfect the first year, but it’ll get you in the ballpark—and you can dial it in as you gain experience.

Step 1: How much of this food can we produce ourselves?

Look through your list and highlight anything you can grow in a garden. Write those items below, and include how much you’d need for a one-year supply (since most produce is harvested once per year).

Produce I can grow:

1. _____ how much: _____
2. _____ how much: _____
3. _____ how much: _____
4. _____ how much: _____
5. _____ how much: _____
6. _____ how much: _____
7. _____ how much: _____
8. _____ how much: _____
9. _____ how much: _____
10. _____ how much: _____
11. _____ how much: _____
12. _____ how much: _____

Step 2: How many plants do I need for each produce option?

The first step is to calculate how much you need of each item. If you need 24 jars of salsa, then let's work through how we'd figure out how many plants of tomatoes we should plant in our garden.

1. Look at your list above for a year's supply of each produce option.

Example: We need 24 quarts of salsa

2. Now we need to figure out how many lbs/heads/stalks/etc for each.

Example: For 24 quarts of salsa, we would need about 3-4 lbs of tomatoes per quart. So $4 \times 24 = 96$ lbs of tomatoes. We need to grow 96 lbs.


3. Find out how many pounds tomato plants typically produce.

Example: The average tomato plant might produce roughly 8-10 lbs of tomatoes per plant. So if we take $96 \text{ lbs} \div 8 \text{ lbs per plant} = 12$ plants

4. Now you can plan your garden and make sure you have enough space to grow the amount of food you've figured you need.

Example: Make sure you have enough space to grow at least 12 tomato plants!

We have made this whole process SO much easier with our [Garden Planning Calculator](#) inside [The Ready Life Academy](#). You would just input the number of pounds or stalks or heads of something you need, and it will tell you how many plants and how much space you need.

STEP 1: Select Bed Size:				THE READY <i>Life</i> ACADEMY			
1' Bed		<i>Garden Size Planner</i>					
Vegetable	Unit of Measurement	Amount needed EDIT THIS COLUMN	Spacing (inches) (do not edit)	# Plants Needed (do not edit)	# of Rows Per Bed (do not edit)	Feet of Bed Needed (do not edit)	Notes
Asparagus	# of Spears		12	0	1	0	50 spears / pound
Beans, green	Pounds		4	0	2	0	
Beans, lima	Pounds		4	0	2	0	
Beets	# of Beets		3	0	3	0	0.25 pounds / plant
Broccoli (# of heads)	# of Heads		18	0	1	0	1 head/pound
Brussels sprouts (pounds)	Pounds		24	0	1	0	25 sprouts/pound
Cabbage	# of Heads		24	0	1	0	2 pounds / head
Carrots	# of Carrots		2	0	5	0	5-6 carrots/pound
Cauliflower	# of Heads		24	0	1	0	1.5 pounds/head
Celery	# of Stalks		6	0	1	0	8-9 stalks/pound
Corn, sweet	Ears		12	0	1	0	1+ ear / stalk
Corn, sweet	Cups		12	0	1	0	3/4 Cup / ear
Cucumbers	# of Cucumber		12	0	1	0	Spacing can vary considerably if hills are
Eggplants	# of Eggplants		18	0	1	0	4 per plant

Step 3: Extend your growing season

Winter gardening can be a big win, especially in cooler climates—because it means that your fresh produce doesn't have to stop when the weather turns.

A simple hoop house or greenhouse creates a protected pocket of warmth that extends your season: start earlier in spring, keep harvesting later into fall, and in many climates keep hardy greens alive through winter (kale, collards, Swiss chard). Growth slows in the coldest weeks, but the plants can hold and still provide fresh cuttings all year long.

Pair season extension with a root cellar or cool room, and you get the best combo: grow longer, store smarter, eat homegrown more months of the year.

Step 4: Preserve your harvest

Preservation is where food storage becomes real. It's how you take what's available today and keep your family fed when the shelves are empty. Let's cover the main methods and pick the ones you'll actually use. There is a [video in The Ready Life Academy](#) that walks you through all of these methods.

Canning (water bath + pressure canning) — Preserves foods in jars for shelf-stable storage; includes both methods so you can safely can high-acid and low-acid foods.

Dehydrating — Removes moisture so foods store longer while keeping more nutrients; covers electric dehydrators and a simple solar dehydrator option.

Freezing — Best for certain foods; focuses on freezing the right way and prepping foods so quality holds up.

Vacuum sealing — Extends the life of refrigerated, frozen, and dry goods by reducing air exposure; includes cautions and an inexpensive way to seal jars.

Culturing (fermenting) — Old-school preservation using beneficial bacteria; examples include sauerkraut, cultured vegetables, and yogurt.

Long-term grain storage (ex: wheat) — Shows how to store grains correctly so they last for years (and how to avoid them going bad fast).

Root cellars — “Nature's refrigerator” for storing produce cool and stable; covers the key setup factors and shows real examples.

Curing (garlic + onions) — Simple drying/curing process that makes certain produce usable and keeps it from spoiling for months.



ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Nick & Lisa Meissner — We live deep in the mountains of Idaho with our young family, and we've learned this the hard way: it's dangerous to depend on corporations or government systems for your basics —water, heat, food, and power.

As Christians, we also believe the days are coming when that dependence will be used to control who can buy, sell, and survive. That's why we built The Ready Life: to help families become resilient and self-reliant, so you're not at the mercy of "the system" when it falters—and so you're strong enough to help others when they're in need.