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FOOD STORAGE

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*Cover: Examples of food storage.
Vacuum packed lentils & black eyed peas. Dried basil & frozen tomatoes.*

Food Storage for Survival

Ann Couto, Lisa Powers & Ginny Ansbergs

Mother Nature has been battered to the point where she is unable to stay in balance. Natural disasters and famine are the results of such gross abuse. To be forewarned is to be forearmed and it is a great blessing to be aware of the present and coming changes.

Self reliance is the key to survival. A well planned program for food growth and storage can ensure our having an adequate supply of nourishment in times of need. The following information is to help you develop your own food plan.

Homa farming and gardening are the way to grow nourishing, life-giving foods in the polluted conditions under which we live today. For information on Homa farming and gardening, please see our website, www.agnihotra.org, the book *Homa Therapy, Our Last Chance* by Vasant V. Paranjpe.

For food storage, a person will need a program for short term and long term storage. Short term storage refers to food storage for one year or less. It includes canning, freezing, drying, fresh food storage in the garden, the use of root cellars and other protected spaces. Long term food storage refers to methods of storing food for up to five years without infestation or significant loss of quality. The foods used in long term storage are mostly grains, nuts, seeds,

beans and legumes. These supply protein, fat and carbohydrates. By supplementing these items with foods from the short term storage (mostly fruits and vegetables), the needs for vitamins, minerals and fiber can be met. Sprouts, indoor greens and wild foods can round out the diet by adding vitamins, minerals and enzymes.

Nutrition

In developing your food plan, good nutrition is a major consideration. It is important to familiarize yourself with your family's nutritional needs. These needs will vary, depending upon the age and sex of your family members, plus other considerations (such as special diets or breastfeeding). A basic knowledge of nutrition will help you develop a food supply that will adequately nourish your family and avoid the many health problems that are caused by inadequate diet. Your public library or local natural foods store will probably have a number of references on nutrition.

Strive to include a wide variety of highly nutritious foods in your food plan. This is the best overall insurance against nutritional deficiencies.

TABLE 1: SHORT TERM STORAGE

Method	Storage life	Pros	Cons
Canning	Approx. one year	When properly done, little risk of spoilage. Many foods may be canned. Canning gives a high-quality product similar to fresh food.	Expensive equipment. Overall, canning is a time-consuming process. There is enzyme loss due to heating. Finished product requires considerable storage space.
Freezing	Approx. 1 year for most foods (see Ball Blue Book)	Fast, easy, produces a high-quality product.	Expense of freezer. Dependence upon electricity which may not always be available. Risk of spoilage due to power failure or freezer malfunction.
Food drying	Approx. 1 year	Least expensive, most natural method. Minimal enzyme and vitamin loss. Requires little special equipment. Does not require much storage space for finished product.	Risk of insect infestation and spoilage during drying. Sometimes difficult to achieve complete, uniform drying, which is necessary to prevent spoilage. Can be a slow method to use.
Root cellaring	Several months. Can be longer, depending upon the type of food to be stored.	After the root cellar is acquired, this is a very easy, convenient method to use.	There is always some risk of spoilage and insect and rodent infestation. Proper space for a root cellar is a prerequisite.
Prepackaged grocery item	Approx. 1 year for many items. (See Table 2)	Easy, convenient. This method can be started and continued at any time. Does not require a large expenditure to begin.	You are limited to the items available in stores. Items packaged in cardboard boxes and plastic bags can be subject to insect infestation.

Short-Term Food Storage in the Home

This article describes five methods of relatively short-term food storage: canning, freezing, drying, root cellaring, and storage of commercially packaged foods.

Use Table 1 to help you choose which method(s) of short term storage will work best for you. (Note: Freezing is our least recommended choice, due to its dependence on electricity.)

In canning we would like to stress that one “go by the book”, i.e., *The Ball Blue Book*, or any other standard reference on canning. Although people sometimes get away with using unapproved methods (depending on the acidity of the food and other factors), to deviate from the approved methods is to invite disaster. Please don't run the risk of illness and wasted food; stick to the tried-and-true methods.

Storage of Prepackaged Groceries

Many grocery stores and natural food stores carry a number of nonperishable packaged food items which could be used as part of your food plan. Stockpiling these items is an easy method of food storage.

To begin, designate an area for storage. The ideal temperature is 70°F or less. Temperatures higher than this will significantly reduce shelf-life. The storage area should also be one

that can be kept free of insects. They can eat through cardboard and some plastic bags and infest the food.

We recommend buying foods which are organically grown and free of GMO ingredients. After purchasing the items, date them, then store. As you acquire more items, rotate your stock and use the oldest items first. This method is good because you can begin by simply picking up a few extra items whenever you shop. You need to pay only a little at a time to build your supply. By stocking up on special sale items, you can cut the cost even more. Some stores offer a discount for buying by the case.

Please note the following precautions:

- Never eat canned food if the seams of the can are rusty or the ends of the can are bulging out.
- Do not eat canned food that has an unusual odor.
- The contents of any can should be completely emptied as soon as the can is opened. Otherwise, in the presence of oxygen, acids from the food mix with the lead from the seams of the can, and may contaminate the food with lead.
- Stored dried edible seeds (such as beans) are subject to infection with *Aspergillus flavus*, which produces aflatoxin, a powerful carcinogen.

Organic Gardening magazine recommends placing a natural antifungal agent (such as whole cloves, a cinnamon stick or some sprigs of thyme) in the storage containers with the food to prevent this contamination.

We also recommend adding Agnihotra ash.

Table 2 shows some grocery items that can be successfully stored.

TABLE 2: ESTIMATED SHELF LIFE OF COMMERCIALLY PACKAGED FOODS

Item	Estimated shelf life (in months)
Dried peas and beans	18
Pasta	12
Salt	Indefinitely
Powdered milk	6
Sunflower seeds	12
Oatmeal	12
Vegetable oil	12
Baking soda	12
Canned tomato juice	6
Canned fruit	18
Canned vegetables	18
Canned peanuts	18
Black pepper	24
Raisins	12
Garlic salt	24
Onion salt	24
Parsley flakes	24
Vinegar	18
Honey	18
Popcorn	24
Peanut butter	18

Available Fresh Foods

Gardening is essential to food self-sufficiency. We recommend the Homa Therapy organic gardening method mentioned above, which has been shown to produce maximum yield and top quality produce.

In times of food shortage or other large scale emergency, it may be difficult or extremely expensive to obtain seeds. To be truly self-sufficient, one must learn how to save the seeds from the foods he grows. *Growing and Saving Vegetable Seeds* by Marc Rogers (Garden Way Publications, Charlotte, VT 05445) is a complete guide to seed saving.

Another valuable source of fresh food is foraged food, or wild edible plants. Many wild plants are extremely nutritious, and even small quantities can provide an important nutritional boost to one's diet. However, edible plant foraging is a tricky business. There are a number of books on this subject, but it is impractical to rely on them as your sole guide to finding wild foods. There are thousands of species of plants and a person can easily mistake one for another. Plants will look different at different stages of growth. Some wild plants are poisonous, so positive identification is essential. Some plants are edible only at certain stages of their growth, and in many cases, only certain parts are edible. They may also require

special preparation to render them edible. The safest, most practical way to learn food foraging is to learn from someone who knows. You may be able to find someone with this knowledge through your County Extension Service, garden clubs, Boy or Girl Scouts, wilderness or conservation groups or any other place where you might find a plant expert.

Appendix

Phytic Acid

Phytic acid is a substance found in the outer portion of whole grains and legumes. Like oxalic acid, phytic acid can bind up minerals, such as calcium, zinc and iron, so that the body cannot use them.

Phytase, an enzyme present in grains and yeast, counteracts the effect of phytic acid by breaking down phytic acid compounds. In breadmaking, phytase is activated while the bread is rising, due to the warm (not hot) temperature and moisture present. During the rising time, much of the phytic acid in the bread is broken down. Leavened bread is recommended for this reason.

Oxalic Acid

Oxalic acid is a substance found in some foods (spinach, chard, beet greens, parsley, sorrel, lambsquarters, wheat bran, rhubarb

and chocolate) which ties up iron and calcium so that they cannot be used by the body. Foods containing oxalic acid should not be relied upon as major sources of calcium or iron because some of their minerals will not be assimilated.

Note to Mothers Concerning Infants and Food Shortages

The best emergency food plan a mother can make for her infant is to breastfeed. In a crisis situation, baby formula or the equipment and conditions needed to prepare it may not be available. By breastfeeding, the baby can have a food supply, so long as the mother has some intake of fluids and nourishment. Breastfeeding also protects the child from the risk of an allergic reaction to the

formula, which could be a serious problem in an emergency situation. Mother's milk also contains antibodies that help protect the baby from some illnesses.

Breastmilk is the only food an infant needs for the first five or six months of life.

Even after the baby starts eating solid food, many American doctors now recommend that mothers continue to breastfeed their babies until they are one year old.

If the mother did not breastfeed after the birth of the child, or has since stopped, lactation can sometimes be re-established.

For information on breastfeeding, visit the La Leche League International website at www.lalecheleague.org .

Long Term Food Storage in the Home

The goal in long term food storage is to store basic foods that will maintain their quality and be free of infestation for five years.

Knowledge needed to begin such a program relates to what to store, how to keep an efficient rotation and inventory record, and what to do if infestation is noted.

The choice of foods for storage depends on availability, nutritive value, cost, storage qualities and other considerations. Store the highest quality or grade of food obtainable (organically grown, non-GMO is recommended). Wheat should be cereal grade,

double cleaned, at least 11 percent protein and no more than 10 percent moisture.

Store foods the family is willing to eat. In times of stress it may be difficult to eat unfamiliar or disliked foods.

Below is a suggested list of basic foods for a long term storage program. Also listed are the suggested quantities to store per person/ per year.

<i>Basic food</i>	<i>Amount per person per year</i>
Grains: whole wheat, buckwheat, whole grain rice, corn, other cereals	350 lbs
Nuts & seeds: sunflower, sesame, alfalfa seeds, almonds, cashews, etc.	60 lbs
Legumes: soy, navy, pinto beans, split peas and lentils, mung beans	150 lbs
Dairy products	60 lbs dry, 300 quarts
Sweeteners: honey, maple syrup (sugar is not suggested as it depletes the body's mineral supply at a time when maintaining a healthy status may be difficult)	60 lbs
Oil	20 lbs
Salt	5 lbs
Multiple vitamins/minerals (especially vitamins A & C and calcium)	365 (one per day tablets)

*Almonds are one of the very best nuts to store in the raw state. They maintain flavor and quality for years since they are very hard and dry. Being a less oily nut they tend not to become rancid. Walnuts and some other highly oily nuts need refrigeration, or can be stored in a cool place for a short time.

Other possible additions to the basic food list could include culinary and healing herbs and spices and dried unsulphured fruit. Apricots are very high in vitamin A and keep the mucous membranes moist, thereby helping to prevent colds and nosebleeds. Some people find that they help uplift the mood. Raisins are a good source of iron and can provide quick energy.

Dried herbs and spices are best stored in brown glass and definitely kept away from light and heat.

The filled containers should be labeled with the following information in waterproof ink:

1. Lot number
2. Type of food
3. Date
4. Process of packaging
5. The processor.

The lot number should be two part. There should be a letter to denote the lot the product was taken from. For example, "A" would

indicate all food taken from the same 50 pound bag. Next there should be a number such as the first, second or third jar processed.

The optimal conditions for storage of grains etc. are in a cool and dry area, that is 34-45°F and 15% relative humidity. Because storage temperature is so important, as a general rule one could say that the lower the temperature the longer the shelf life. Oils should be stored in a very cool place to prevent rancidity. Table 4 shows the various shelf life times at 70F, a temperature which is practical for most people's storage areas:

Table 4.

<i>Rice</i>	<i>2 years</i>
<i>Pasta</i>	<i>2 years</i>
<i>Popcorn</i>	<i>1 year</i>
<i>Wheat</i>	<i>25 years</i>
<i>Nuts</i>	<i>9 months</i>
<i>Beans</i>	<i>5 years</i>
<i>Peas and Lentils</i>	<i>5 years</i>
<i>Dry Milk</i>	<i>2 years</i>

A chemical free, oxygen free process which is recommended for safe food storage is vacuum sealing. We recommend use of a Pump-n-Seal, an inexpensive hand-powered vacuum sealer, which can be used with either new or used jars, provided the jars have a rubber ring on the inside surface. (Peanut butter and other commonly available foods come in such jars, giving one the opportunity to recycle.) For more information, please contact Pioneering Concepts, Inc., P.O. Box 82, Wapiti, WY 82450 tel. 1-800-323-3965, or email www.pump-n-seal.com .

(Note: We have successfully used the Pump-n-Seal to store a variety of foods, but have sometimes encountered one problem. The small plastic strips one uses on the lids were sometimes chewed up by mice, thus breaking the vacuum seal. We solved this by using the Pump-n-Seal in the usual way, then covering the plastic strip and the area around it on the jar lid with aluminum heat-duct tape from the hardware store.--Ed.)

If using glass jars it is best to replace them in the box in which they were bought to omit light, help protect them from breakage and for convenience in handling and storage. The outside of the box should be marked with the contents and the date, the notation facing outward for easy inventory.

The storage area should be clean and away from heating units and damp areas. The bottom shelf should be 2-3 feet above the ground in flood prone areas. A 9ft x 12ft room with ten foot ceilings will provide adequate space for a family of six to store eighteen months' worth of food.

Utilize a space where it would be difficult for insects and rodents to find harborage. Good housekeeping is an important factor to help prevent infestation.

Typical places in the home that are usually easily adapted for long term storage areas are basements, pantries, back halls, enclosed porches or breezeways, sheds, and bulkheads. Closets, attics, space under beds, an unused room, stairways or space made available by family or friends can be used.

An inventory and rotation schedule should be maintained on the stored food. The inventory should be done monthly to:

1. Check bulk grains for rodent and insect infestation
2. Make sure the food is being rotated properly
3. Remove bulged cans or unsealed packages
4. Make sure the written inventory is accurately kept
5. Check the temperature of the room

throughout the year to maintain proper storage temperatures.

When checking for infestation it is only necessary to check one or two containers from each lot. If contamination is evident, the rest of the lot should be checked. To deal with infested food, small quantities of grain.(1-10 pounds) can be put in medium to heavy grade plastic bags and placed in the deep freeze for 2-3 days. This will usually destroy all stages of any insects which may be present. Insect fragments may be removed by pouring the dry food through a stream of fan air into another container. Then process the food again for storage but place in the front of the storage area to be used first.

For more specific information regarding appropriate foods and optimal storage conditions consult local universities or government agencies.

Bibliography

1 Satsang, Vol. 9 No. 16. Jan. 7, 1982.
“Agnihotra Ash Keeps Harmful Insects Away.” A report on an experiment by Dr. B. G. Bhujbal.

“Food Storage in the Home”, Cooperative Extension Service. Utah State University

Appendix

A source for storage jars that will accept smaller orders:

Freund Container
155 West 84th St.
Chicago, Illinois 60620
773-224-4230 Fax 773-224-8812

They offer all types of glass, metal and plastic containers in various sizes. When storing food, the wide mouth gallon glass jars work very nicely. The large mouth makes filling easier, particularly if you have a wide type of funnel. Covers may need to be ordered separately, and it is important to order the metal covers with the plastisol lining to insure proper vacuum sealing.

Some useful books on growing and storing food:

The Vegetable Gardener's Bible by Edward C. Smith, published by Storey Publishers, North Adams, MA, USA Phone 413-346-2100

This is an excellent step-by-step book that a beginning or more advanced grower could use. Covers creating healthy soil, growing the seeds, transplanting, cold frames, greenhouses, and details on how to grow many specific vegetables and herbs. Beautiful photos and clear instructions.

All books by Eliot Coleman, master gardener from Maine, such as:

Four Season Harvest tells how to grow organic vegetables all year long. There is a whole chapter on compost and soil. Others are on planting and growing outside, cold frames, greenhouses and high tunnels, root crops and root cellars, etc.

The Winter-Harvest Manual—Farming the Back Side of the Calendar

Seed to Seed by Suzanne Ashworth, published by Seed Saver Publications, Rural Route 3, Box 239, Decorah, Iowa 52101. An excellent book on seed saving—to many, the “bible” on the subject.

Root Cellaring by Mike and Nancy Bubel is particularly helpful for storage of root vegetables, with photos and text on each vegetable and best methods for storage. Includes 30 pages of vegetable recipes. Published by Storey Publishers, North Adams, MA, USA

Keeping Food Fresh by the Gardeners and Farmers of Terre Vivante, with a foreword by Eliot Coleman is published by Chelsea Green Publishing Company, White River Junction, Vermont. It covers many methods of food preservation for a fairly large variety of foods, mainly vegetables and fruits. Methods used include root cellaring, drying, lactic fermentation, preserving in oil, in vinegar, etc.

Has lovely black and white illustrations.

The Ball Blue Book. One of the original references on canning, now a highly authoritative guide to canning, freezing and dehydrating foods. Available for \$8.95 from Amazon.com

Letters to Satsang

Agnihotra ash is my first choice of medicine when I feel a cold sore coming on. If I apply it before I go to bed, by the morning it has dried, the ache is gone and it never progresses to the weeping stage. It simply reduces and goes away in a couple days. This is great for those who suffer through these unattractive sores, usually around one's mouth!

*Ann Couto
Baltimore, MD*

We have been using Agnihotra ash since 1975 for everything for which it can be used, with great results. Some of the uses are: with honey for sore throats, coughs and colds; on cuts and scrapes (even deep ones); to stop bleeding; for rashes to stop itching and to get rid of the rash; for eye infections as in pink eye; to remove and prevent skin growths like warts.

I had been getting warts on my face, having them removed by the doctor and they would come back in the same area as the ones removed. I started putting ash on the area when I felt some itching, and the warts didn't return. When my two children got a wart, they removed it and we applied Agnihotra ash; the bleeding stopped and the warts never returned.

I used it for a vaginal discharge and heavy

bleeding after my last child was born. The condition of heavy bleeding began because of an IUD; after the last birth I was able to deal with the entire problem with Agnihotra ash. The list goes on and on.

*Mimi Bennett
Baltimore, MD*

Not so long ago our 20-year-old daughter, Naomi, had a very sore and swollen throat, making it difficult for her to swallow and to breathe. Perhaps it was an allergic reaction to something. I immediately gave her Agnihotra ash to take into the throat area. This was done one time only. Almost immediately her throat went back to normal. The problem never returned. Had we not had this miracle ash she may have ended up in the emergency room of the hospital! We are indeed grateful.

*Ginny Ansbergs
Plainfield, MA*

From Vasant's Correspondence

Anger is easier to control because there should not be any anger at all. You have to discipline yourself to not indulge in anger at all. It is like alcohol to the alcoholic. He cannot have even one drink, even one sip. Of course he can do his best to avoid bars or places where alcohol is served. He can avoid friends or family who abuse alcohol. But ultimately he has to become so strong without it that he overcomes his fear of it and alcohol ceases to have control of his mind. His mind controls it. So it is with anger.

It behooves one to steer clear of situations one knows for certain are going to cause difficulty or create anger. One can avoid contact with difficult people who cause more stress. But ultimately one has to be able to deal with any and all situations with love, harmony and compassion for the other person involved.

In the initial stages try to surround yourself with good, supportive people. Try to reduce stress load. If a situation in your life is causing you great stress, first ask yourself if the situation or relationship is necessary. Is it helpful to your life and your spiritual evolution? Is it one which is better left? Is it one which is better for you to remain in and heal?

All these personalities are like masks only. If you could see, if you could all see yourselves as We do, you would be so humble to be in the presence of such great souls. The outer layers are being peeled away. Don't worry about the outer layers. They are no longer needed.

You cannot teach common sense. If a person does not have that, it is only because the mind is undisciplined. The mind is preoccupied with other thoughts, whether they be fantasies, worries, fears or the like, so it does not utilize its full potential. Then such people are referred to as "scatterbrained". This is a very accurate word, as it describes the undisciplined mind. So one cannot learn common sense. One cannot learn even to make best use of his ability to draw on logic or intuitions unless one's mind is properly trained. Once the mind is trained properly, all the natural abilities come to the fore and the person can begin to live an efficient life with clarity of mind.

Lord Parashuram has blessed specific points on the planet which will serve as Lighthouses in future times. Maheshwar-Bhrugu Aranya-Elqui Valley is the triangle. Then Parama Dham and Tapovan and of course Shivapuri.

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FIVEFOLD PATH for Happy Living

1. Perform **AGNIHOTRA** for purification of the atmosphere which leads to automatic purification of mind.
2. Practice **DAAN** (sharing of assets in a spirit of humility to reduce attachment to worldly possessions).
3. Practice **TAPA** (becoming better managers of our energy expenditure by training the body and mind to react to all circumstances in life with Total Love).

4. Perform **KARMA** (every action for self purification only and thus no expectations which bind us to the material world).

5. Practice **SWADHYAYA** (Self-study) for liberation. Who am I? Why am I here? My work on this planet is to learn to react with total LOVE with each opportunity given to me.

This is the Fivefold Path for happy living on the planet. By practicing the Fivefold Path you become better members of your society, group, religion, community, etc.