

What's For Dinner?- Part 1, by J.R.

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I tell my family that those are the three most dreaded words in the English language. At the same time, I often think about how very difficult life is going to become when most women will not be able to answer that question for their families. While those who are preparing for complete collapse of the economy and our society may feel they have the situation covered, the reality is that the vast majority of preppers, at least those I have conversed with and observed, do not. The reasons vary. For most, it is lack of knowledge of what foods should be stored in what quantities. For some it is normalcy bias—life can't possibly be bad for that long, so I don't need to store much or worry about a varied diet. For others it boils down to the mistaken belief that if they and theirs are hungry enough, they'll be content to eat whatever they have. This article is not focused on correcting a person's normalcy bias. I will, however, address the other two widely held beliefs I have observed among friends, family, and mere acquaintances and as one who taught food storage classes over the years.

When it comes to food storage, I have observed that most people fall into one of two camps. The first is composed of people who store primarily the long-term basics of grains, beans, oils, salt, and sugar—a plan that resembles to varying degrees what the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) has counseled their members to store. It is the most economical way to stockpile the minimum emergency storage. The second group is comprised of people who store primarily what I call the "expanded storage". This storage provides much more variety and therefore requires more attention to record-keeping and rotation. Both storage plans satisfy the minimum number of calories for individuals who are not stressed and physically exerting themselves, but we are not planning for a life of ease when TEOTWAWKI hits. If we want our family to thrive in the hard times, we really need to have a comprehensive storage of the long-term basics as well as the expanded storage.

THE BASICS

Let's begin with the bare basics using lists of the essential long-term storage foods put forth by the LDS. I use their lists because the LDS have a long history of counseling their

members to be prepared for uncertain times and have done the research on what staples to store and in what quantities.

These amounts will provide 2000 calories per day– the minimum for survival– for one year. For comparison, you can go to any of a number of food storage companies and see that they offer “year’s supply” food packages that provide between 1200 and 2000 calories per day. This is the *minimum* number of calories. Please keep in mind that when the body is stressed, as most people will be when TEOTWAWKI hits, the body needs more calories. When we are cold, we need more. When we are working hard, we need a whole lot more. (Can you imagine telling your husband or teenage sons who have been at hard labor all day that they are limited to 2000 calories?) This is not the time to decide to lose that extra weight. That will come regardless. A decreased calorie intake will result in a decreased ability to think. It will also result in a decrease in body heat generated and an increased need for more layers of clothing and blankets.

List A: 300 pounds grains, 75 lbs dry milk, 60 lbs beans, 60 lbs sugar, 20 lbs oil, 8 lbs salt.

List B: 400 pounds grains, 20 lbs dry milk, 60 lbs beans, 60 lbs sugar, 20 lbs oil, 10 lbs salt.

These two lists provide 2000 calories per day for one year. List A is for children and pregnant and nursing women who need the extra calcium and vitamins for proper development. List B is for the rest of the people. You will note the differences are in the recommended storage amounts for grains, dry milk, and salt. List A has more calories and calcium from the dry milk, and less from grains. List A also needs less salt due to the lower grain amount.

Now that you know what you need to store in what amounts, let’s discuss each of these staple items in detail so that you can make the most informed decisions for your family’s storage program.

Grains

Grains are the basis for most food storage programs. Calorie-wise, they provide the biggest bang for the buck. Whole grains are recommended, not only due to their higher nutritional value but also to their generally longer storage life, the primary exception being rice. (White rice has a much longer shelf life than brown.) The LDS church advocates a

minimum of 400 pounds per year (with the complementary 20 pounds of dry milk) for adults or 300 pounds per year for children and nursing and pregnant women (with the complementary 75 pounds of dry milk). Wheat and milk have all nine essential amino acids for making a complete protein. There is no recommendation for how much to store for each kind of grain. That is personal preference. In our family, wheat comprises about 70% of our grain storage, with pasta, rice, oats, and popcorn in about equal proportions for the balance.

Wheat

Wheat has been advocated as the best choice for food storage in the United States primarily due to the fact that it is what we eat in this country but also due to the fact that wheat and milk combined (in the same meal) provide all the essential amino acids for protein.

There are four major types of wheat– hard red, hard white, soft white, and durum.

Hard red wheat is what our pioneer ancestors raised for centuries. Kept cool and dry, it has a long shelf life. The flour is slightly darker, the grain itself a little bitter. According to Chef Brad of Fusion Grain Cooking, hard red wheat is an acid-based grain. It is this acidity that causes some people digestive problems. Hard red wheat is only very slightly more nutritious than hard white wheat. Hard red wheat was all that was available to me when I began my long-term storage program over thirty years ago, and it was acceptable because it was the only option. However, with the advent of hard white wheat, hard white is all I will buy. I can't recommend it enough.

Hard white wheat was developed from crossing hard red wheat and soft white wheat and selecting for the desirable traits of both. It is very slightly less nutritious than hard red wheat. As an alkaline-based grain, it is easier for most people to digest. Hard white wheat flour bakes into perfectly light loaves of 100% whole wheat bread. It makes delicious cookies. And because it lacks the bitterness of hard red wheat, you can use less sweetener than 100% whole wheat recipes normally call for.

Soft white wheat has a shorter shelf life due to its higher moisture content. It is prized for pastries, pasta, cakes, and crackers.

Durum wheat is most often used for making pasta.

Wheat is the most versatile of the grains. Not only can it be ground into flour, but the

berries, whole or cracked, can be cooked into a cereal, boiled and used to extend hamburger, and sprouted to provide a vitamin C source when there are no other options.

Consider also storing some wheat to sprout and feed to chickens. Sprouted wheat contains small amounts of vitamins A, B, C, and E not found in whole grain bread.

For maximum nutritional value, whole wheat flour should be used immediately after grinding. Otherwise, store freshly ground wheat in the freezer until ready to use.

White flour (which has had the bran, the oils, and most of the nutrients removed) has a shelf life of 1-2 years. I store only 25-50 lbs, just enough to keep the family pastry chef happy.

Rice

Rice and beans also make a complete protein. Brown rice is high in oils and has a shelf life of about six months. For this reason, it is not recommended for inclusion in your home storage program. White rice, on the other hand, has a 25-30 year shelf life. It is also a good choice for extending your supply of dog food. You can also make your own instant rice by cooking the rice fully and then dehydrating it. To prepare, do just as you would for commercially prepared instant rice.

Oats

The two main choices with regard to oats are rolled or quick. Rolled oats have a longer shelf life than quick oats, but for most people the choice comes down to personal preference. In this house I prefer quick; my husband prefers rolled, so we store both.

Popcorn

We hope popcorn will only be used for snacking, but it may also be our emergency food on those days when dinner gets a bit overdone or a recipe goes horribly wrong. Some preppers advocate grinding popcorn into flour for cornbread. It makes a gritty cornbread. If you like grit, great. If not, store dent corn for this purpose instead.

Dent Corn

Dent corn is what you want for grinding into cornmeal to make corn bread. Dent corn is also what you would use for making the flour for corn tortillas and masa; however, you need to add lime in a process known as nixtamalization.

Pasta

Pasta adds variety to your diet. It has a shelf life of about eight years.

Even the most careful of food storage practitioners will occasionally find that some of their grain has been compromised. Fortunately, unless it has become moldy, it does not have to be wasted. It can be fed directly to livestock, sprouted and fed to livestock, or grown in the garden and then tilled into the soil for a green manure.

Of all the food groups, it is most important to become accustomed to eating wheat now but gradually. Some people need time to make the transition, or they will experience intestinal discomfort.

As of this writing, wheat can be obtained most inexpensively through the LDS Home Storage Center (link at the end of this article), for about \$7.00 for 25 lbs. They carry hard red and hard white. If your local Wal-Mart doesn't stock bulk bags of wheat, they can be ordered in for about \$14 for 25 lbs.

Loss leaders at grocery stores are a better option for rice and pasta. Dent corn can be purchased from Honeyville Grain. Oats are most likely least expensive at the LDS Home Storage Center.

To prepare all grains for storage, place them in the freezer for at least 72 hours to kill any bugs. Remove from the freezer and let come to room temperature before putting into buckets or mylar bags. If you are using oxygen absorbers, you can skip the freezing step.

All grains should be stored in a cool, dry place, preferably below 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

Beans

The minimum recommended storage amount is 60 pounds of dry beans (not green beans, not commercially canned) per person per year. Beans are high in protein and low in fat, and are a good source of many trace minerals. It does not matter what kinds of beans you store—white, pink, pinto, red, kidney, black, lima, garbanzo, lentils, et cetera. In this house we store only what we really like. The chief cook and bottle washer here is of Mexican descent, so we have a lot of pinto beans. We also store some black beans, some white, and a few pink and garbanzo.

While most of us think of beans as a side dish or component of soup, they can actually be used in a wide variety of recipes. Beans can be sprouted. Mung beans are especially suited for this. Beans can also be ground into flour using a grain mill. This flour can be used

instead of wheat flour or cornstarch in thickening soups.

Bean puree is also advocated for use in baking as a way of substituting for oil in baking and boosting the nutritional value of sweets. I've read rave reviews from people praising the use of bean puree in chocolate chip cookies and cakes. In the interest of research and providing my classes with samples, I have made some of these recipes. Using the full amount of bean puree recommended results in a very heavy product. Small children might be fooled; I don't know, as I didn't have any around at the time to offer samples to. My older children and teens were not fooled. When I used half of the recommended amounts of bean flour, most people said the result was tolerable but not desirable. Basically, they'd rather just do without. If you want to give this a try, here are the suggestions on how to go about this. For bean puree to substitute for oil in baking, mash beans with enough water to make a puree. To substitute for butter in baking, mash cooked, drained beans into a paste. Substitute in a 1:1 ratio, meaning that if your recipe calls for one cup of oil or butter, use one cup of pureed or mashed beans instead. White beans are recommended as being the best to substitute in baking.

Because dry beans require a long time to cook (and will thus require a lot of fuel in a grid-down situation), I always keep a good supply of beans that I have pressure canned at home. Dry beans are among the easiest foods to can. Consult your Ball Blue Book ^[1] (the exact title has changed over the years, and the current edition is no longer blue, but usually the title includes Ball Blue Book, and that is how it will be referred to in this article) for exact directions. Basically you soak the beans overnight, rinse in the morning, add the appropriate amount to your jar, add salt and boiling water, and process according to instructions with your pressure canner ^[2]. There are also several websites that advocate the canning of beans that have not been presoaked, i.e., dry beans are put into the jar, salt and boiling water are added, and then the beans are canned under pressure. This method is not USDA-approved, which may not matter to you; I have never seen any reasons offered as to why this is the case. However, I and others who have tried this method have noted a much higher seal failure rate that we can only attribute to the beans being unsoaked.

For many people beans are not a favorite food storage item. This is not due to the eating of the beans, but rather what happens afterwards. Numerous remedies are suggested for this problem, but the fact of the matter is that people who are not accustomed to eating beans on a regular basis lack the proper intestinal flora to digest beans properly. Once you start

eating beans regularly, any problems with gas should disappear entirely.

Beans are very sensitive to heat and should be stored in conditions as cool as possible. Beans exposed to higher temperatures become tough, take longer to soak, and longer to cook. Unfortunately, we sometimes have beans that won't soften with cooking. There are several ways to address this problem. First, add acidic foods such as molasses [3], tomatoes [4], and vinegar near the end of the cooking time as these items tend to toughen bean skins. For the same reason, salt [5] should not be added until just before serving. Second, hard water may cause hard beans. If the cooked beans are still not soft, try adding ¼ teaspoon baking soda to soften the beans. If this still doesn't work, there is yet another remedy to try, but it won't work for tonight's dinner. Try freezing the beans. As the water in the beans freezes, it will break down the cell walls to soften the beans. If that still doesn't work, pressure cooking or canning the beans almost always will. And if that doesn't work, the beans can still be ground in a mill and the resulting flour used in soups. However, bear in mind that the increasing toughness in the beans suggests a corresponding decrease in nutritional value.

The LDS Home Storage Center sells a few varieties of beans (white, pinto, and black) in bulk bags as well as #10 cans. The HSC also sells dehydrated refried beans. While I know of a few people who have been happy with the product, I have not, and therefore I cannot recommend it. (Perhaps it is my heritage coming through, and I'm too picky about the consistency, or perhaps my beans were old and tough.) The prices for the bulk bags are comparable to grocery stores' sale prices.

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URLs in this post:

[1] Ball Blue Book:

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B00Q5T4L4G/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B00Q5T4L4G&linkCode=as2&tag=survivalcom-20&linkId=TO2ERYGXVIW2VAEM

[2] pressure canner:

http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B0002808Z2/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B0002808Z2&linkCode=as2

&tag=survivalcom-20&linkId=A3Q75GOZ5MAGXTGC

[3] molasses: **http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001E2M70A/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B001E2M70A&linkCode=as2&tag=survivalcom-20&linkId=EZ7GXUTV66KZP3TM**

[4] tomatoes: **http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000LKZ9KK/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B000LKZ9KK&linkCode=as2&tag=survivalcom-20&linkId=MCHXONVUVESF2RZP**

[5] salt: **http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001GHYO4E/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=B001GHYO4E&linkCode=as2&tag=survivalcom-20&linkId=N3BTFKYQC5QRQBFV**

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