

Food Storage – January 2006

Welcome to the New Year! January seems to come with a mood to clean out and organize. With that in mind, let's work on ways to track and rotate your storage and some ideas for your 72-hour kits.

First, let's think about our 72-hour kits. As you go through children's clothing to pass along, keep in mind that what may be cast-off clothing by one child may be just perfect to put in a 72-hour kit for another child. Because children grow so rapidly, clothing that is a bit too large may be a good size to put into an emergency backpack. Remember to put in winter and summer clothing, as well as gloves, knit caps and jackets for winter. Passing clothing around to family, friends and neighbors helps make emergency preparedness kits more economical also. Zipper-close bags are great to keep underwear and clothing clean and dry. The bags may also come in handy for other uses in the event of a real emergency.

This is also a good time to replace food items that are getting old with fresher items. Make sure you have eating utensils or a mess kit in also. Check the expiration dates on medicines, etc. and replace any that are close to expiring. Sample or trial-size medicines, dental floss, toothpastes, etc., are easy items to throw together for an emergency kit. These items often come in the mail, at the dentist's office, or can be purchased at stores. Some coupons do not say a specific size and can be used on trial size items, thus cutting costs on items. Remember to keep water pouches in your kits, or have bottled water next to your kits to take with you in the event of an evacuation.

Think of sanitation items also, toilet paper, tissues, wet wipes, washcloth, soap, garbage bags, twist ties, etc. Also have some reading material, scriptures, games, pencils, pens, writing tablets, coloring books and crayons, etc. for emotional and spiritual support.

Practice using your emergency items just for fun some night. Make it fun, eat items you may have stored in your 72-hour kits, play games, enjoy a fun "emergency" snack, sleep in the same room together with your emergency heater and lighting. By trying it and making it fun you will help your children prepare and do better if and when a real emergency arrives. You'll take much of the "scary" out of the changes that may be part of the situation. Kids have great ideas and they may think of things you don't.

Rotating and tracking your food storage is a very important thing to do, and now is a perfect time to do it. Some of the following ideas/methods may be of help to you and your family. The following idea came from the Provident Living website (See www.providentliving.org)

- Protect food storage from heat. Store all products away from heat and sunlight. Food stores best at 70 degrees or cooler. Store items on shelves or on raised platforms rather than directly in contact with concrete floors or walls.
- All food storage should be rotated. Oldest products should be used first to maintain freshness. You can rotate food by using it yourself or by sharing it with others.
- Shelf life varies according to product and storage conditions. Quality products that have been sealed and then stored in a cool, dry location should last for many years. An exact shelf life is difficult to calculate because of the many variables involved.
- Wheat and sugar can be stored for many years under the right conditions. Powdered milk, instant potatoes, and rice have a much shorter shelf life but should maintain most of their nutritive value for three years or more. Other products that are recommended for food storage were chosen because they are still nutritious after five to ten years.
- Protect products from rodents and insects. Bulk dry food storage products store well in #10 cans, foil pouches, glass canning jars, PETE (Polyethylene terephthalate) plastic bottles, and plastic buckets.

ROTATION SUGGESTION for products from the church cannery: Dry-pack products will slowly lose nutritional value as they are stored. However, the products do not need to be discarded after they reach the "Best If Used By" date printed on the label. Most products, if properly stored will still be safe and have some nutritional value long after that date. Rotation Suggestions for properly packaged dry-pack foods when stored in a cool, dry place under ideal conditions (this is the newest list from the church website):

Wheat, sugar – 20+ yrs
Beans, onions, macaroni,
spaghetti, apples – 6-8 yrs
White flour – 3-5 yrs

Corn – 8 yrs
Nonfat dry milk – 5 yrs
Refried beans – 4-5 yrs
Hot cocoa – 3-4 yrs

Juice mix, carrots – 8-10 yrs
Rolled oats, pudding – 5 yrs
Rice – 4 yrs
Potato pearls – 1-2 yrs

Place a copy of this rotation list near your food storage!

Tracking Your Food Storage

- Check bulk grain for rodent or insect infestation.
- Make sure the food is being rotated properly.
- Remove and dispose of any bulged cans or unsealed packages.
- Update a written inventory list.

There are a multitude of ideas on how to track your storage. The following idea came from the "Random Sampler" section of the *Ensign*, entitled "Tracking Our Food Storage," sent in by Leslie O. Andersen from Kansas City, Missouri.

For years I struggled with keeping track of my year's supply of basic foods. I tried keeping lists of what I had, but the lists changed weekly. I was taking inventory much too often.

Then, while a friend was visiting a bicycle shop, she noticed their system for inventory control. Inspiration struck! We each adapted the idea to our own food storage system with wonderful results. Here's what we did:

1. On a poster board, tape or glue pockets made of index cards cut in half, one for each kind of food in your basic year's supply. Each pocket is labeled by the type of food, number of packages or units, amount in each package, and the total amount needed for a year's supply of that item. For example, one pocket might be labeled 'spaghetti - 48 boxes x 2 lbs = 96 lbs'.

2. We make an inventory card for each package or unit. Spaghetti, for example, would need 48 cards, each with 'spaghetti - 2 lbs' written on it. Those 48 cards are placed in the labeled pocket. Do the same with each food item.

3. Whenever someone takes an item from storage, that person also pulls a card from the pocket and brings both items to the kitchen. We place the card in an envelope taped behind a cupboard door in the kitchen.

We color coded the cards to represent the source for obtaining each food item. Foods obtained from the cannery are kept on red cards, grocery store items on green ones, warehouse items on blue, and home-canned items are on pink cards.

It's a simple matter before shopping to pull all the green cards from the envelope when planning a trip to the store, or all the red cards when I plan for a trip to the cannery. I know exactly what needs to be replaced. As items are restocked, I replace the cards in the poster board pockets.

We hang our poster board in our storage area. Now we are able to keep our year's supply of food fully stocked."

Suggestions from Tim Wolf given in a Preparedness Fireside:

START USING YOUR FOOD SUPPLY! Use these times of peace and plenty to find out what you do not like about your supply and what you want more of. Try meals around your supply. You will find many 'holes' in your program, supplies you need to buy to be able to make meals that your family expects from your storage. This is important to start now. For example, you may have stored the wheat, but have you stored yeast? Without yeast, the bread will be as hard as a brick. You only find the "holes" in your food storage ark if you use the products... Your food storage does not have to be like everyone else's... Remember that 72-hour kits are from the Civil Defense Dept., not the Lord, that's why the Brethren don't talk about them. It is considered good, common sense, but not a commandment of the Lord. A one-year supply of food however, IS.

After you have the basic food storage, the spirit is very helpful in custom fitting a food supply to the needs of your family. Because each family will go through different trials, each family may be inspired differently... different needs and of course, different storage needs. Only the Lord knows for sure what trials your family must endure. Maybe this is why the church has never come out with a concrete storage program of what items to store. The spirit will help you customize a program to fit your needs.

Another storage idea is to buy in bulk and have storage buckets with sealed lids to put those items in. With these types of storage buckets you can get out the amount you need then just push the lid back on tight to reseal. Remember though that these buckets do not have an oxygen absorber packet in them, so things will need to be used more quickly, but this would work great for rotating things into smaller storage buckets and current use. **Wheat can be sprouted from wheat stored this way as the oxygen absorber packets kill the sprouting ability.**