

Key Points to Know

Calories to Survive:

- Depends on your age, how active you are, stress, etc
- FDA recommends
 - Children:** 1,000 to 2,000 calories per day
 - Adult women:** 1,600 to 2,400 calories per day
 - Adult men:** 2,000 to 3,000 calories per day
- Calories needed to maintain your current weight: multiply current weight by 15
- Consuming too few calories compromises your normal bodily functions. It could cause you to feel lethargic and light-headed.

Best survival foods: Calorie-dense and high in carbohydrates for energy. Fat, protein, and fiber are also crucial but are often absent from pre-packaged survival foods.

Many emergency foods are heavily processed and contain high levels of sugar and salt.

MREs are, in many ways, the ultimate survival food. Calorie-dense and nutritionally balanced. Containing approximately 1,200 calories, they give you enough protein, fat, and carbohydrates to perform the most taxing of tasks. MREs are healthy enough to live on for a few days, but after that, your body will begin to take the strain.

Downside to MREs – too much fat and sodium in the average MRE and contain very little dietary fiber. The lack of fiber means you'll rarely feel full after an MRE and may experience fluctuations in your blood sugar levels and irregular bowel movements. Not recommended for more than 21 days consecutively.

Prevent & kill pests in your food – make sure you have an air-tight storage.

- Mylar bags with oxygen absorbers
- Air-tight mason jars

Inventory

- Take a good inventory of what you have and where it is located on a master list
- Label your storage containers with what's inside
- For short-life storage items, consume some of your stored foods to keep it fresh

Buying pre-packaged foods: This is my opinion....the only ones I trust purchasing would be from Mike Adams at <https://www.healthrangerstore.com/>. Everything he sells is glyphosate and heavy metals tested; laboratory verified for non-gmo, China free, and much much more.





Making your own MRE's:

To ensure your MREs keep you healthy, each MRE needs to contain: carbohydrates, protein, and fruits/vegetables. *It is also good to include fats in your emergency food.

	Dehydrating	Freeze-drying
Moisture Out	up to 80%	98-99%
Shelf life	15 years	25 years
Nutrition	60-70% retained	97% retained
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equip far less expensive Equip little maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longer shelf life More nutrients preserved More flavor retained Easier to rehydrate Most foods can be eaten w/o hydrating Food weighs less
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shorter shelf life Less nutrients preserved Less flavor retained More difficult to rehydrate Food weighs more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equip is expensive Equip is more difficult to maintain

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★★★★★ 256 Reviews



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★★★★★ 816 Reviews

Mylar bags: Many on Amazon; **Get 5 mil thickness or higher depending on type of food.** I especially like the ones that can stand up.

Oxygen absorbers: most packages come with a supply of 400cc oxygen absorbers.



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How Many Calories Minimum Do You Need to Survive in an Emergency?

<https://www.primalsurvivor.net/minimum-calories-to-survive/>

How We Burn Calories Changes in an Emergency

Stress affects how our bodies produce insulin and adrenaline. Our pulse rate increases, and we become tense and may struggle to sleep. All these changes require energy, which we need to supply in the form of calories.

Physical changes also occur when we're under stress, affecting the calories we need to consume.

There are four different ways our bodies burn calories:

- The Basal Metabolic Rate (BMR) is the number of calories our bodies need to maintain vital functions, such as breathing, brain function, and heart rate
- The Thermic Effect of Food (TEF) is the total number of calories we burn while digesting food. This is usually around 10% of your calorie intake
- Thermic Effect of Exercise (TEE) covers the calories we burn through physical activity
- Non-Exercise Activity Thermogenesis (NEAT) refers to the calories we burn subconsciously fidgeting and changing position.

The number of calories we consume through these four processes varies. Hormonal changes, for example, can reduce or increase the number of calories we need, as can stress and changes to the nervous system.

In a survival situation, we're likely to burn more calories than we do at home and yet have fewer calories available to keep our bodies functioning.

Rather than recommending the minimum calorie intake of between 1,200 and 1,500 per day, the US Food and Drug Administration advocates storing the following quantities of survival food:

Children: 1,000 to 2,000 calories per day

Adult women: 1,600 to 2,400 calories per day

Adult men: 2,000 to 3,000 calories per day

Ideally, these calories should come from foods that balance nutrients, protein, carbohydrates, and fiber.

Unfortunately, many so-called emergency foods fail to offer such a balance and could leave you suffering a calorie deficiency.

MREs, for example, contain high levels of fat and sodium but not so much in the way of carbohydrates and fiber. You can find out more about whether MREs are healthy.

Eating Too Little Can Endanger Your Health

Even if you're eating 1,200 calories a day, you'll suffer the consequences if you're not getting the vitamins and minerals your body needs.

A lack of iron, for example, could cause anemia, while a niacin deficiency could put you at risk of a heart attack, and a reduced zinc intake could cause your hair to fall out.

Many emergency foods are heavily processed and contain high levels of sugar and salt. While these will temporarily keep your energy levels up, they won't give you the nutrients your body needs to function. As a result, you may start to feel dizzy or light-headed. Your blood pressure may also drop, making it difficult to think clearly.

Some people's bodies enter starvation mode long before their consumption drops to survival levels.

If calorie consumption drops too low, your metabolism slows down to compensate. It preserves the available calories for vital functions like blood circulation and breathing. When your body enters starvation mode, you may feel lethargic, have trouble concentrating, or feel weak and cold.

To survive in chilly winter temperatures, you need calories to burn for heat and fuel. If you don't get enough, you put yourself in danger of developing hypothermia.

What To Eat If You Want To Survive

Water is the most vital factor in any survival diet and is included in all the best pre-made bug-out bags. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) suggests that you can get by on as little as 64oz (1/2 gallon) of water a day, although the US Coast Guard recommends that if water is extremely scarce, you can survive on as little as 4.225 oz per day. Other studies, however, indicate that this applies only to healthy adults who live a largely sedentary existence in a temperate climate.

If you're outside, surviving on your wits and bug-out bag, you'll need a larger fluid intake, especially if you're in a hot climate and want to prevent disease.

While survival food bars will keep you going, a quick look at their nutritional facts will soon reveal their shortcomings. According to the results from the US Department of

Agriculture's Dietary Reference Intakes Calculator, we should consume four times as much carbohydrates as fat.

The best survival foods, therefore, are calorie-dense and high in carbohydrates. Survival bread, like hardtack, may contain little more than flour and water, but flour is so calorie-dense and high in carbohydrates that it provides much of the energy we need.

Our survival food list gives a clearer idea of what you need to stockpile for an emergency and includes:

- Canned meat and vegetables
- Peanut
- Crackers
- Dried fruit
- Granola bars
- Instant mashed potatoes
- Oatmeal

How To Calculate Calories for Survival

If you multiply your current weight by 15, this will give you the number of calories needed to maintain your current weight, assuming you're moderately active and not lounging on the couch.

You can get a more accurate idea of your daily nutrient requirements by using an online calculator. I used the one provided by the US Department of Agriculture, and according to the results, as a 5'4" woman who weighs 140 pounds, I should consume 2,289 calories per day. This amount is a little more than the equation above stated, which was just 2,100 calories, but it's close enough.

Carbohydrates comprise the lion's share of those calories, vital energy sources that help fuel our bodily functions. Fat, protein, and fiber are also crucial but are often absent from pre-packaged survival foods.

If I were to drop that down to 1,200, I'd easily survive for a few days without any nasty consequences. After that, however, I would probably start to feel lethargic and struggle to maintain the energy levels needed to survive.

Conclusion

Bugging out is a potentially stressful and physically demanding experience. 1,200 calories may not be enough to compensate for the energy you expend in a survival situation.

Consuming too few calories compromises your normal bodily functions. It could cause you to feel lethargic and light-headed. It could also increase your risk of hypothermia in cold conditions.

The right balance of carbohydrates, protein, fat, and fiber is also crucial to your survival and well-being.

30-Day Emergency Food Supply

<https://www.primalsurvivor.net/?s=30+day>

The Two Types of Emergency Foods to Store

There are many types of survival foods to stockpile. For your 30-day emergency food storage, we can break them down into two types:

1. Foods that don't require cooking
2. Foods that require cooking

To be fully prepared, you should combine both types of emergency foods.

Emergency Foods That Don't Require Cooking

You can find lots of ready-to-eat emergency foods in your local supermarket. The benefit of storing these foods is that they are easy. Picture your family sitting in your basement eating granola bars and soup straight out of the can as a hurricane rages around you.

There is no need to cook, prepare, or even clean plates. You just pop open the packaging and start to eat.

Another reason you need to have ready-to-eat emergency foods is that **it isn't always safe to cook after a disaster**. For example, you should never have an open flame after an earthquake. This is because gas lines break, and an open flame could result in an explosion. So, if this is the case, you would want foods that don't require cooking.

Examples of Emergency Foods That *Don't* Require Cooking

- Crackers – [How to store crackers](#)
- Rice cakes
- Granola bars
- Peanut butter – read more about [storing peanut butter](#)
- Jam
- Dry cereal
- Powdered milk – see our guide to the [best tasting powdered milk](#)
- Canned milk
- Dried fruits
- Canned fruits and vegetables
- Canned soup
- Canned meat and fish – see [best canned meat](#)
- Jarred food – pickles, beets (read about [preserving beets](#))
- [Meals Ready to Eat \(MREs\)](#)

Emergency Foods that Require Cooking

In theory, you could stockpile just ready-to-eat foods for your 30-day emergency food supply. However, it will probably get boring eating all those canned and packaged foods after a few days (I've run disaster scenario drills before and can attest to how boring it gets to eat just packaged food!).

Ready-to-eat emergency foods also tend to be lacking nutritiously. It might be okay to live off granola bars for a day or two during a blackout, but all that sugar, fat, and sodium will make you feel like crap in a longer-term disaster situation.

When you cook food, it is more nutritious and will give you the energy you need to stay healthy and alert in the disaster aftermath.

Finally, you'll want some emergency foods which require cooking because they taste better. The taste shouldn't be a priority for disaster preparedness, but having tasty food can go a long way in alleviating the stress which comes with emergencies. Even the act of cooking might be a welcome distraction from the disaster.

Examples of Emergency Foods that *Do* Require Cooking

- Pasta
- Rice, barley, and other grains
- Dry beans and legumes
- Packets of instant soup
- Instant mashed potatoes
- Meals in a box

Other Items for Your 30-Day Emergency Food Storage

- **Salt, herbs, spices, and seasoning packets:** Eating plain pasta, canned veggies, etc., can be boring. A bit of seasoning can go a long way to making it taste better (and thus making the disaster aftermath less stressful).
- **Powdered drink mixes:** Preferably ones that have vitamins in them.
- **A can opener:** Make sure it is a *manual* can opener, not an electric one! Read [how to open a can without a can opener](#).
- **Paper plates and plastic utensils:** You don't want to waste precious water on washing dishes, so have enough disposable plates and utensils stockpiled.
- **Off-grid cooking method plus fuel:** If the utilities go down after the disaster, how will you prepare your food? Ensure you have an [off-grid cooking method](#) and enough fuel to last you through the month.

Long-Term Food Storage List: 26 Foods with a long shelf life

<https://www.primalsurvivor.net/food-long-shelf-life/>

Food Storage List of Long Shelf Life Foods

1. Commercially Canned Foods

Canned foods are the best way to go for people just getting started with emergency preparedness. You can get them in the supermarket; they won't break like glass jars, and a huge variety can be bought in bulk.

Canned products do have a "use by" date on them. However, studies have shown that canned foods are good for decades and potentially forever. They might have some nutrient breakdown or get mushy, but they will still be stable and safe to eat. [Learn more about canned food shelf life here.](#)

Canned foods aren't perfect for emergency preparedness, though. They are usually loaded with sodium or sugars. And a lot of canned foods taste gross. So, try to include other foods in your stockpile as well.

*Don't forget to stockpile a manual can opener with the canned goods! In a pinch, you can use one of [these methods for opening a can without a can opener.](#)

2. Sugar, Honey, and Other Sugars

Archaeologists have found honey in Egyptian pyramids that are 3,000 years old and still edible. Likewise, refined sugar can last forever. It might become rock-hard or lumpy but will still be edible.

Here's what you can expect of shelf life from sugars:

- **Maple syrup:** About two years in an unopened glass jar.
- **Corn syrup:** Forever shelf life, though the color might change.
- **Molasses:** Last 10 years in a sealed, unopened jar in the pantry. Once opened, it will last 1-5 years in the pantry.
- **Powdered sugar:** Forever shelf life
- **Stevia:** About 4 years

3. Freeze Dried Foods

Freeze drying is when the moisture is removed from food while leaving its nutrients intact. The resulting foods are delicious and crisp. You can eat them as-is or soak them in water to rehydrate.

All sorts of foods can be freeze-dried. These include meat, cheese, dairy, fruits, veggies, and even entire meals.

Almost all the “emergency food” sold is freeze-dried. When packaged properly (in an airtight container with oxygen absorbers), freeze-dried foods can last 25+ years.

4. Dehydrated Fruits and Veggies

Dehydrating uses heat to remove approximately 75-95% of moisture from foods. Without moisture, the rate of spoilage decreases drastically. Dehydrated fruits can last an incredibly long time because their sugars act as a natural preservative.

Without special packaging (such as storing dried fruits or veggies in Tupperware), they will likely last 6 months to 1 year. If you take the extra step of packaging them in Mylar bags with oxygen absorbers, dried foods can last 5-15 years. This is how emergency food brands package their dehydrated foods.

5. Jerky

Jerky is also made with a dehydrator. However, dehydrating at home is trickier because the temperature must be high enough to kill bacteria.

The jerky you buy in the supermarket can last 1-2 years unopened in your pantry.

With homemade jerky, the shelf life is much shorter: anywhere from 1 week to 4 months. The variation in shelf life depends on how much fat is in the meat, storage conditions, and the amount of moisture remaining in the jerky.

Read: [How to store beef jerky long term](#)

6. Dried Beans

USAID says that dry beans have a shelf life of at least 1 year when stored in a cool, dry place but can last indefinitely. Beans will start to lose vitamins at around 2-3 years. But, so long as they stay dry and don't begin to grow mold, they will still be fine to eat.

Just remember that dry beans take a long time to cook. If you plan on eating them during an emergency, make sure you have a way to cook them.

7. Jarred Food (Commercially-Made)

The food you buy in jars in the supermarket is preserved by canning. It's the same method that preserves food in cans.

In general, food in cans will last longer than in jars. Jars are more likely to have issues with their seals, breakage, or deterioration from light. However, you can still expect jarred food to last at least five years.

Remember that the "Best By" or "Best Before" date is not a safety date. It's the manufacturer's estimate of how long the food will remain at peak quality.

Here are just some jarred ingredients to consider for your emergency stockpile:

- **Jams**
- **Applesauce**
- **Pickles**
- **Peppers**
- **Pasta sauce**
- **Baby food**

8. Home Canned Food

Canning is a way to preserve food at home, and it is pretty simple with a good pressure canner. Home-canned foods won't last as long as commercially canned ones, but they can still last 2-5 years.

9. Pasta

Pasta generally has a "best by" date of 1-2 years. It will easily last 2 years past this date in your pantry without any special storage. Pasta will last 20-30 years in Mylar bags with oxygen absorbers!

10. White Rice

White rice can last forever if stored in a cool, dry place. This is not the case with brown rice, though.

Unlike white rice, brown rice hasn't had its bran removed. The bran is relatively high in oils, which go rancid fairly quickly. That's why brown rice will only last up to 1 year in your pantry.

11. Whole Grains

Whole grains still have their outer shell (hull) intact. This acts as a natural preservative, keeping out air and light that would cause degradation. The grains with harder hulls (hard grains) will last longer than those with soft hulls (soft grains).

Like virtually every food on this long shelf life list, you should store whole grains in Mylar bags with oxygen absorbers. They will still last a long time in a sealed container in your pantry, though.

Expected shelf life in a cool, dry pantry:

- **Wheat:** 2 years
- **Barley:** 2 years
- **Kamut:** 2 years
- **Millet:** 2 years
- **Rolled oats:** 2 years
- **Rye:** 2 years
- **Spelt:** 2 years
- **Alfalfa:** 4 years
- **Buckwheat:** 2 years
- **Quinoa:** 3 years – see [how to store quinoa long term](#)

Shelf life when stored in Mylar bags with oxygen absorbers:

- **Soft grains (such as barley, quinoa, and rye):** 8 years
- **Hard grains (such as wheat and buckwheat):** 10 to 12 years

Like dry beans, whole grains can take a long time to cook. Remember to plan a [way to cook without electricity](#) for using them.

12. Seeds

Seeds are an excellent source of nutrients. They are loaded with protein, iron, magnesium, healthy fats, and many vitamins. They are also one of the foods with the longest shelf life without you having to do much of anything.

Most seeds will last 2-5 years in a cool, dry pantry. Remember that temperature matters for seed shelf life because they have natural oils that go rancid from heat. The USDA states, “Each 5.6oC. (10.08oF) drop in temperature doubles the storage life of the seeds”.

13. Nuts

Like seeds, nuts are loaded with nutrients and naturally have a long shelf life (especially if kept in their shells).

The difference is that nuts usually have a much higher fat content than seeds. This fat will eventually go rancid, especially in hot, humid conditions. Fattier nuts like pistachios will go bad very quickly.

Because nuts are so expensive, I wouldn't try to store them for years as part of a long-term food storage plan. However, if you keep them cool and remember to rotate them, they are a great emergency food.

Notes:

1. Nuts in their shell will last 25-50% longer than shelled nuts.
2. Whole nuts last approximately 50% longer than nut pieces.
3. Some roasted nuts may only have ¼ of the shelf life of raw nuts.
4. The shelf life of peanut butter depends on whether it is “natural” or has preservatives.

See how to store nuts long term

Shelf life of nuts in months

	In pantry at 50F	In pantry at 68F
Almond, shelled	8	4
Almond, in shell	16	6
Macadamia, shelled	12	5
Peanut, shelled	9	4
Peanut, in shell	9	6
Pistachio, shelled	3	1

14. Powdered Milk

Powdered milk is made by freeze-drying milk. It is then stored in sealed packaging, which prevents air or moisture from passing through.

If you keep the powdered milk in its packaging, it is a forever shelf-life food. Even after it has been opened, it will probably last 2-10 years, so long as you keep it away from humidity and heat.

Read how to store dried milk for the long term and how to make powdered milk.

15. Salt and Bouillon

Salt is a preservative for food, so it is no surprise that it lasts forever. Instead of just stockpiling salt, you might also want to stockpile bouillon in your emergency supplies. It also has a forever shelf life but has more flavor than salt alone – which can do wonders for spicing up bland emergency meals.

16. Instant Mashed Potatoes

Instant mashed potatoes are one of my favorite backpacking foods and great for emergency prep. The flakes come sealed in packages, usually with 2-4 servings per package. This makes them very easy to ration.

I also love that instant potatoes can be made with straight-up water – no heating required. If you don't have an emergency stove or cannot use it for whatever reason (or it's raining while camping, and you don't feel like cooking), add water to the flakes and stir.

In sealed packaging, instant potatoes have a shelf life of 5-15 years (despite what the "Use by" date says). Once opened, you can expect them to last 6-12 months in a cool, dry place. Read more about storing potato flakes long-term.

17. Cocoa and Cacao Powder

Unsweetened cocoa powder can last 6 years past its expiration date, though it will lose some of its taste over time. Just don't eat it if it has a moldy, unpleasant odor.

Read: How to store cocoa powder long term

Cacao is a less-processed version of cocoa. It won't last as long, but you can expect a shelf life of 2-3 years if stored in a cool, dry place.

18. Flour

Flour is made from ground-up grains. Because the hulls have been removed or destroyed, flours won't last as long as whole grains. However, you can still get a very long shelf life.

White flour stored in a cool, dry pantry has a shelf life of approximately 1 to 2 years. Whole wheat flour, which contains more oils, lasts only a few months.

White and whole wheat flour will last around 10 years in a Mylar bag with oxygen absorbers.

Read how to store flour for the long term.

TIP: Food rotation is a lot easier if you keep it organized!

19. Cooking Oils

Most cooking oils will last at least 2 years and probably much longer in a cool place.

Heat is the biggest enemy of oils. Some oils – like coconut and olive oil – will quickly deteriorate in hot temperatures. You will notice a nasty smell. It's better to stick with sunflower, soy, and canola oils for emergency preparedness.

20. Herbs and Spices

Herbs and spices are generally dehydrated. Without much moisture in them, most will last 2-5 years without special storage. These are great to include in your emergency food storage to add flavor to bland survival meals.

Read more about storing spices long term

21. Crackers

Many supermarket crackers will easily last 6-9 months in the pantry without special storage. Some types of crackers have even longer shelf lives. For example, [Hardtack biscuits](#) have a forever shelf life and were a primary food for sailors over the centuries. Read [how to store crackers long term](#).

22. Jell-O Mix

In its unopened package, Jell-O mix can potentially last forever. Once you open the package, though, you'll need to use the powder within 3 months.

23. Vinegar

The acidity in vinegar acts as a natural preservative, giving it a forever shelf life. You don't need to refrigerate vinegar to get this long shelf life. Ensure you avoid vinegar with herbs, as those herbs might eventually go bad.

Also, see [does vinegar go bad?](#)

24. Some Condiments

Soy sauce and Worcestershire sauce will last forever in your pantry. Ketchup also has a long shelf life and will last around 2 years past the expiration date. So stroll down the condiments aisle and look at the shelf lives. You'll find lots of good items for your emergency food storage.

25. Baking Soda, Powder, and Yeast

There's not much point in stockpiling flour if you don't have a way to make things out of it. So remember to include some baking soda, baking powder, and yeast in your emergency food stockpile.

These are all long-shelf life foods, even without special storage methods. You'll also want to look up some recipes for solar ovens for making bread loaves or learn how to make flatbread in a skillet.

- **Baking soda, unopened:** Indefinitely (but will lose potency after approximately 3 years). See [how to store baking soda long term](#).
- **Baking powder, unopened:** 6-12 months
- **Dry yeast, unopened:** 2-4 years past its expiration date. See [how to store dry yeast long term](#).

26. Instant Coffee

Coffee isn't a food, but many people wouldn't want to live without it. The good news is that instant coffee (made by freeze-drying) has a forever shelf life.

Read [how to store coffee long-term](#).

Before You Begin Stockpiling these Foods

All of these foods can last a very long time. Some even have shelf lives of “forever.” However, that doesn’t necessarily mean they will last through a disaster. Nor does it mean you’ll be able to eat them during a disaster.

For example:

- Honey lasts forever. But it will be useless if you store it in a glass jar that is smashed during a hurricane.
- Pasta can last 5+ years but is useless if you don’t have water and an emergency stove for cooking it.
- Dehydrated foods don’t require cooking but will be useless if rodents or pests get at them

Making an emergency food stockpile requires careful planning. You’ll need to consider things like:

- Where will you keep your emergency foods
- How will you package them
- Nutritional value
- Ways to cook foods without power
- Water required for cooking food

Are MREs Healthy: Could They Be the Key to Survival?

<https://www.primalsurvivor.net/are-mres-healthy/>

Popular amongst preppers and survivalists, MREs are, in many ways, the ultimate survival food. Calorie-dense and nutritionally balanced, MREs are the main operational food ration for the United States Armed Forces.

MREs are undeniably useful, but are they healthy?

MREs are nutritious enough and designed to deliver as much nutrition and as many calories as possible. They do not, however, constitute a healthy diet, especially not if consumed for more than 21 days consecutively.

The Benefits Of Eating MREs



While MREs are probably the furthest you can get from gourmet cuisine, they're surprisingly popular amongst civilians.

Author, Anastacia Marx de Salcedo, believes that MREs have helped people “deal with a chaotic and unpredictable world,” giving them some much-needed “comfort food for courage.”

Furthermore, according to Dr. J. Philip Karl, a research dietitian at the US Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine, “*The MRE actually provides more fiber and more of several vitamins and minerals compared to people’s typical diets.*”

There’s no disputing the nutritional value of MREs. Containing approximately 1,200 calories, they give you enough protein, fat, and carbohydrates to perform the most taxing of tasks. Each MRE also contains one-third of the Military Recommended Daily Allowance of vitamins and minerals.

These benefits only go so far, however, as the reporter Juan Leon discovered when he took on the Independent Journal Review’s 21-day MRE challenge in 2016.

The Negative Effects of Living on A Diet of MREs

Despite his initial confidence and enthusiasm, after 10 days of eating nothing but MREs, Juan started to experience stomach pains and constipation. By day 13, he said,

“Generally, I’m just feeling very, very tired and low energy. Physically, I just feel bloated all the time.”

Juan’s experiences were similar to those described by military personnel, many of whom have complained of gastrointestinal issues when living off MREs in operational environments.

Concerned that MREs were harming soldiers’ gut microbiota composition, the US Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine launched a study aimed at establishing if there was a link between eating MREs and “a dwindling frequency of bowel movements.” The study, involving 60 adults aged between 18 and 61 years old, found that MREs do, indeed, cause an “intestinal traffic jam,” largely because they lack the good bacteria found in fresh foods, like yogurt and fruit.

Despite that, the researchers concluded that MREs did not “increase IP [intestinal permeability] or inflammation,” nor did they “result in clinically meaningful gastrointestinal symptoms when compared to typical American diets.”

The trouble is a typical American diet isn’t particularly healthy either. It contains too much fat, sodium, and sugar – just like your average MRE.

Why MREs Aren’t the Best Survival Food

As MREs were created for soldiers, they’re designed to fuel heavy physical activity. As a result, they contain high levels of fat and sodium, which is ideal if you’re running long distances, shooting at enemies, and digging ditches.

There Is Too Much Fat And Sodium In The Average MRE

If you’re sitting in a bivy sack waiting for the rain to stop, however, your body doesn’t need that kind of fuel.

Instead of expelling the excess sodium through sweat, you put yourself in danger of developing high blood pressure. Rather than burning off the high-fat content in an MRE, you’ll simply be sitting around as your cholesterol levels soar.

Even compared to the average American diet, the percentage of fat in a standard MRE is high. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, the diets of American men contain around 34.6% fat. For women, it’s slightly higher at 35.1%. In an MRE, however, you’ll be getting a whopping 36% fat. Only the most enthusiastic of survivalists are busy enough to benefit from that!

On the plus side, you can get some heavy physical activity simply from carrying a three-day supply of MREs. The average MRE weighs between 18 and 26 ounces, and you need three of them a day. That means adding nearly 200 ounces, or 12.5 lb, to your bug-out bag in food alone.

MREs Contain Very Little Dietary Fiber

MREs are also very low in dietary fiber, which is why they sometimes cause constipation. You will get some gum, sweetened with xylitol, that should alleviate some of your problems, and the crackers also contain a higher than average vegetable content, which is designed to improve digestion, but it's doubtful these will be sufficient to ease your discomfort.

The lack of fiber means you'll rarely feel full after an MRE and may experience fluctuations in your blood sugar levels and irregular bowel movements to boot.

MREs Lack Flavor And Texture

While there's no disputing the fact that MREs last a long time, just how long you'll last eating nothing but Meal Ready to Eat is somewhat more questionable. To make matters worse, some MREs are virtually inedible.

In 2008, some unfortunate soldiers were given a Veggie Omelet in their MREs, which quickly became known as the Vomlet. With its gelatinous texture and complete lack of flavor, the Vomlet is universally agreed to be the worst MRE in military history.

You can get around some of the health issues associated with MREs by reading this article about where to buy cheap MREs online. Some of these offerings, like the reduced-sodium MREs from Sopakco, won't put as much pressure on your digestive system, but even these can't really be called healthy.

Conclusion

MREs are healthy enough to live on for a few days, but after that, your body will begin to take the strain.

If you're determined to take MREs with you when you bug out, you might find that making your own MREs provides a healthier and cheaper alternative to pre-packaged meals.

That way, you can include items that contain healthy bacteria, like yogurt, and those that will help regulate your bowel movements, like refried beans.

How to Make DIY Survival Food (Homemade MRE's)

<https://www.primalsurvivor.net/how-to-make-your-own-survival-food-mres/>

Before we get into how you can make DIY Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), let's take a second to clarify what survival food is. It sure isn't a bunch of non-perishables that you stockpile in your pantry!

While it is good practice to stockpile non-perishables, these aren't going to help you through long-term disasters like EMP, hurricanes, or any of the other likely disasters.

Sure, you can live off canned peas for an indefinite time, but most non-perishables will go bad quickly after you open them, require lots of water to prepare, and have extensive cooking times. And good luck carrying canned food with you if you've got to bug out somewhere!

For a food to be considered a good survival food, it must be:

- Lightweight
- Compact in size
- Have a very long shelf life
- Have a long shelf life *after* it is opened
- Be easy to prepare
- Require little or no cooking time

Dehydrating versus Freeze-Drying

Freeze-dried foods are great for survival. The process keeps the nutrients intact, and freeze-dried foods usually taste delicious. Their only issue is that freeze-dried foods don't shrink, so they take up a bit of space.

Supplies for Making Your Own MREs:

- Dehydrator – See our guide to the best food dehydrator
- Mylar bags – See our guide to using Mylar bags
- Vacuum sealer
- Desiccant, such as Silica gel. Or you can use an oxygen absorber.

Which Foods Can You Dehydrate?

You'd be surprised at how many different types of food you can dehydrate. There are the obvious ones like fruit slices (I like dried banana best), tomatoes, and jerky, but here are some of the surprising foods you can dehydrate:

- Yogurt
- Mashed potatoes
- Pasta sauce
- Hummus
- bananas
- Dried beans

To dehydrate these foods, just dry them as you would fruit leather.

Ensure they are pureed first (such as with pasta sauce or mashed potatoes). Then spread them out on parchment paper in your dehydrator.

The finished result varies.

Refried beans look a bit like cardboard when done. Yogurt becomes a crumbly paper.

Which Foods NOT to Dehydrate

You can dehydrate just about anything – but not all foods rehydrate very well.

I learned this on a backpacking trip where I made some vegetable soup to take with us. The tomatoes, kale, and onions rehydrated well – but the carrots and mushrooms remained tough little rocks, even after pre-soaking them and boiling them for a long time. We ate them anyway, but it would probably be harsh on our digestive system in a survival situation.

Here are foods you do NOT want to dehydrate:

- **Avocado and high-fat foods:** The fat can make them go rancid quickly, and it will destroy your entire MRE contents
- **Fatty meats:** for the same reason
- **Cheese:** You will be better off buying commercially dried cheese
- **Eggs:** They are weird when you try to rehydrate them and won't work for baking or cooking needs; consider buying commercially dried eggs instead.
- **Milk:** This can be done, but only with low-fat milk because the fat can make it go rancid. You'd be better off buying commercially dried milk instead.
- **Store-bought condiments:** They have too many chemicals and additives in them that they will likely separate when you try to rehydrate
- **Root vegetables:** You CAN dehydrate these, but they will take a long time to rehydrate and thus aren't suitable for use as survival foods.

*If you want to dehydrate root vegetables (beets, carrots, potatoes, turnips), you should BLEND THEM INTO A POWDER. This powder can then be put into the MREs for added nutrition or to make the base. For example, carrot powder can make a great carrot soup.

Foods NOT to Include in Your MREs

Remember that survival food must be able to be cooked quickly and with little water. So, even though a lot of DIY MRE recipes include these foods, I am putting them on the “off-limits” list:

- Dry beans (though lentils work well because they cook so quickly)
- Pasta
- Rice
- Dried root veggies (unless ground into a powder first)

Each Homemade MRE Should Have:

As a survival food, DIY Meals Ready to Eat are meant to deliver maximum nutrition while still tasting decent (compared to survival food bars or shop-bought MREs which are all about providing calories in as dense a package as possible to keep you alive).

To ensure your MREs keep you healthy, each MRE needs to contain: carbohydrates, protein, and fruits/vegetables.

*It is also good to include fats in your emergency food.

Fats are necessary for nutrition because they are excellent energy sources and are essential for absorbing fat-soluble vitamins.

However, since fatty foods go rancid quickly, be cautious about adding these to your DIY MREs. It is safest to buy commercially made freeze-dried fats (such as freeze-dried cheese or freeze-dried milk) and carefully check the expiration date and storage methods before adding them to your MREs. Or keep these separate!

Carbohydrate = Energy

Examples include couscous, fast-cooking noodles (such as ramen, soup, or rice noodles), oats, and mashed potato flakes.

Protein = Strength

Examples include jerky, freeze-dried meats, lentils, dried bean paste

Vegetables and/or Fruits = Vitamins, Minerals, and Fiber

Examples include dehydrated or freeze-dried tomatoes, peppers, onions, spinach, kale, bananas, apples, raisins, and peaches.

As a general rule, try to aim for as much variety as possible, especially for fruits and veggies.

You don't have to memorize each food's nutritional qualities, but know that specific colors are associated with certain nutrients.

For example, bright red foods like tomatoes are rich in antioxidants which you will need to boost your immunity in survival situations.

Dark leafy greens have minerals like calcium and iron.

Example MRE Combinations:

Breakfast MRE

- Oats
- Dried apples and bananas
- Cinnamon
- Sugar
- Dried milk

Tomato and Chicken Soup MRE

- Dried tomatoes, carrots, and peppers — blended into powder
- Dried milk
- Soup noodles
- Herbs and spices
- Freeze-dried chicken bits
- Salt, pepper

Mashed Potatoes and Steak MRE

- Mashed potato flakes
- Dehydrated turnip or celery root powder
- Freeze-dried steak or dehydrated beef jerky
- Dehydrated spinach
- Salt, pepper

Couscous and Hummus MRE

*Couscous is like the Middle Eastern version of rice. It cooks in 2 minutes and without much water. Hummus is made from blended chickpeas and dehydrates well.

- Couscous
- Dehydrated hummus
- Dehydrated red peppers and tomatoes
- Dehydrated kale
- Parsley, cilantro, and sesame seeds

How to Get Rid of Moths and Weevils In Your Food Stockpile

<https://www.primalsurvivor.net/bugs-weevils-moths-food-storage/>

Once you have moths or weevils in your dry staples, they are tough to eliminate. I've experienced this firsthand, and (embarrassingly) it's happened more than once.

Here's how to get rid of the pantry pests.

Step 1: Contain the Infestation

Hopefully, your pest infestation is limited to just one container of food. For example, if you stored rice in an air-tight container, you might see bugs inside the container but not in the rest of your pantry.

In this case, you must ensure the insects don't escape. Do NOT open the infested container: The moths/weevils will fly out, and suddenly, your entire pantry is open to infestation.

Stick the entire container in the freezer for a few days to kill the insects inside. Or, if the container is microwave safe, you can microwave it on high.

Step 2: Protect Unaffected Foods

Even if you can't see any signs of infestation (such as silk webbing or live larvae), your other dry foods could be infested.

Any food stored with less-than-ideal methods (such as in boxes, bags, buckets, or recycled jars) should be treated. As discussed earlier, you can deep freeze, microwave, or heat the food to kill insects and their eggs.

I recommend freezing the foods until you are sure the infestation is gone. Or, use this as a lesson and transfer the food to more reliable storage methods, such as sealed Mylar bags or mason jars with oxygen absorbers.

Step 3: Decide Whether You Want to Throw Away the Infested Food

Yes, I know it sounds gross, but **eating (cooked) moths and weevils is perfectly safe**. This includes their eggs, larvae, pupae, cocoons, silk, and adults. The caveat is that you want to cook the food first.

Read more about [What Happens If You Eat Weevils in Food](#)

If you are okay eating bug-infested food:

Then, cook, heat, or freeze the food to kill the pests and their eggs. This will prevent the infestation from spreading. Be careful that live adults don't escape while you are treating the food. If possible, freeze the entire affected container without opening it.

*If you soak beans or larger grains, moth and weevil bodies will float to the top and can be removed. Some cocoons and larvae will still be in the food, but they won't be visible and thus less gross to eat.

If you don't want to eat infested food:

Then you'll need to toss it. It sucks to waste food. Alternatively, it can be used as bird feed. Make sure no live insects escape when dumping the food into the trash. They will easily escape your trash can, and the infestation will start again.

Step 4: Clean the Heck Out of Your Home

Once you've gotten the food out, you must thoroughly clean your home of weevils and moths. Take EVERYTHING out of the pantry – including canned goods and jars – and wipe them down. Then vacuum the shelves and wipe those down, too.

Some people successfully use natural cleansers like vinegar and water to get rid of pantry insects. Others recommend household insecticides meant specifically for pantry pests.

It's often not enough to clean your pantry. You may have to clean your entire kitchen or areas around your pantry.

Moths tend to be worse than weevils because they can fly all over your home. Weevils don't make it as far, but don't be surprised if you find them in your kitchen cabinets. In a worst-case scenario, you might need to put all your dry staples in the freezer or toss them, have an exterminator come, and leave your home until the fumes settle.

Remember, it only takes ONE moth or weevil to restart an infestation. So, you must be thorough in cleaning out your pantry. Or get used to the idea of eating insects in your dry foods!

Have you had an insect infestation in your food storage? Let us know how you dealt with it in the comments section below.

Flour and Rice Bugs: How to Prevent & Kill Pests in Your Food Stockpile

<https://www.primalsurvivor.net/?s=bugs>

Want to stockpile flour, rice, dehydrated fruit, or other dry goods? If you don't take precautions, you will end up with an insect infestation.

Speaking from experience, these moths and weevils (aka rice and flour bugs) can take over your entire home.

Preventing pantry pests is much easier than dealing with an infestation. Here's what you need to know about insect-proof food storage methods and what to do if you get an infestation.

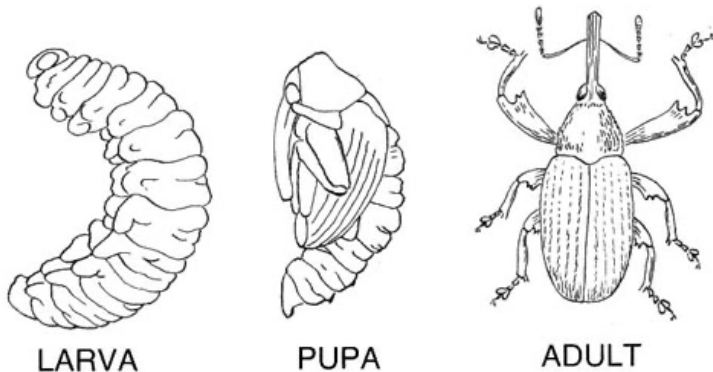
What Are Pantry Bugs?

Any insect that gets into your food storage is considered a pantry bug. The two most common are weevils and moths.

- **Weevils:** These are small beetles with long snouts. There are over 1,000 types of weevils.
- **Moths:** The most common type of pantry moth is the Indianmeal moth (*Plodia interpunctella*).



Both weevils and moths have similar life cycles. They start as eggs and then hatch into larvae, which look like small whitish worms. The larvae feed on your dry pantry foods for several days. During this time, the larvae grow and will molt, leaving behind a dry shell. The larvae then enter the pupa (cocoon) stage before emerging as an adult.



Weevil life cycle. You are in big trouble once you have adult weevils or moths in your pantry. They can produce *hundreds* of eggs, which then hatch and produce more eggs.

Where Do Pantry Insects Come From?

I once had some buckwheat in an air-tight mason jar that I forgot about. When I finally went to use the buckwheat, live moths were fluttering around *inside* the jar.

The container was air-tight, so how did the moths get there?

In some cases, insect infestation occurs when moths or weevils get into your home from the outdoors. But, in most cases, **the insect eggs are already in the food when you purchase it.**

You can't see the tiny eggs, and they are harmless to eat. But, if you let the food sit long enough, the eggs will eventually hatch, and the larva will eat your food.

If the infested food isn't in an air-tight container, you will be in serious trouble. The hatched insects easily escape from paper and plastic packaging and infest all other food in your pantry.

Which Foods Are Prone to Pantry Pests?



Pantry pests will eat virtually any dry food. Some pests prefer certain types of food over others.

For example, I've noticed that the moths that infested my pantry preferred to eat flour. By contrast, the weevils seemed to like beans better. Neither of them got into my powdered coconut milk.

Regardless of what they prefer, pantry insects will feed on virtually any dry food they can find, including:

- Flour, cornmeal, and cake mixes
- Rice and whole grains
- Beans and legumes
- Breakfast cereals – [how to store breakfast cereal long term](#)
- Pasta
- Cookies and crackers
- Spices and herbs – read about [how to store spices long term](#)
- Dried fruit
- Chocolate
- Nuts
- Tea
- Powdered milk
- Pet food
- Tobacco

How to Prevent Insects in Your Stored Food

Depending on the conditions and type of pantry pest, it can take just a few weeks for the eggs to hatch and larvae to grow. Thus, the most common advice on preventing pantry pests is to “don’t store more food than you can eat in a month.”

This advice doesn’t apply to preppers who want to stockpile emergency food. For long-term storage, the following two methods can prevent pantry insects.

Option 1: Kill Insect Eggs on Dry Foods BEFORE Storing

Since most infestations occur from eggs already inside the food, you need to kill these eggs before putting the food in storage. There are three ways of doing this: microwaving, freezing, and heating.

Microwaving:

Microwaving dry foods will kill insect eggs.

How long do you need to microwave food to kill insect eggs? Recommendations vary.

Some studies found that 28 seconds at 500 watts killed eggs of all pantry pest species. However, some other sources recommend microwaving on high for 5 minutes to kill eggs.

Unfortunately, not all foods can be microwaved to kill pests.

- **Foods for Sprouting:** If you plan on sprouting your dry foods (such as beans, seeds, etc.), do not microwave them. I did a test at home – I microwaved various beans and seeds and then tried to sprout them. The non-microwaved ones from the same batch sprouted as expected, but none of the microwaved ones sprouted.
- **Cornmeal:** Corn scorches easily. I ended up with burn spots in the cornmeal when I tried microwaving it.
- **Whole grains:** Research found that microwaving for more than 90 seconds damaged the endosperm of grains, which could mean reduced nutrition.
- **Pasta:** Pasta (not corn pasta) can be microwaved to kill insect eggs. The problem is that hot spots can form, and these may leave burnt areas. Don’t microwave too much pasta at once; the center shouldn’t get too hot.

For these reasons, **I can only recommend the microwaving method for white rice, flour, and oats.**

Heating:

Heat is another way to kill insect eggs in flour, rice, and dry staples. Put the food on a shallow oven tray and spread it out evenly.

How long do you need to heat the grains? And at what temperature?

Again, sources vary. Some say 120°F for two hours. Others say 140°F for 15 minutes to kill insect eggs. Yet another says 140°F for two hours. ([7](#), [8](#), [9](#))

As with microwaving, heating grains/beans/seeds can prevent them from sprouting later on, this isn't a big deal if you only plan on cooking your dry food storage.

However, I do plan on sprouting some of my dry staples, so I'd have fresh veggies to eat if SHTF during winter when foraging isn't feasible.

Freezing:

Another way to kill insect eggs in dry foods is to freeze them. This is contingent on you having enough space in your freezer. The good news is that freezing doesn't affect seeds' ability to sprout as much as heating does.

How long do you need to freeze foods to kill insect eggs? Recommendations from reputable sources vary from 3 to 7 days at 0F.

I also found one source claiming that freezing only kills *larvae* and *adult* insects – not the eggs. They suggest putting infested food in the freezer for 2-3 days, removing it for 24 hours so some eggs can hatch, and then repeating the freezing process. That sounds like an insane hassle!

In my experience and from what other preppers have told me, freezing for a few days *does* seem to prevent insect infestations. This is anecdotal, as we can't be sure whether an infestation would have occurred if we didn't freeze the dry staples before storage.

Important: Let the frozen food come to room temperature before transferring it to buckets or storage containers. Otherwise, condensation will form in the container, and moisture will spoil your food.



Option 2: Use Oxygen Absorbers When Storing

Insects (including their eggs) require oxygen to survive. (14) If you remove oxygen from an air-tight storage container, the eggs will never be able to hatch. Oxygen absorbers are a cheap, effective way to remove oxygen.

Oxygen absorbers are little packets that absorb oxygen from the air. If you put an oxygen absorber with your food in an air-tight container, it will be safe from insect pests.

Bonus – oxygen absorbers don't affect seeds' ability to sprout! On the contrary, seeds survive better in low/no oxygen environments. If you plan to sprout any of your dry food stockpile, OAs are the best storage method. (15, 16)

You can use oxygen absorbers in mason jars for small amounts of food. For larger quantities of food, I recommend getting Mylar bags. Sealing the bags requires effort, but your food will be safe for *years* or even *decades* with this method.

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Related

- [How to store flour](#)
- [How to store cornmeal](#)
- [How to store dry pasta](#)
- [How to store dry beans](#)
- [How to store rice](#)
- [How to store sugar](#)
- [How to store dried milk](#)