

# The Survival Mom's Top 12 Instant Survival Tips

## My Food Storage Master Plan

I admit I'm a bit of a latecomer to the whole food storage scene. It wasn't too many years ago that the only thing I could say I stocked up on was boxes of brownie mix. Never a bad idea, but hardly comprehensive!

After some research and a few missteps, my current food storage plan is built around three categories of food.

### 1. Grocery store goods

This category is the easiest to acquire, the food is often very inexpensive, and it's all familiar stuff. During stressful times, I think we'll all appreciate a nice big bowl of macaroni and cheese. The downside of foods in this category is that most are not packaged for long-term storage, so keep an eye on expiration dates. When food gets old, it loses its color, texture, flavor, and important nutrients.

### 2. Freeze dried and commercially dehydrated foods

These are lightweight and don't take up much room. You could pack 6 months' worth in the back of a pick-up truck. In fact, I've stored ours near our back door in case we ever have to evacuate. With a relatively small amount of water, bingo, you have a meal.

The ever-popular "just add hot water" entrees require boiling water, so make sure you store extra water and have 2 or 3 ways to heat it in a power-down scenario.

Freeze dried food is more expensive up front, but when you price it out per serving, it's actually pretty budget friendly. One caveat: pay attention to serving size. If you have big eaters, you may find yourself zipping through a #10 can of turkey tetrazzini over a weekend. Two companies that I recommend for quality foods that are packaged for long-term storage and are fairly priced are Thrive Life, NuManna, and Augason Farms.

### 3. Bulk dry food

This category includes rice, beans, cornmeal, wheat, dried milk and a whole lot more. These foods are meant to last a very, very long time, up to 20 or 30 years in many cases. This food must be stored correctly in a dark, dry, and cool location, but ultimately, it will be the backbone of your food storage. Since you'll be buying large quantities of these foods, make sure they are items that your loved ones can eat without worrying about allergies or food sensitivities.

This balanced approach is smarter than stocking up on just one category of food. There are plenty of “survival food” websites out there that urge you to spend thousands on their products but combining foods from all 3 categories is more balanced. As well, it provides you and your family with comforting, familiar foods, ultra-quick meals, and foods you can rely on to be there years from now. I don't think there's any bad way to begin your food storage, except procrastinating until tomorrow. Or the next day.

## **Under the Bed Stored Food Now Easily Accessible**

In a recent conversation with my 70-something year old Dad, he commented that he had purchased oil drip pans for their food storage. He explained these were the type of drip pans, or trays, used to catch dripping oil from underneath a vehicle.

Intrigued, I asked him to explain how on earth these trays helped with food storage. Well, it turns out that their new home has very little storage space. Since neither he nor my Mom fancy trying to fish loose, individual containers of food from under their bed, they've placed their stored items on these trays and then just slide them under for storage and back out again when they want to use the food.

How smart!

You can get these trays in varying sizes and could place them in horizontal rows under a bed on each side for easiest access. Also, you could organize the items on each tray so you wouldn't spend time on your hands and knees locating what you need.

Hope this tip helps you maximize the empty space under beds!

## **School Supplies for Prepping**

Every fall, it's that time again. Kids and parents are hitting school supply stores and filling their carts with unblemished binders, un-chewed pencils, and reams of notebook paper. Prices on school supplies will never be lower.

Now is the time for you to think about which supplies might come in handy for your preparedness efforts. Keep an eye out for store and manufacturer's coupons for even greater savings. These supplies, in particular, always come in handy:

- Binders are a great way to organize recipes using your food storage items, a Survival Mom resources binder, recipe binder, a Grab-n-Go Binder, school records, health records, and much, much more.
- Sharpies and similar markers are extremely useful in 72 Hour Kits and stashed in the glove compartment of your car. If you ever need to make a quick “GET HELP!” sign, you’re ready.
- Spiral notebooks — select different colors for each topic in your preparedness research, e.g. Home Security Ideas, Practical Skills I Need to Learn, Emergency Evacuation Routes, etc. An added plus is that, unlike 3-ring binders, the pages in a spiral can never fall out.
- Composition books can be purchased for a buck or so and come in handy when taking notes, making lists, and keeping inventories. They can be purchased in different colors and designs, making it easy to assign a different book for each purpose.
- Notebook dividers are essential in any binder and can be purchased for just a few cents at this time of year.
- Zippered, 3-ring pencil cases for holding small supplies in your binders or in a glove box.
- Inexpensive, lightweight backpacks are perfect for individual 72 Hour Kits and to keep in your vehicle in case you ever need to abandon it and need to carry supplies with you. I could never lug my entire vehicle emergency kit very far, but I could definitely divvy up the most important supplies between backpacks, one per person.
- Colored pencils, inexpensive coloring books, anything to keep kids entertained in a long car drive or evacuation are priceless. Keep these stored in your Vehicle 72 Hour Kit. I don’t recommend crayons because they make a melted mess in a hurry on hot days. Markers dry out all too quickly.
- Add a small pair of scissors to your stash. Keep a pair in your vehicle kit, a pair with your sewing or knitting supplies, one in your desk, and anywhere else you find yourself thinking, “Now where did I put those scissors?”

After you’ve stocked up on your kids’ supplies, wander the aisles one more time, looking through the eyes of a Survival Mom. The prices are right, so stock up!

## **Prepare Your Kids for Disasters away from Home**

My daughter loves living in Phoenix because there are virtually no natural disasters that threaten us and other than extreme heat and occasional thunderstorms, the weather is pretty cooperative, too.

However, in our travels around the country, I've realized the importance of teaching my kids what to do in emergencies they might not encounter here at home. More than once, on trips to Disneyland, I've wondered what we would do if an earthquake occurred while we were in the middle of "It's a Small World". Would my kids know where to find shelter from a tornado or basic winter weather survival even though those events never occur here in Phoenix?

They might encounter any number of different situations while away from home, whether at a school or church event, camping trip or a resort vacation. Regardless of the most likely disasters in your area, do your kids know how to stay safe in these situations?

- A flood, including flashfloods
- Earthquake and aftershocks
- Tornado
- A lightning storm
- Hurricane
- Ice storm
- Blizzard
- Heat wave
- Wildfires
- Dust storm, aka haboob
- Tsunami
- Avalanche

It would also be helpful as kids get older to learn the warning signs of any of these, so they have the chance to prepare, not just react.

There are plenty of resources available for learning and teaching basic survival skills for each of these events. A little education and a bit of planning go a long way.

## **A Refrigerator for Life and Death Scenarios**

After giving it a lot of thought, I've decided that what I would miss most in a grid-down scenario is ice. I seriously need my iced tea every day.

Truth be told, though, I could exist without iced tea but many people have family members who rely on medications that must be kept refrigerated. It's a matter of life and death.

If you've priced solar refrigerators or those powered by other fuels, the price tags are real wake-up calls. However, there is an option that is much, much lower priced AND will be far easier to operate without electrical power: the lowly dorm-sized fridge.

Powered by a generator, these tiny refrigerators use as little as 90 watts of power and could keep milk, fresh produce, and drugs such as insulin cool. A standard refrigerator requires far more power.

Yes, you'll need a generator (check out solar generators if you can't store a lot of gasoline/diesel or don't want to), but if a loved one requires medication that must remain cool, this solution is low-cost and compact. You'll find them on Craigslist as well as in home improvement stores.

## **Camping equipment for non-campers**

You may hate the outdoors and the very thought of Camping-in-The-Wilderness makes you queasy. However, there is a very good reason to have a few camping items on hand.

In a pinch, a well-made tent provides an emergency shelter. In a big enough emergency, you never know who might be in need of a roof over their head and a tent is way better than huddling under a tarp or under nothing at all.

Sleeping bags can be tucked in the trunk of your car if you live in a cold climate. If your car breaks down or there is a traffic pile-up and you're stranded, a sleeping bag could make the difference between life and death.

Camping stoves aren't just for camping. They work well as emergency stoves when the power goes out, and if you live in an area prone to outages, something as simple as a dual-fuel Coleman stove or a rocket stove will provide heat and a hot meal.

Maybe you've never had to light a campfire in your life, but having something like a BlastMatch in an emergency kit will help make sure you always have the ability to get a small fire going.

Other items I highly recommend for the non-camper are:

- A hundred feet or so of multi-use paracord
- A multi-tool
- A tarp or two, or three, or four.

- A cooler on wheels, at least this is my preference for portability
- An emergency toilet

Worst case scenario, you never use this stuff and someday put it on Craigslist or pass it down to your grandchildren. However, each of these items is geared toward not just camping but for use in emergencies.

## Cash Is King

“Cash is king!” a Chicago native told my husband one day. I hadn’t heard the term before but considering that our friend’s family was reputed to have ties to the mob, I wasn’t surprised.

I’ve thought a lot about the importance of having cash on hand. Severe weather and natural disasters routinely shut down access to banks and ATMs, and in fact, ATMs can be emptied of cash in no time by panicked customers. A worst case scenario, such as an EMP or economic collapse, would shut down banks for long periods of time. Even if the dollar was devalued, there would still be some value left in saved cash.

I recommend storing enough cash at home to get you through at least a week. In the case of an evacuation, this cash would be useful for hotel stays, fuel for your vehicle, food, supplies, and more. If hordes of evacuees descend on a town, your cash-in-hand might mean a good night’s sleep in a clean hotel room if a hotel manager decides he or she would rather have cash than payment by debit or credit cards. And forget writing a check in an emergency. Out-of-town checks are rarely, if ever, welcome.

Are you planning for something much bigger than an ice storm, such as an economic collapse? In that case, set aside as much money as you think you’ll need to cover the mortgage payment or rent, utilities, food, and other necessities for several months.

Be sure to stash smaller bills, no larger than \$20s. You may not be able to break a fifty- or hundred-dollar bill. Store \$50-100 in small bills in your emergency kit/Bug Out Bag, and a similar amount in your vehicle. If money is tight, try to set aside just ten dollars each week in order to have a nice stash of cash in a few months. Around the house, divide your cash in three or four different bundles. If your kids are responsible and mature, let them know the location of one of the stashes. If there is ever a time when parents aren’t around, that money may help your kids survive in difficult circumstances.

Protect your cash from the elements as well as severe weather and natural disasters common to your area. I’ve used my Food Saver to seal small bundles of cash. Just remember all your hiding places and save your money for true emergencies!

## Add Non-Edibles to Your Stash the Smart Way

Food storage is a topic that has been thoroughly covered in websites, blogs and books, but how are you doing with your non-edible storage? There’s a simple, systematic way to decide which items your family needs, and you won’t end up with forty tubes of toothpaste and only four extra toothbrushes.

This week, keep a pad of paper handy and jot down each product your family uses beginning first thing in the morning. What non-food items do you use in a 24 hour period? Pay attention to your daily/weekly routine. If you use something just once this week, say a band-aid, note that, too. For me, my list today looked like this:

1. Contact lens solution & contact lens case (these wear out after a while & need to be replaced)
2. Contacts
3. Toilet paper
4. Shampoo
5. Hairbrush
6. Hairspray
7. Liquid soap, bar soap for hubby
8. Toothbrush & toothpaste
9. Anti-perspirant
10. Dog & cat food
11. Laundry soap
12. Dishwasher soap

And my day is only half over! All of these items, and more, are things to add to my stash. I look for them when they're on sale, and I'm not picky about brand names. I use Secret anti-perspirant, but in a crunch, I'd use anything and be happy about it!

Make a goal of having three months' worth of these items. That would be a great start toward having the non-edible necessities your family relies on.

## **Mosquito Nets Aren't Just for Rain Forests**

I've only lived in hurricane country a whole 6 months, but as we settled in to our first summer, I found myself battling mosquitoes outside and, sometimes, indoors. There must be something about my body chemistry that these bloodsuckers really like.

Along with summer heat and mosquitoes comes the increased likelihood of damaging thunderstorms and hurricanes. Extreme weather events nearly always include power outages and the loss of air conditioning.

If the power goes out and the indoor heat becomes overwhelming, you'll need to open doors and windows that would otherwise remain closed or spend more time outside. Either way, you're going to need protection from mosquitoes and other insects. The best strategy is to combat these

evil flying blood-sucking annoyances with layers of protection. Spray, diffuser, fly swatter, and mosquito netting.

Mosquito nets aren't just for the jungles of South America! They can help protect you from those bothersome pests no matter where you live.

They come in different sizes and are equipped with rings for hanging the netting over a bed, tent, eating area, or anywhere else you need protection. As well, the fabric can be used for other purposes.

Mosquitoes carry a variety of diseases in addition to being annoying and leaving itchy bites behind and a couple of inexpensive mosquito nets can help you avoid them.

## Get the Most out of Multi-Use Items

Multi-use items save space in a survival kit or bug-out bag, and they are fun! Here are a few that are worth stocking up on and most are budget-friendly.

1. **Petroleum Jelly** – Most everyone you know has used petroleum jelly for chapped lips and dry skin, but how many have mixed it with another multi-use item on our list, cotton balls, to make a quick fire-starter? Simply mix a few cotton-balls with the jelly in a Ziploc bag and have enough tinder for multiple fires.
2. **Cotton Balls** – Of course cotton balls are used for cleaning, sanitation, and skin care. As mentioned earlier, they can be mixed with petroleum jelly for fire-starter, or even used as ear-plugs or for blister relief.
3. **Shoe Goo** – This awesome adhesive can repair shoes, backpacks or purses, and can even be used to glue fishing lures and flies!
4. **Alcohol Swabs** – These should be saved for medical use in the cleaning of cuts and scrapes, especially when soap and water are not available. They are also flammable, and in a pinch can be used as alternative tinder for a fire.
5. **Iodine** – 2% Iodine Tincture can be used to sterilize wounds and to purify water. 5 drops will purify 1 quart of clear water, 10 drops should be used if the water is cloudy.

## Local Preparedness Classes

If you're lucky, you just might be a short drive away from some very helpful preparedness classes. Yesterday, I attended the first of a series of classes held at a LDS Cannery in Mesa, Arizona. Since I'm not Mormon I wasn't sure if I'd be welcome. Maybe I'd stick out like a sore thumb, but no. At

no time was church or religion even mentioned, and no one tried to set up an appointment for me with a pair of Mormon missionaries!

Instead, what I got was some excellent information and advice on planting my spring garden. A Master Gardener was the speaker, and she had more information to share in ninety minutes than was even possible to cover. I learned which veggies grow best in our climate. (I never knew that the Phoenix area actually has two growing seasons: March through May and August through the first frost.) She told us which nutrients we needed to use to make our soil more acidic and which varieties of tomatoes she likes best.

I was very impressed and hope to continue with these Monday classes. There's one coming up on Dutch oven cooking, and a lot more. Give a call to a local LDS church, cannery, or Bishop's Warehouse and see if something like this is offered in your area. There's no obligation, and all you need to do in return is just give them a heartfelt, "Thanks!"

## **Plant Roses for Home Security**

One of the typical suggestions for making your home more secure is to plant thorny plants, such as roses, bougainvillea and even cactus, in strategic places. Our rose bushes have developed some pretty serious thorns and would cause a burglar to think twice. I spoke with Steve Winterfeldt, a horticulturist at my favorite source for roses, Jackson & Perkins, and asked for his suggestions for super-thorny roses. Here are his suggestions.

- Rugosa, or wild native roses
- Hybrid teas
- Grandifloras
- Floribundas
- David Austin English roses

Steve said that even roses that might not be typically thorny will become that way as they age, with hard, tough thorns growing up to three-quarters of an inch or longer. Metal bars, barbed wire, Dobermans, and cholla cactus have their place in home security, but so do beautiful, colorful rose bushes.

