

30 Days to **PREPAREDNESS**

Old-Fashioned Skills
to increase self-sufficiency



Melissa K. Norris

30 Days to Preparedness

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Introduction:

Welcome to the 30 Days of Preparedness!!

These next 30 days will equip you to look at the things you have and set you on a journey to self-sufficiency. Many people think of prepping as someone with a tinfoil hat or a concrete bunker filled to the brim with freeze dried food. This is not that kind of prepping, we won't be using fear factors or doom and gloom.

Fact is, more people will experience some sort of financial hardship, health problem, or a local natural disaster like extended power outages, than they will a zombie type apocalypse.

I don't believe in investing our time or money into things we don't use in our everyday life. Our food storage and preparedness skills exist of things and tools our great-grandparents or the pioneers used, the original preppers.

We'll be covering a lot of ground over these 30 days but each day is taken down into bite sized chunks.

My hope is this will help you look at areas you might not have thought of, up your game in areas you already have covered to a degree, and help others along the way.

I've created a checklist that will help you see which areas you've got a handle on, and the ones you'll need to work on.

Will you be fully prepared in just 30 days? No. We have to keep things real and honest.

However, you **will** have a strong base and foundation to build after this month.

You will be able to implement a lot and you will be further ahead than when you started.

Truth is, it's impossible to be fully prepared for everything. Your single best asset is a calm mind followed by knowledge, which is what I hope this book will provide. The third thing is practice and experience.

I also strongly suggest you take some time to look at your faith. Regardless of our preparedness level, we're all going to die someday. My faith is in Jesus Christ and knowing where I'll go when I die and that He will be here to help me on earth is a huge source of comfort and hope. Probably not what you were expecting to read in a book about preparedness, but something I hope you consider.

In order to get the most out of this challenge, you'll want to make sure you choose your top 3 areas or skill sets to learn, practice, and improve with. This is just the beginning of your journey and I'm so glad you chose to let me be a part of it.

Preparedness Checklist

First Priority Items to Have in Place

- Food storage items for at least 3 days for each family member
- Water for each family member and pets for at least 3 days
Water purification method _____
- Cooking methods when electricity is out
- Heat method when electricity is out
- Light source
- Few extra days of prescription medications (if applicable)
- Preparedness kit for car (circle items you have in place)
fuel for vehicle
water
food
footwear
means of shelter from cold/heat
light
fire starter
extra clothing
book or entertainment
toiletries
shovel
duct tape
other _____
- Emergency Bag for each person (bug out bag)
Shelter (blanket, tent, tarp)
Water
Food
Fire starter
Light source
Important papers
Cell phone/radio and means to charge it (solar or hand crank backup)
First aid and medical needs (make sure you have a few days medication for those on prescriptions or with special medical needs)
Toiletries
Cash
Compass and maps
Knife
Rope
other items _____

Second Priority Items to Have in Place

- Food and Water Storage up to 3 weeks to 3 months (and/or beyond)
- Entertainment items during power outages or other emergencies
- Renewable food sources (circle items you already have)
 - foraging hand book
 - herbs
 - heirloom seeds for vegetable garden
 - fruit trees/bushes
 - livestock animals
- Bartering items
 - food supplies
 - specific skill set you possess _____
 - luxury items
 - other _____
- Food Preservation
 - Canning supplies
 - Dehydrator (or means to dehydrate via the oven or solar)
 - Fermentation
 - Root cellar techniques
- Skill sets I want to learn or improve (pick your top 3)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Day 1

This past summer we experienced an unprecedented drought (longest in recorded weather history) and more wild fire than ever before. This really opened my eyes to quite a few areas that we weren't prepared nearly enough in.

Having been stranded on the side of the road a time or two due to a vehicle breaking down, having items in your car is something you'll have need of one time or another. It might not even be for an emergency.

This fall we went to my son's football game and it started down pouring (awesome answer to prayer for helping bring the fires from 0% containment to over 50% in 48 hours). However, with the wind blowing the rain sideways into the covered bleachers, a wool blanket was greatly needed to keep warm for the two hour game.

An emergency? No. Super glad for these items in your vehicle? YES!

I realize there are a lot of things we could include, and when we get to packing a bag to have ready at home, we'll be including more of those; but I want this to be manageable for those who are starting out and realistic.

I have to confess something; I've never been much of a reader or follower of the whole bug out bag thing or movement. If things get bad due to natural disasters, government failure, or some other catastrophe, I plan on staying in my home.

I think we'll be far better off at our home, even without power or support from the outside world. We're pretty self-sufficient as is and have gone two weeks without power during a winter mudslide. We know our neighbors, I grew up with over half of them, and believe having a community of people who will support one another is far better than hiding out somewhere.

Now, I realize this isn't the scenario for everyone. Stay with me here for a minute. We live rural. You might live in the middle of the city. This is where everyone has to take a look at their own situation and scenario and decide what is truly best for them and their family. Because it's not all one size fits all.

In light of this revelation, I have never put too much energy into a bug out location and stocking said location. Then we entered into this summer. We're in the most severe drought Washington State has ever had since they began recording weather in the 1890's here. Pretty much the worst drought ever. We've had no rain and because we normally are drenched for most of the year, hello Pacific Northwest and western side of the state, we don't have things like irrigation put into place. Water has always been an abundant resource here.

Enter August. Our state has been declared a state of National Emergency due to the wild fires. To look at a map, it seems the entire state is ablaze. Lightning has been the cause of most of the fires. There have been loss of homes and loss of life. Three fire fighters died last week while fighting the blaze on the other side of the pass from us.

Twenty-five miles from us in two towns over, a lightening fire gained strength and devoured timber. It jumped the river and the road, causing the evacuation of one town and part of another. My brother worked on the fire

line as a faller (one of the trees he fell burst into flames when it hit the ground) and sent me photos. I've never seen anything like it in person.

Smoke blanketed our homestead. We sit in a gorgeous little valley at the foot of a mountain and the Cascade mountain range swirls around us. Thick smoke blocked the mountains completely from view. Driving home from church visibility was so bad we couldn't even see the next turn; it was like driving in the worst fog you've ever seen, except it was lung stinging smoke.

Thankfully, after two days, the wind shifted and cleaned out most of the smoke. We were also blessed with three days of rain, and not a moment too soon.

But another fire in the town I work sparked up.

I realized I needed to have things prepared in case of an evacuation.

You'd have thought I would have realized this a month ago when my truck broke down in the middle of the city and I was stranded for an hour waiting for the tow truck.

Alas, sometimes it takes a bit longer to grasp certain things. Please tell me I'm not alone in this.

If you're a typical American, then you spend quite a bit of time in your vehicle. I commute 18 miles one way to work and over 30 miles to get to the nearest large town and shopping areas. **The chances of being in your vehicle when an emergency strikes are pretty high.**

8 Items You Need in Your Car

1. First things first, in an emergency you probably won't be able to stop and get fuel. If a fire is licking at your heels, you won't have time. If the power is out, you won't be able to operate the pumps and get gas. So always keep a ½ tank of gas/diesel in your vehicle. You'll never run out of fuel this way and if you have to leave in the middle of the night (we don't have 24 hour gas stations up where we live) you won't be left stranded.

2. Shelter is your next concern. If you're stranded on the side of the road, you need to keep warm if it's cold out, or shaded if it's hot. A blanket will provide both. Your best bet is wool. Wool will still keep you warm even if it's pouring down rain. It might be itchy, but it is superior for warmth. You can wrap up in it to keep your body heat from being conducted into the ground, or string it up for shade if it's hot.

Check a military surplus store for wool blankets. We have a pawn shop and military surplus in the town I work at and I was able to purchase one there for the trunk of my car. I purchased mine for \$20 as I like to shop local when I can, but if you don't have a military surplus, you can find a wool blanket on Amazon. And it will come direct to your door! See the reference guide on my website for a recommendation.. Remember, you shouldn't ever dry wool products in the dryer, line dry for best results.

A small tarp is also a good idea for shelter or an all-weather blanket that has some long lasting ability to it.

3. Water. You should keep some bottled water in your trunk. Be sure to rotate it out and check it during the winter if it's freezing solid. I always fill my stainless steel water bottle and take it with me when I leave the house, but you'll want extra reserves in your trunk or the back seat of your truck (if you don't have a canopy).

After a water bottle, or with it, you should have a water filtering system. This way, if you have to leave your vehicle or run out of water before help comes, you have a way to safely drink from a nearby water source. Where I live, our roads follow the river and there are lots of creeks and smaller bodies of water near the road. I personally own a LifeStraw. It's light weight enough it won't weigh you down, which is important in an on foot situation, and comes as a stand-alone filter or in a water bottle. The water bottle is good if you need to walk away from the water source.

4. Food. Water is most important, but if you get stranded with kids, you know how important it is to have something for them to eat if they're hungry. Even big kids... aka adults. I recommend some dried fruit and nuts. They're lightweight and won't go rancid quickly unless exposed to high heat. The fruit would be ok but the nuts will go rancid when high temps are involved. Just like anything, you're going to want to rotate the food and water out every so often (More on that to come soon). Even though I love chocolate, especially Theo brand chocolate, pure chocolate melts. You don't want something that's going to melt all over your car... at least, I don't.

Sealed energy bars are another great option for on the go. You see a lot of people recommend candy bars, but I'd rather have something that will give my body fuel, not just a sugar rush and then crash.

Just make sure you have some type of food source in your vehicle.

5. Walking shoes. When I go to work at the pharmacy, I'm not wearing tennis shoes or hiking boots. You're probably not either, depending upon your job. But if I get stuck alongside the road on the way home from work, I'm going to need some footwear that will let me cover some terrain. Keep an extra pair of walking or hiking shoes/boots in your vehicle with a pair of wool/hiking socks.

6. Fire starter. You need a way to stay warm, especially in cooler climates. Hypothermia occurs most often between 30 and 50 degrees, obviously it will happen faster if you're below freezing, but many people underestimate the range between 30 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit. See Day 23 for all different ways to start a fire, how to build one, and how to keep it going.

7. Light source. When it gets dark you're going to want light. It can also help you signal for help and allow rescue workers to find you easier. A flashlight is always a good option, but be sure and pack extra batteries with it. Most times, you can find little LED flashlights that will hook right onto your key chain. Never a bad idea to have more than one light source.

Another option that is also water proof and extremely small, portable, but puts off a decent amount of light are solar powered bag lights. We use ours, [LumiAid Solar Light](#), camping and in case of power outages, plus no need for back up batteries, and ours is going on two years. They're really awesome, waterproof and they'll float on water! Did I mention they put off 16 hours of light from one charge?

8. Pocket knife. A knife can come in handy in so many different ways. It's small, lightweight, and something you should definitely have in your car. A Swiss army knife fits on a key chain and has multiple tools, plus, it comes in different colors, which I know doesn't matter from a preparedness standpoint, but I'm just girly enough to want to pick my own color.

Now, you'll probably want a slightly bigger blade, but something that still folds up and is light enough to carry. The Tac Force Folding Knife is sturdy, with a decent blade, and is under \$10.

These are what I consider the most basic of basic items to carry at all times in your car.

READER ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

Melanie	Medical Kit, Flares
Alesia	Hand sanitizer, First Aid Kit, Small book (to occupy time), Emergency blanket
LauraK	First Aid Kit
Ricki	Jumper Cables, Spare tire, Basic Mechanic set
Marilee	Canned heaters , Hand and body warmers
Peggy	Small shovel, Kitty litter, Fluids for car (windshield, oil), Empty 2 gallon gas can, duct tape, Wind-up radio, Phone charger, Extra jacket/mittens or gloves/hat, Hand & seat warmers, gum/hard candy
Muriel	Magic Tank (a non-flammable emergency fuel), If pets are frequent riders: food, water, and meds (if applicable)
Joyce	Bible, Deck of Cards, Walking poles, One day supply of prescription meds and whistle on keychain
Cheryl	Folding shovel
Beth	Peanut Butter and crackers
Marcie	Hand/toe warmers
Jim	Survival Rifle
Frances	First Aid Kit, Fire Extinguisher, Cell phone charger, Pepper spray/Shock stick, Rain coat or umbrella, Jerky, Toilet rolls

Day 2

The thing about emergencies is you never know when they're going to happen. The only way to prepare for the unknown is to have some basic things in place before hand, giving us a head start when the unexpected happens.

Emergencies come in all shapes and sizes, but the below advice will serve you well, especially during a natural disaster.

I want to come back to having things ready to go at a moment's notice. We covered things to have in our car, but now we're taking it a step further to things to have ready in our home.

And I think number 10 is the most important and probably one of the most often overlooked.

11 Things You Need Ready All the Time

The essentials you need ready to go at a moment's notice. As I've said before, I've never much thought or paid a whole lot of attention to having a bug out bag (never heard that term? Totally okay; it's a bag of items you have ready to go at a moment's notice due to an emergency of some sort).

Then we went through the worst drought in recorded history here in the Pacific Northwest this past summer. Wild fires blazed all around us, literally. Smoke clogged the air and ash dropped from the sky like little flickers of snow.

Friends from all across the state were given evacuation notices. My husband was out of the country and I had to face the thought of what I would do if we were put on evacuation.

I realized I was not ready.

Thankfully, we did not have to evacuate and the good Lord sent the rain that ultimately put the fires out and allowed fire fighters to bring them into containment.

Putting together a bag of essentials to keep inside your home, and putting the 8 Items You Need in Your Car, became a real priority for me.

11 Things You Need Ready All the Time

Some of these items are cross overs from our 8 Items You Need in Your Car chapter but should be in whatever you leave home with, be it just the bag, or your car and bag.

1. Bag. Each member of the family should have a bag with clothing in it. Depending upon the time of year will determine if you need things like gloves and wool hats. I recommend swapping those out twice a year as the season's change. This will be important for children as they're likely to outgrow their current size and you can swap out to what fits.

To get started, a regular backpack for your kids will do. In fact, any bag will do and is better than nothing. However, whoever the main person (usually mom or dad) is, will want a bag that's meant to distribute the load evenly. Back packs with a waist or hip belt or frame work will be your best bet if you're going to be on foot.

2. Shelter. A waterproof lined coat, space all weather blanket, and/or a wool blanket. You may even do a combination of all the above. A sleeping bag that is rated for cold weather would be great, but a wool blanket will do the same and even if it's wet, wool still keeps you warm. My husband just invested in a cool weather sleeping bag on his week-long back country trip, it only weighs 1.54 pounds and rolls up super small, making it a great option for packing.

3. Water. Packing around bottles of water is heavy and takes up a ton of space. You may choose to put one bottle of water in each bag, but I would include a Lifestraw (the Lifestraw water bottle would be ideal) or some water purification tablets.

4. Food. Have something non-perishable that is light and doesn't require heating is preferred. Beef jerky, nuts, dried fruit, trail mix or the like are all good options.

5. Important papers. Identification papers such as passports, certified birth certificates, marriage license, last will and testament, things that would be difficult to replace if you can't get back to your home or your home is destroyed. You probably don't want these papers sitting in a bag in your child's room, but have them all together in one place. We keep ours in a fireproof safe and I know they need to be taken out in an emergency. You may want to put a few precious photos or the like in there as well.

6. Cell phone or radio. If you're leaving in an emergency, you need a way to get updates and stay apprised of the situation. Make sure you take a charger for your cell phone for your car or something like a solar phone charger, light, and radio in one, which allows you to hand crank it or runs off batteries.

7. Other important items. This is going to vary from person to person, but **determine what other items you absolutely need to take with you.** For me, it would be my Bible and my laptop. By deciding ahead of time what those items are, you're more likely to remember to grab them. In fact, I suggest having a list you can quickly read over while you grab your bag.

8. First Aid and Medication. A small first aid kit that is ultra-light with a durable case is a smart thing to have. If you or any of your family is on prescription medication, make sure you have some in your bag, especially if it's something like an epi-pen or insulin. My daughter has a blood-clotting disorder and making sure we have her medication with us can literally be life or death.

If you're on prescription medication you can ask your doctor to write you a small quantity for your bag. If you explain it's for emergencies, most providers will do it once. Or, if you have refills on your prescription your insurance will usually let you fill it about six days before you run out. This will provide you with a small buffer and allow you to put a week or so supply in your bag.

9. Fire Starter. Depending upon your fuel source, you'll want to make sure you have not only a way to start a fire, but tinder as well. I take the lint from our dryer (which I rarely have any during half of the year because I am an outdoor clothesline junkie) and keep it in a small plastic bag. Pulled apart cotton balls work well, as well as dry moss or wood shavings. And, balled up newspaper will work as well.

Strike anywhere matches in a waterproof container and a lighter will work. Two other products that work great, especially in bad weather is the Exotac Fire Striker, we bought it for our son's birthday and I kind of adore

things made in the USA. The other item is an emergency road flare. They burn in pretty much any weather and aren't too heavy, I learned this trick from our hunter safety instructor who is an avid outdoors man.

10. Calm State of Mind. I know, seems kinda silly to put in a list, but truthfully, this is the most important thing in any situation. If you freak out and start to panic, you won't think clearly and you're going to make things way worse. Say a prayer, take a deep breath, and focus on the task at hand, not the "what if's".

This is where I'm always so grateful for memorized scripture. When I start to sink into a muddy pit of panic, Bible verses rise to the surface for me to grab onto.

11. Animal Plan. Now, I realize this isn't something you can really tangibly pack into your bag, but if you have pets, what's your plan? Can you take them with you? If it's a dog probably so. We happen to have three pigs, a small herd of cattle and chickens. Our cattle are not halter broke and in an emergency I need to move quickly; I am not going to be able to get them loaded into our small trailer.

If we have advance notice, I can move them. So know what you can to do and have steps to put that into action.

READER ADDITIONAL SUGGESTIONS

Linda	Extra cash (hidden), compass/maps, swiss army knife, small bundle of rope, feminine products, TOILET PAPER! Also water pack product called Datrex.
Marilee	Tuna Fish in foil packs
Muriel	Get farm animals out as early as possible when you have warning.

Day 3

I think everyone at some point in their life will go or have gone without electricity. Yet so many people are caught off guard and barely able to function when it happens.

We just had a surprisingly early and strong wind storm sweep through the Pacific Northwest a few weeks ago and tens of thousands of people were without power for a few days, some close to five.

Many people were not prepared, in any way shape or form.

We lose power at least a couple of times a year here and once went for two weeks without it. My father was raised without power until he was a late teen.

This chapter focuses on things you need ready to go when the lights go out and we'll be building upon this as the series continues.

4 Things You Need When the Lights Go Out

The smallest amount of light can penetrate the heaviest dark. When the power goes out, there is nothing more reassuring than having a light source.

It's funny, we humans have lived for centuries without power, but in just a little over a hundred years, most Americans shudder at the inconvenience of going without electricity for a few hours and get quite put out if it's over a day. Now, I'm not saying I don't enjoy my electricity. I certainly do. When we were without power for almost 2 weeks, I cheered when it finally came back on. Like full on jumped up and down and may have went through and flipped a few light switches on and off like a kid to make sure it was really back on.

Life is easier with electricity for most of us, unless you've converted your home to complete off-grid or some sort of solar or wind generated energy. This is something we've look at, but haven't made the plunge just yet.

Because we do experience power outages, and because we're extremely rural with no businesses for miles around, we are last priority to the power company when there are large storms. We've learned to always be prepared for an outage.

Heat is the first thing you'll want during a power outage. We have our trusty wood stove as our main heat source and always have seasoned and dry wood stacked in the woodshed. For us, heat is not a concern.

For those who rely completely on electric heat, I'd encourage you to look into another heat source if at all possible. We'll go into other options in another post.

Second thing to the lights going out is finding a way to provide yourself with light. If you can't see, you're not going to be able to get your food out, see how to cook, find your warmer clothes, or walk without stubbing your toe (yeah, done that one).

4 Things You Need When the Lights Go Out

1. For a **quick solution**, we love these little head lamps. We have one in our children's bedrooms just in case. My husband and I both use it when going out to the wood pile in the dark and feeding the animals in the winter when we get home from work after dark. They allow you to work hands free, which is golden. They're under ten dollars and a great tool.

2. A great **solar option** is the LuminAid lantern. It's small and will stay lit for 16 hours from one charge. They provide a decent amount of light and don't require batteries, just access to daylight to recharge. They're also water proof, so you can use them outdoors in the wet or if they're dropped in a puddle, you're good to go.

In the evening when the whole family is gathered in the kitchen or living room, you're going to want something that will provide a decent amount of light. I've found **nighttime is the hardest without power** as we're not as accustomed to rising and going to bed with the sun (most of society, that is). Though, if you're without power for long, you'll begin to find yourself adjusting to that rhythm more readily.

3. Like a true pioneer of old, an **oil lamp** is your best bet. They give off a lot of light and can be adjusted by turning the wick for more or less light. My father grew up with kerosene lanterns and they always make me feel a bit nostalgic. I purchased this glass oil lamp to have when the power went out and it stays on the kitchen counter for emergencies and part of our decor.

Note: With any of your preparedness items, take them and know how to use them before it's an emergency.

A few things to remember is keep it on a stable place when lit where it can't be jostled or knocked over. Our kitchen goes into our living room and I usually leave it on the counter. Remember, the glass chimney will become hot, so be careful when moving it. If a wick is kept too long it will smoke more.

Obviously, you need oil in order to burn your lamp. Make sure you have at least a backup bottle or two. We purchased and have been burning this brand of oil in ours. We didn't notice any odor or smoke when using it in our living room and kitchen.

For overall efficiency, the oil lamp is my number one pick when the power is out. I can sew by it, read a book, the kids can color or play a game, and we aren't having to each hold a small light or get close to a candle flame.

4. The only thing more old-fashioned than a kerosene or oil lamp are **candles**. Candles will help light a room, but unless you have a lot of them, I don't recommend them as your main light source. But we will light a candle in a bathroom or for light in another room of the house for short periods of time. Candle wicks should be kept trimmed short to avoid smoking. And I hate to state the obvious, but don't leave any kind of flame, be it a candle or lantern, burning unattended.

For us pioneer and homestead folks, you're going to love these candles. They're made from beeswax and lard and I have a full on [DIY candle making tutorial](#) so you can make your own to have on hand for preparedness. I kind of think they'd make an awesome gift as well.

Reader Tips

Maribeth
Leslie R When using a candle for light, place a mirror behind it. Solar lights from the yard also work well. Bought a whole bunch of inexpensive driveway type solar lights. Put them out in the sun during the day, then remove them from their base and bring inside and put the stems down in vases and distribute through the house. They light the way all night long, dimming by morning in time to go outside and recharge.

Sandi
Muriel

Keep a flashlight handy. She always has one in her purse.

An old-fashioned olive oil lamp is easy to make and has the advantage that if it somehow DOES get tipped over, the oil is not particularly flammable so usually it just goes out. Just put some olive oil in a small jar and twist or knot a long thin rag to act as a wick. The main disadvantage is they don't give off as much light as a kerosene or paraffin oil lamp.

Day 4

You'll want to make sure you have these tips on hand for the winter storm weather just around the corner.

10 Ways to Keep Warm Without Electricity

No one likes to be cold, unless you're Olaf (yes, my daughter is part of the Frozen frenzy). When the power goes out, having a way to keep warm becomes a top priority.

We have a wood stove, which acts as our heat source, part light with the glass front, and the top is designed for cooking, so like any good homesteading or preparedness tool, it serves three functions.

If you have a wood stove or propane heat source, then being without power isn't that big of a deal for you in regards to staying warm.

But if you rely on electricity for your heat source, then you're teeth are going to be chattering and, in the middle of winter, could lead up to a very bad situation.

This advice will serve you well not only at home without power, but if you're out in the elements as well. The most efficient material for warmth is wool. It can be itchy, but **when it comes to keeping you warm, nothing is better than fur or wool.** It was made by nature and God to keep an animal warm and safe when out in the exposed elements and it will do the same for you.

10 Ways to Stay Warm Without Electricity

1. The more body heat we can contain around us, the warmer we'll be. Put a snug fitting wool hat on your head that fits down over your ears. You'll instantly begin to feel warmer.

Our body will do its best to keep our internal organs protected, even at the expense of our limbs. This means if you keep your core warm, you'll also be keeping your extremities warmer, too.

2. Layering is your best bet. You want to make sure your bottom layer (the fabric against your skin) will wick away moisture. If you sweat in cotton and then it turns cold, the wet fabric will begin to suck all the body heat straight out of you. Not a good thing. Many folks like Under Armor or thermals as the base layer.

A wool or wool blend long sleeved shirt as your next layer will give you lots of warmth. You can then layer on a vest or coat if needed.

3. Don't forget about your toes. A pair of thick wool blend socks (can I get a prize for saying wool the most times in a single chapter?) will keep your feet warm, especially when paired with a pair of lined boots. Of course, indoors, you probably won't need the boots unless you're in freezing conditions for a long period of time.

4. Gloves and/or Mittens are another must. I really like a pair of wool fingerless gloves with the mittens that flap over (double bonus, they have a place for heat packets!!) This way, I don't have to take off my gloves when I need to chop wood or use my fingers for a few minutes. Because, I don't know about you, but I tend to fumble everything with gloves on, my fingers just don't work right in them.

5. Another **great way to keep fingers and toes warm** are pocket warmers. They fit into shoes and pockets, keeping you toasty. My sister used to flag for construction and swore by these.

6. Blankets are good, especially, can you guess it, don't make me say it again...Okay, wool blankets or a nice heavy quilt. And as any good homesteader and pioneer lover, there is little better in my book than a nice thick gorgeous quilt for cuddling up under. Or having on the back of your couch or even folded up on a ladder because it just looks all kind of vintage cool in your living room when you're not using said quilt.

You'll be even warmer if you share body heat. Cuddle with your spouse or kids under a blanket while reading a story.

7. Although I really don't like not being able to kick my feet and sprawl out (yes, I'm that kind of sleeper) the design of a **mummy sleeping bag will keep you warmer as it traps body heat**. Having a sleeping bag that is rated for 0 degrees is your best bet on cold nights when you need to hunker down.

You should *never ever* **run an outdoor cooking stove inside a house or use charcoal to keep warm**. It can be deadly. Don't do it!

But, using one outside to boil water for hot chocolate or tea, or my favorite in the wee hours of the day (okay fine, afternoon, too) coffee is a very good idea.

8. A hot beverage will warm up your hands and your insides, by raising your core body temperature. Nothing like a bowl of hot soup and hot tea to keep a body warm. This is provided you've been following along in our preparedness series and have food and water on hand to heat. We purchased a little canister stove for under \$10 and it works great for boiling water or soup.

9. This may seem obvious, but I can be almost shivering in our house and then do a 30 minute workout and be warm in the same clothes and temperature for over an hour. **Some jumping jacks and high knees will warm you up in as little as five minutes.**

10. Another option for heat without electricity for your home is a tealight terra cotta heater. Now in full disclosure, I've never used one. As stated, our wood stove does a fine job of heating our home.

This is an interesting article on not only how to make one, but [how it held up in their home when the power was out](#) and it was below freezing outside. I have to state the obvious, please be extremely careful when using any kind of open flame in your home, even a candle like a tea light. Never ever leave it burning unattended.

Bonus 11. Last but not least, go to a friend's home, neighbor, church, or RedCross shelter that has heat if traveling is safe.

Reader Advice

Lenore asks: "...what to use instead of wool if you are allergic to wool?"

Ann suggested that silk and down are great alternatives.

Kenna seconded the advice to use silk as a base layer.

Kezia says she also uses silk long sleeved t-shirts, not necessarily as a base layer but for layering.

Lorraine that alpaca wool does not have lanolin and may be a good alternative to wool. She also love wearing the silk clothes; can get them in turtlenecks and crew necks. Flannel lined pants are a part of her winter wardrobe.

Grammyprepper says “Keep everyone in one room, isolate that room with blankets over any doorways, and keep your heat concentrated to that one room. You can also pitch a tent inside, and keep everyone in there, to concentrate body heat. Be sure to cover windows/doors with blankets to keep out any drafts. Don’t forget the importance of adding humidity to the air for comfort as well. We supplement with kerosene heat, and keep a pot of water on top of the heater. Bonus, add some herbs and your house smells great too.”

Melissa suggested using pine needles to make it smell festive!

Joan added, “...if you have area rugs move them to the floor of that one room you’re sheltering in for extra insulation on the floor.”

Judy advises to open shades during the day when it is sunny but to close them in the evenings. “The sun adds a lot of heat even when the temps are low.”

Tracey knows from experience that you can line a room with emergency mylar blankets and that room will remain very warm.

RJ uses polypropylene underwear as a base layer. “Also mittens are better than gloves for keeping warm and heavy hunting boots will keep your feet toasty. Remember, if you can keep your head, hands and feet warm, the rest of you will be warm.”

And Rob has the most unique, but sage, advice. “When I was in the army, there were nights that were so cold you didn’t really sleep. You kind of just meditated. When all that blood goes to your core it puts a crazy amount of pressure on your bladder. And you guessed it. Had to go pee every hour. Which was a blessing believe it or not. I had an old canteen that I “relieved” myself in. Because you don’t want to get out of your bag and lose what body heat you have, and 2, it’s the only warmth you’ll get cuddling that bottle. Gross? You bet! But it kept me alive. Of course, only the army will give you 5 grand worth of kit, and then you you’re not allowed to use it during training. Much to the dismay of a group of young soldiers clinging to anything above 32 degrees. You on the other hand, will probably be better prepared. But hey. If you gotta survive the night. There ya go.”

While not specific for a house, this is some pretty good advice from Michelle: “My husband is wheelchair bound, and in our Canadian winters we needed to find a safe, effective way for him to shelter in place if his van stopped running or he was stuck somewhere. Without the engine producing heat a vehicle can be deadly while waiting for help. We bought (and use) a Coleman propane catalytic heater that runs on the 1 pound green bottles of propane. It is designed for use INSIDE but with the caution that it uses oxygen so one must allow fresh air to come in. It does not produce carbon monoxide. There is a manual that comes with it and it is a device to use with caution. However, as a paramedic I would encourage others to look this up, do your research, and invest in a similar or same product if you spend time on remote highways and/or harsh climates. I have used mine when camping and it is part of my winter travel kit in my truck. Caution: do NOT use heat generating devices if you do not know or understand their proper use!”

Linda has used a wire rack and bricks in her chimney to warm water for tea, coffee or hot chocolate.

Day 5

This chapter started out as a way to beat boredom when the power is out, but as I wrote it, it evolved into something else.

While they are all things we can do without and are fun, they're really something else. They're a way of life sometimes slipping away in our modern rush. I believe it's also a list of what we should begin doing today.

When the power goes out, how long can you go before boredom sets in? For most American households, the television or some form of electronics is the go to for something to do. But when the power is out, so is your TV and once the batteries die, there goes the electronics.

If your power is out for only a few hours, this isn't such a big deal, but when it's out for days or weeks, you'll come to realize how much you did rely on said television or computer for entertainment.

My father remembers when the first television came to the valley where he lives. Everyone piled in to see it, but it was years before most families had one. In fact, when I was growing up (which wasn't that long ago) we had a television, but there was no cable (still isn't) where we lived. If you turned the antenna just right and there was snow on the mountain, and the wind wasn't blowing, you could get a fuzzy show on one channel and sound. **No joke.**

I never had a Nintendo or Atari (really going back now, aren't we?), which might be why I love Laura Ingalls so much. I related to her and adored her stories.

If we look at generations past, we see how folks used to spend their leisure time.

6 Things to Do For Fun When the Power is Out

1. Reading. Big surprise, but books were a treasure. Many people only had one or two and they would reread these treasures over and over again. How spoiled we are today, where we have millions of books at our finger tips.

Though I do love my Kindle, it's not best to rely on during a prolonged power outage. Besides, there's nothing quite like the weight and feel of a physical book in one's hands. Because I know many of you are pioneer and homesteading fans like me, I thought it would be fun to share a few of my favorite novels.

Christy by Catherine Marshall. I can't believe I just now read this wonderful story. My grandparents lived in the gaps and hollers of North Carolina's Appalachian Mountains and I felt like I'd traveled back in time to my grandmother's youth.

Emma of Aurora by Jane Kirkpatrick. This trilogy is delightful. This story ranges from Missouri to Washington (which makes it a fun read for a native like myself) and shows the hardship of the time along with the beauty.

Cadence of Grace series by Joanne Bischof. This series is seriously one of my favorite ever. I cried with Lonnie and Gideon and my feet trudged up the mountain and down into the twists of the hollers with them. You'll be enchanted with the homespun setting and love the twists and turns that develop.

2. Board and card games. This is one of our favorites and we frequently bring out card games to play. One piece of advice, make sure you have a printout of different card games and the rules, because you might not be able to look them up online...or you'll end up making your own rules, which can be fun as well. We like to play Spoons with the cards as it's a game all of the kids can enjoy and understand.

3. Handwork. Quilting, embroidery, crocheting and knitting are all ways to not only pass the time, but also create both things of purpose and beauty. While I sew, I give my daughter a small piece of scrap fabric to practice on. I've gotten many a Christmas present done when the power was out.

Again, make sure your patterns are printed out or you have a physical book for crocheting and knitting.

4. Music. Playing an instrument or picking parties were a thing of many weekend nights back in the day. There's something about music that soothes the soul and it can do wonders when you've been without entertainment.

It shouldn't be saved just for emergency situations, but something enjoyed all the time. If you know how to play an instrument, make sure you take out and keep in practice, along with maintenance care. If you don't know how to play, consider beginning lessons now. Life is too short to not have music.

My grandfather was an expert fiddle player. He actually played in Loretta Lynn's band and I miss listening to him make those strings sing! My mother plays guitar and I enjoy singing with her. I can play a little guitar, but I haven't kept up on my practicing, so I need to take my own advice here, however, I do play the flute.

My husband is a sawyer for guitar tops and since he cuts the tops for these, we're kind of partial to Taylor Guitars. They do make a fine guitar, if I do say so myself.

You'll want to make sure you have sheet music, and perhaps a few new songs to learn to keep busy as well; unless you're one of those blessed people who can play by ear. If that's the case, I'll do my best not to be envious, because that's just not nice...

5. Go for a stroll. There's something to be said for meandering for pure enjoyment. Many times we're outside when we're exercising, working on chores, feeding animals, and not that we can't have or don't have enjoyment in that, but there is something wonderful about just strolling. Find a wooded path, or an open field, along a river bank or the curve of a stream. Even on a paved street and watch the way flowers and clover creep onto the pavement, a silent statement that no matter what us humans do, nature and God will gently and persistently still exist.

6. Visit with your family and neighbors. How often do you have your neighbors over for a meal and visit? Our ancestors probably did a better job at this than we do, even though you'd think we'd have more time with all of our modern conveniences. But I'm not sure that's really true. There is nothing like a good conversation spent in the company of friends. It's amazing how swiftly time passes when we're visiting up a storm.

Even though I intended this to be a guide for entertainment when the power is out, I really think it could and should be a guide for everyday living. I think we'd all be happier if we did these a bit more often, how about you?

Reader Shares

Nola fondly remembers her Grandmother and the lessons she taught: I remember at Grandma's house (60+ years ago) every time we said we were bored Grandma told us to go "find" something to help someone. I usually ended up crocheting a rug, my big brother would work on his trapping skills, my little brother was his accomplice, and the baby brother tore up the old sheets, clothes, etc. for my rugs.

We also learned to cook, sew, clean, iron, etc. Grandma said that if you were going to eat, wear clothes, or live in a house, "You durn well better know how to take care of it yourself."

So, if you are bored, it is your responsibility to find something that will help people, even if it is just your brother.

Day 6

If you've ever struggled with the where to store food while building up your food storage, then this chapter is for you.

Many people feel like you need a room just for your food storage or at the very least a basement.

I have neither. In fact, we don't even have a garage. No matter how tiny your home, you can still store more than you think.

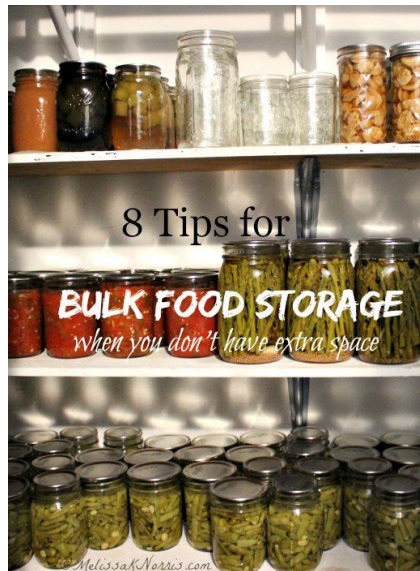
I take you on a photo tour of our food storage and give tips and creative ideas for not only unique storing spots, but also repacking your food storage and how to get the longest shelf life.

I know many of you are super creative and I'd love to see photos or ways you store you bulk food storage.

8 Tips for Bulk Food Storage

Where do I keep my food storage? Many of you are like me and don't have a ton of space for long term food storage. Even though we live on a fifteen acre homestead, I actually have very little storage space. We don't have a barn, we don't have a garage, we don't have a basement, nor do we have a crawl space or an attic.

Our home isn't huge by any means. So if you're like me, you might be thinking there's no way you can store a few months worth of food, let alone up to six months or a year.



Let me assure you, it's possible and with less space than you think.

[The 2 most important things in choosing your food storage location](#)

For the majority of our long term food storage and pantry, we converted a coat/broom closet into a walk in pantry. We used plain metal shelf brackets and sheets of plywood (we did a quick paint job with white pain) and installed shelving along the back and sides of the closet. I still hang my broom and mop on the wall, and we put a hanger that goes over top of the door to hang our coats from.

1. Our coat closet turned food storage pantry is at the farthest end of the house from our wood stove and is against an exterior wall. **Food will store and last much longer when kept cool.**

2. No windows. **Light will degrade your food and significantly shorten its shelf life.**



I store the majority of our bulk food in the closet pantry. You can see in the photo the 30 pounds of organic evaporated cane juice (our sugar source) and 40 pounds of organic unbleached all-purpose flour fits on one shelf. Anything that has an expiration date on it, I stack with the expiration date facing outwards. We used pretty good bracing as you can imagine. My coconut oil sits beneath that with some of our salt and buckwheat.



The floor houses our dried beans, rice, and 50 pound bags of wheat berries. Normally, I store our 25 pound of brown sugar in a plastic 5 gallon bucket with lid, but my bucket got swiped for another use on the homestead and I have to replace it.

The other majority of space is for all of my home canned goods. I'm still canning as the garden is producing, so it's not quite full yet.

You can tell by looking at the photos, probably two thirds of our bulk and home food storage comes from our home canned goods. From those home canned goods, we grow almost all of it ourselves, making it virtually free. Even if you don't grow it, preserving it yourself is both frugal and a step towards self-sufficiency.

How to Re-Package Bulk Food for Food Storage

I repackage a lot of our bulk food storage into glass containers and keep them directly in the kitchen. I prefer glass as it's much harder for pests to get through it or for it to rip, like said plastic bags. Plus, I'm a sucker for anything in a Mason jar and consider it part of my decor.

Labeling is important, as you might think you'll remember when you canned it, or which type of wheat it is, but trust me, you're likely to forget a year from now. I'll write with a permanent marker on old canning lids, but I adore chalkboard labels for prettier use and it makes it easier when going at a glance then having to look at the top of each jar or container. I use them on my spice jars, different wheat berry varieties and just about anything else that stands still in the kitchen.

Small jelly jars work well for re-packaging herbs and spices.

Pint size jars for things like dill weed and chili powder, which I tend to use more of.

Quart size jars are what I use for my garlic and onion powder. I also keep popping corn and wheat berries in my quart sized jars. **Wide mouth jars work best for re-packaging and a canning funnel works well if you're pouring things from one container to another.**

Half gallon jars work well for dried beans. I **re-use my used canning lids on my dry good storage.** Old peanut butter jar lids work well as well.

I adore the gallon size Ball jars with a rubber seal. Note: they're not for canning, but they work very well for things like oatmeal, flour, and sugar. However, there are other gallon jars that are half the price of the Ball mason jar.

Keeping food in an air tight environment also helps with the shelf life. You can use the attachment on a vacuum sealer or check out this tutorial on using a [non-electric Mason jar vacuum sealer.](#)



Here is my in the kitchen home food storage area. The top open shelf is home canned goods that need to be used first. I practice my rotation by placing the newly canned items in the back closet and bringing out the older stuff to the kitchen to make sure I don't "loose" track of things.

Need to get even more creative with your storage?



Creative Food Storage Ideas

Some folks will slide things in underneath their bed. Just make sure you keep notes of what you have and practice rotation. Another creative idea is from my friend Angela over at Food Storage and Survival and she shares how she [stores food behind her couch.](#)

Daisy has some great ideas for storage spots, plus grouping items together in her [6 OCD hacks for to organize stock piles.](#)

The [Magazine holder in this post](#) is a great idea!

Love this post from Common Sense Homesteading, her [shelf idea is great](#), not to mention the corner and small area ideas.

What creative spaces have you used for food storage?

Reader Suggestion:

Laurie says - Because some things might already come with weevils in them from the store shelves it's a good idea to put bay leaves in things like flour and baking mixes; especially cornmeal. Weevils are worse during our rainy season and I suppose because everything else was "protected" my pasta was attacked for the first time ever. I took that as a sign I was doing something right and the loss of one box of pasta didn't break the bank but from now on it too goes into a glass storage container with bay leaves.

Day 7

We've talked about our car, water, and now we're moving into food storage. We'll go into this more and in depth, but this is a great list and place to start.

I'll tell you straight up front, I don't store food we don't eat in everyday life. Our food storage is food we eat and use and it's not filled with processed ick or chemicals. It's old-fashioned food like our great-grandparents and Laura Ingalls Wilder had in their pantry.

8 Foods You Should Be Storing and How

Everyone knows we should be storing some kind of food in our home pantries for both emergencies and preparedness. But how do you know where to start or which foods to store? I see lots of lists on foods folks think you should be storing for your long term food storage. Some of them I agree with, but a lot of them, they're not practical.



I don't believe in storing food you don't use in your regular life. Why would you invest money and storage on something you're not using? That makes no sense to me. Plus, if an emergency does hit, you don't want to be adding to the stress of the situation by trying to figure out how to cook and use something you've never used before.

Our goal is to have close to a year's supply of our staples on hand. This works well with the produce we grow and put up at home, along with the raising of our homegrown grass fed beef, meat chickens, laying hens, and pigs we raise.

These are the 8 foods I believe you should be storing and how to store them. I don't include fruits and vegetables as most of us can grow or harvest these at home or close to our homes. I firmly believe you should know how or where to get fresh fruits and vegetables and preserve them at home. In fact I have a free *Ultimate Home Food Preservation Guide* and *Heirloom Gardening Guide* to help you do this, [go here to claim your free copy.](#)

1. Salt- Salt can be used as both a way to preserve food as well as flavoring dishes. I put salt at the top of the list because most of us don't have a way to get salt where we live. We can all grow our own herbs, but most people

do not have a naturally occurring salt source in the vicinity of their home. I recommend a true sea salt for cooking and baking. **Store salt in a dry area** as moisture will make it cake together. If doing a lot of preserving and curing meat with salt, you'll want at least 50 pounds for a year, probably more.

2. Fat source. Our bodies require a certain amount of fat in order to function right (Which means I should be highly functional!). Fruits, vegetables, and [foraging wild edibles](#) are part of a well-balanced diet, but unless you have access to your own meat for rendering lard (here's [how to render your own lard](#)), you probably won't have a fat source. We need fat for cooking and baking. I use butter, lard, avocado, coconut, and olive oil. Mark the container to see how much of each fat you use for a few months and then multiply it out. Coconut oil can be used as a moisturizer and in homemade creams and salves as well. I keep 10 quarts on hand for a year of Organic Nutiva Coconut oil. (Costco also carries this brand of coconut oil at a slightly lower price) I use about 8 pints of our rendered lard and 1 bottle of olive oil a year. Butter is my darling and I use about a pound a month. **Store your fat source out of the heat and light.** I put extra butter and lard in the freezer.

3. Wheat berries. You'll see flour on lots of food storage lists, but quite frankly, **flour is not meant for long term food storage.** It will go rancid and can also be a home for pests. Wheat berries, and other forms of grains for people who are gluten intolerant, will store for years. Not only can they be ground into flour, but they can also be soaked and cooked into a cereal. We use about 100 pounds of wheat berries a year. I use hard white wheat and spelt as our primary type of wheat berries. Here is more info on choosing a wheat grinder and how to grind your own flour. **Store wheat berries in a cool and dry location.**

4. Honey. Honey is a non-perishable food. Raw honey is excellent for eating, cooking, and medicinal purposes. You can [make a ginger infused honey](#) for medicinal purposes during cold and flu season. Honey can also be used for wounds and to help with allergies. Honey is excellent for baking and what I use in my [whole wheat buttermilk sandwich bread](#). If honey hardens or forms crystals, simply place it in hot water. Plus, honey just plain tastes good. I love to swirl it in my coffee. **Store honey out of direct sunlight.**

5. Sugar. Sugar is needed in baking and also canning homemade jams and jellies. However, I don't use regular processed white sugar. I use organic evaporated cane juice and all of my [jam and jelly recipes](#) use about a 1/4 amounts of sugar compared to regular recipes. I'd recommend about 40 pounds of sugar for the year, depending upon how much baking and preserving you do. **Store sugar in a dry place in a pest proof container.** A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down, the medicine go.... oh, we're not singing, okay.

Muriel, a blog reader commenter, advises not to use an oxygen absorber in your sugar. She says, "The oxygen absorber generates heat while it works, and the heat will partially caramelize your sugar, causing it to get hard and clump up (ask me how I know, lol). You can still use the sugar, but honestly, with everything else going on in a crisis, do you really want to be crushing your sugar lumps into powder so you can use it?"

6. Beans. (You knew this would be on my list, right?) Dried beans are not only inexpensive, easy to store, and have nutritional value, but they can also be your seed to plant in spring for a renewable food source. You need to make sure and have heirloom seed (non-hybridized bean seed) in order for this to work. Here's my info on seed saving and heirloom gardening. Beans can be used in multiple dishes. I make this easy and frugal [bean and ham soup](#) and these [10 minute refried beans](#). They can also serve as your vegetable if you run out of fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables. **Beans should be stored in a dark, cool, and dry place.**

7. Oatmeal. Oatmeal is inexpensive and can be used for cereal, in baked goods, or even ground up into flour. It contains fiber and is easy to flavor with seasonal fruits and spices. We have oatmeal for breakfast at least once a week, if not more. Cinnamon, a pat of butter, and a smidgen of sugar is excellent. We add peaches, blueberries, raisins, and other fruits as they come on in season. I also make a [gluten-free homemade chocolate chip oatmeal bar](#). **Store oatmeal in a dry place in a glass or pest proof container.**

Reader tip: oat groats store longer than oatmeal, provided you have a flaker to make your own oatmeal or you can use a grinder to make your own steel cut oats. *Phil*

8. Coffee. Most of us do not have a source of coffee available to us other than purchasing it. If you're a tea drinker, then stock up on your teas. But I am a coffee lover. While we could live without coffee, I'd rather have it on hand. Does anyone else just open the canister of coffee and take a big whiff? Whole coffee beans will store much longer than ground coffee. Coffee will also be a wonderful item to have on hand for bartering if goods become scarce. Make sure you have a way to grind the coffee beans such as a manual hand crank coffee grinder. **Coffee beans should be stored in a dry and dark area.**

Reader tip: If you have access to green coffee beans you can roast them yourself. Green coffee has a longer shelf life than already roasted beans. I use this coffee roaster Fresh Roast SR500 www.coffeeproject.com. Green beans from CostCo.com, cost about 4.00 per lb buy by the case free shipping. *Phil*



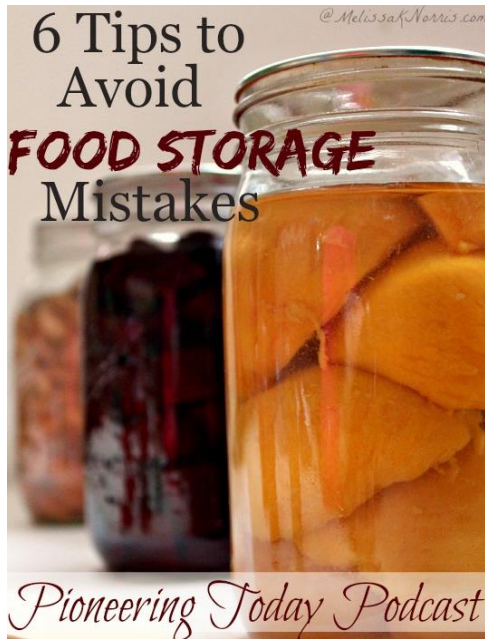
Bonus food #9. Chocolate. I realize we don't need chocolate to survive technically, but really, for the sanity of everyone, chocolate is on my list of must have foods to store. Seriously, contemplate a world without stores and the power of chocolate when you haven't had any in hours, days, weeks... yea, you're with me now aren't ya?

Bonus food #10 Rice. I hadn't originally included this in my list, but we're using and storing rice and quinoa. Rice is a great way to stretch a meal and I add it in with beans for tacos and into soups. One caveat to storing rice for long term food storage is brown rice has a higher oil content and will go rancid and bad faster. I store a 25 pound bag of Jasmine rice from Costco and smaller bags of quinoa. All foods will store longer when kept in air tight and cool conditions. I prefer glass when possible, but food grade storage buckets with lids will help keep dust and bugs out.

Day 8

This chapter shares 6 tips to avoid food storage mistakes. It's important we don't waste the time and money we invested into our food storage with poor management.

. 6 Tips to Avoid Food Storage Mistakes



Want to know one of the costliest mistakes in food storage? [American's throw out more than \\$165 billion dollars](#) in food every year. In one year.

That amount is staggering. And I'm willing to bet if you and I were honest, we've thrown out more food than we'd like to admit. One of the things I love most about the pioneering today mindset is doing more with less, being wise stewards with what we have, and always looking to do better.

Podcast: [Play in new window](#) | [Download](#)

Unless you're going to the grocery store every day, everyone has some sort of food storage in their home. I personally try to only go shopping once a month. Our food storage consists of our own homegrown beef, chicken, pork, and lots of canned good from our garden. However, we don't grow all of our own food so I recommend everyone start with the eight foods everyone should be storing..

It's important to keep your food storage organized. If you can't find or see what you have at a glance you're likely to either let it go unused or to purchase more before you need it.

6 Tips to Avoid Food Storage Mistakes

First thing is to go into your pantry or where you keep your food storage and look at the shelves. Can you immediately see your food or do you have to move things out of the way? If you have to move things, it's time to reorganize.

1. Keep like items together. I keep home canned goods together in one area. I can tell at a glance how many jars of each food item I have left. My flour is all on one shelf, same with sugar, herbs, and pasta. My wheat berries are kept in bags and buckets, all together in one spot.

Take all of the items off the shelves and wipe down the shelves. Clean up any spills. Put items back on the shelves by category and date.

2. Keep track of dates. If the item doesn't have an expiration date on it already, make sure you have the date it was either canned or purchased written somewhere easily read. You may think you'll remember, but trust me, you'll likely forget. I put the year on the top of all of my canning jars. The exception to this is the re-usable Tattler lids. I put those jars at the front so they'll be used first. You could also write in sharpie on the outside of the jar as it will wash off with a good scrubbing later.

3. Practice food rotation. Always put the oldest item in the front to be used next. Whenever you get a new item in, make sure you rotate it to the back. This way, you'll always be using the oldest first. This is as important in your food storage and pantry as it is in your fridge.

4. Never stock what you're not using. One of my biggest beefs with food storage advice is to stock foods you'd never eat in your everyday life. I know a lot of people have food storage as part of their preparedness plan, but what if the day you're preparing for never comes? Then you've wasted money on things you're not using. Plus, if you're not using them, when that day comes that you need to, will you even know how?

I only have items in my food storage that I'm using in our everyday cooking and life. I don't have the extra funds or money to invest in things I'm not going to be cooking and using on a regular basis. If you stock an item, then you best be using it in my book.

5. Know what you have. One of the easiest ways to lose money is to not know what you have. For example, I thought I only had ten pounds of sugar left in our food storage so I purchased another ten pounds when I went to the store.... now I have thirty pounds of sugar because I hadn't double checked. That's close to a year's worth of sugar for us. I don't use a lot in our day to day cooking and all of my jam and jelly recipes are low sugar. That sugar won't go to waste, but I actually needed to replenish my spelt berries and could have used the money for that instead of the sugar.

Keep an inventory of your food storage so you know when to replenish your stock and what you're low on.

6. Know how much of an item you use in a year. Our goal is to have one year's worth of food in our food storage. Each family is going to be slightly different. **Easiest way to calculate a year's supply worth of food:** Put a date on an item when you open it and see how long it takes you to use it up and then multiply that out for 12 months. Be sure to account for holidays or preserving times when you may use more of a certain ingredient like canning salt or sugar.

I recommend restocking an item before it's totally gone. I keep a minimum of sugar, flour, wheat berries, salt and coconut oil on hand at all times. That way I'll never be out but I'm not restocking it all at the same time.

Find a place for all of your canning bands. I don't store my home canned goods with bands on as they tend to rust. I have a large basket I keep most of the bands in but you can be as creative as you like. I've seen canning bands hung on a rope.

Look at your canning lids. I try to keep a year's worth on hand, so that's about two hundred lids. Make sure you have enough regular and wide mouth lids to fit your supply of jars. Speaking of jars, did you run low last year? I try to can more than I did the year before. I tend to run lower on quart sized wide mouth jars than any other size. Now is a good time to stock up before the craziness of canning season arrives.

I love vintage Mason jars. I have several old turquoise ones that I use for storing dry goods and as decoration. I even use one as a toothbrush holder in my kid's bathroom. The turquoise jars were made for a number of years, but other colors are rarer, such as green, purple, and even black.

The darker colored glass was to keep light away from the food. Black is extremely rare and I've never seen one.

Ball canning started a limited edition of remakes and released the blue and green jars last year (2014). This year (2015) they have purple and it is the last year and color they're releasing. I got mine yesterday and I have to say, the purple maybe my new favorite. It's a really pretty deep purple and in the light a violet color. I can't wait to put some pink roses in it this summer and I've got some homemade goody ideas for them as well.



Go through your spice and herb cabinet. We all know spices and herbs lose their potency after being exposed to air. Spices and herbs can make or break dish. They're an excellent way to add flavor with little cost.

I don't purchase spices at the store. They're too expensive. I grow some of our own herbs at home ([how to dry and store your own herbs](#)) but with our climate I can't grow all of my own herbs and certainly not all of my own spices.

Go through your spice cabinet and toss any really old herbs and spices. You know you've got some.

I have a basic list of spices and herbs I always have on hand. This is especially important if you plan on making all of your own spice mixes like I do.

Spices- Cayenne pepper, chili powder, cumin, celery salt, cloves (whole and ground), curry, Ceylon cinnamon, ginger, mustard (whole and ground), nutmeg, red pepper flakes, pepper (whole and ground), paprika, turmeric, onion powder, and garlic powder. Note: I generally use the whole versions of these spices in my canning recipes.

Herbs- basil, dill, oregano, sage, thyme, rosemary, and parsley

I purchase my herbs and spices in bulk from Mountain Rose Herbs. They have organic, non-GMO, and harvested responsibly herbs and spices. Plus, they're much cheaper than store bought versions. Organic spices at stores near me are usually well over \$5 for one small bottle, but at Mountain Rose Herbs bulk section I can get an entire pound of organic garlic powder for \$10, or a regular small bottle for just \$3.25.

And their smoked sea salt and smoked paprika...I have a thing for smoked foods, what can I say?

Keeping all your inventory, rotation, and expiration records in one place

Day 9

If you've ever been without running water for a week, you know there's nothing better than a glorious long hot shower when all has been restored. In the heat of summer when you're working in the garden and dust cakes your throat, a cold glass of pure water is like beautiful rain at the end of a three month drought.

Water. We need it to live, to grow our crops, and to enjoy life. Some of my favorite memories are playing along the banks of our crick (cause that's how we say creek around here) as a child.

Like a lot of things in life, we take water for granted. We assume when we turn on the faucet water will come out. If we go to the store it will be stocked with water. Recently here in the Pacific Northwest we assume rain will fall from the sky on a fairly regular basis, but we went through a three month drought and learned that's not always the case.

Water is a precious commodity and one that needs to be taken into consideration in our preparedness plan.

On our homestead we have our own well. I don't have to worry about officials treating my water with fluoride or other chemicals and there are no big commercial farms around that use spray that might contaminate it. But, when the power goes out, so does my well.

We all know the power usually goes out when we're not expecting it, or if a big storm is in the forecast, you'll have a short time to prepare before it hits.

In these cases, the local stores will run out of bottled water fairly quickly. Plus, if weather is moving in, I don't want to be caught out and about in it.

4 Ways to Store Water at Home

How much water do we need?

You need at least one gallon of drinking water per day per person in your household, according to common recommendations. However, you'll need more for personal hygiene and cooking.

Water sources for storage

Water storage. Keeping some bottled water on hand for emergencies is always a good idea. It's one of the 8 items I recommend you keep in your car. You can purchase a six pack of bottled water or half gallons of water at most dollar stores. Costco carries a 40 pack of bottled water for under \$5 a case.

Having some water stored on hand is a good idea, but most of us only have so much storage space. We don't have a garage and my food pantry is already pretty full with our food storage. Plus, like any item you store, you need to practice rotation so your stock doesn't go bad. So I do recommend storing some water, but I don't store a huge stock pile.

I believe it's better to invest my time and money into ways to replenish my stock or when needed.

Use a natural water source. We have a river less than a mile from our house. In the winter we usually have some snow fall. In fact, our longest stretch without power was almost 2 weeks and it was when we had a few feet of snow on the ground. We melted down snow to flush toilets and boiled it for cooking.

You can **create rain barrels to collect the rain** if you live in an area with a decent amount of rainfall. This actually used to be illegal in Washington State, but changes to the law recently now make this legal. Check your area for any restrictions.

There are also units available to make your electric well a manual one in the event of a long term power outage, though I have not personally used one yet.

If you have a **pool or hot tub**, you've got a lot of gallons at your disposal, though in this state, it's not safe for drinking... yet.

You may can your own water at home for storage use! A reader shared in the comments on the blog and then another wonderful reader emailed me this link with directions on [how to "can" water at home](#) from the University of Nebraska.

4 Ways to Purify Water at Home

The **first** way people think of is boiling water. The common recommendation is to boil water for 1 minute to kill any bacteria to make it safe for drinking. This does not remove contaminants or chemicals from the water, only bacteria. If your water source has algae bloom or has had a spill, like what recently happened in Colorado, this method won't work.

Second, is to add purification means to the water such as water purification tablets or bleach. You need to use liquid chlorine bleach and add 5 drops to a quart of water, 10 drops to a half gallon, or 1/4 teaspoon to a gallon of water. When using the bleach method, you have to let it sit before drinking. For a chart and more instructions, you can check out this guide from [Washington State Emergency Guidelines](#).

One thing to remember with the bleach method is once opened your bottle of bleach at home will expire or begin to lose its potency.

Third is to filter your water. Some people use a whole house filter system. Filters do require being replaced every so often once the filter is full. We personally use a Lifestraw filter for our emergency kits and when out on day trips or in the back country.

Fourth, and the most efficient and long term water purification method, is distilling. Distilling removes chemicals, impurities, bacteria, and pollution from your water. This method makes even pool, hot tub, and OCEAN water safe for drinking.

Go to the [resource page](#) for your **FREE video series** and the FEMA & Red Cross guide *Food and Water in an Emergency*, as a bonus gift, *Water in an Emergency Situation*.

From Daisy, author of *The Prepper's Water Survival Guide: Harvest, Treat, and Store Your Most Vital Resource*.

How long could you sustain your family with the water that you have on hand or could procure on your own property?

Many people worry about the unstable electrical grid, and the effects that this would have on life as we know it. However, what will cause death and illness even faster is a threat to the water supply. An epic disaster doesn't have to be a dramatic, end-of-the-world scenario. It can be as simple as contaminants spilling into the municipal water supply, which has happened without warning over half a dozen times in the US in the past couple of years: West Virginia, North Carolina, Ohio, twice in Utah, and most recently that awful spill in Colorado.

If you don't want to be at the tender mercies of FEMA and the government for your survival, get prepared.

The simplest way to build an emergency water supply is two-fold. Purchase enough filled 5-gallon jugs of purified water from the store to provide your family with a gallon per day, per person. A full month's supply of drinking water for a family of 4 is approximately \$150, give or take a little, depending on the prices in your area. At the same time, fill empty containers with tap water that can be safely used for pets, for flushing, and for cleaning and hygiene purposes. This is a small investment to make for your family's security and well-being in the event of an emergency.

There is nothing you can store that is more valuable than water or the means to purify water. There is no greater preparedness measure that you can take than that of securing a safe, abundant source of water. Without this one vital element that makes up 50 to 70 percent of your body, you're as good as dead.

How long could your family survive if the water stopped flowing from the municipal supply and none was available at the store? If the answer is not indefinitely then you need to check out my new book, *The Prepper's Water Survival Guide: Harvest, Treat, and Store Your Most Vital Resource*. See [Resource Page](#) for link.

Day 10

The homesteading part of me is all kinds of happy with today's lesson. You see, while I firmly believe in being prepared, I believe in living a self-reliant lifestyle even more.

In fact, I believe the homesteader or pioneer is the original prepper. Because the homesteading folks knew what it meant to be prepared and to be self-sufficient. I'd rather know how to grow my own food and replenish my food storage and pantry than have it stocked with five years' worth of weird freeze dried food.

Growing our own food is a big part of our preparedness plan and it should be yours, too. Because being able to replenish our stock piles and storage is true preparedness.

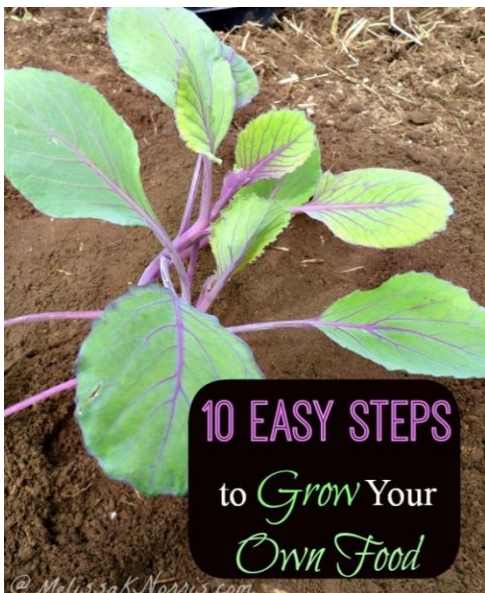
And little more gets me happier than digging in the dirt with seeds and harvesting the bounty to feed my family. It brings a level of thankfulness to my heart and praise to the Lord above.

So, here are my 10 tips to get you started with growing your own food! Ready, set, go!

10 Easy Steps to Grow Your Own Food

There is little else more rewarding than growing your own food. It cuts down on your grocery bill, improves your health, makes you more self-sustainable, brings families together, and brings us closer to God.

If you've never grown your own food or had a garden, it can feel a little bit intimidating. It seems everyone has tons of advice on the wrong and right way to do things. But you just want to get growing. These 10 steps will get you growing your own food in no time.



This article is for beginner gardeners, but even if you're someone who is a lifelong gardener, there are some tips in here for you as well. I believe we're all on a learning journey and can always learn more from others.

You've decided to plant a garden, congrats! Starting is often the hardest part, but you'll do great, and these tips are sure to help get your garden off to its best start.

1. Know thy soil. Knowing what type of soil you have is very important for the success of your garden. You're thinking, "I just want to put my plants in the dirt and get going", but trust me, you'll save yourself a ton of heartache if you do a little bit of prep work first.

Hang with me for a moment as we get a bit scientific. Your soil ph level will either be acidic, alkaline, or neutral. There are do it yourself tests at home such as the Luster Leaf 1601 Rapitest Soil Test Kit or you can send a soil sample off to have it tested at your local county extension office.

An easy way to **know your soils ph level** is if you have a hydrangea plant. If the blossoms are blue your soil is acidic, if it's pink, your soil is alkaline. Or try this at home [soil test with vinegar and baking soda](#). Note: this will show extremes, it won't measure exactly or within a few points.



2. Amend your soil accordingly. Now that you know your soil's ph level you'll need to amend your soil or change the PH level. But how? It's easy peasy. If your soil is too alkaline [add coffee grounds](#), citrus peels, peat moss, or pine needles.

If your soil is too acidic add lime or wood ash.

Our soil is slightly acidic, which works well for raspberries, blueberries, and potatoes. However, beets and brassicas like neutral soil, so we add the ash from our wood stove in the area we plant our beets and other brassicas, like cabbage, broccoli, etc.

We add well-rotted (not fresh, it's too hot and will burn your plants) chicken and cattle manure, with leaves, and straw. We use the refuse from the animals on our farm. If you have a local farm, they'll let you haul off manure for free. I'd make sure they only feed organic food if using the poop for your garden. Most plants are heavy nitrogen feeders, so this helps add nitrogen and organic matter back into our garden soil.

3. Plant what you eat. I have a free chart and guide in my [Heirloom Gardening Guide-Planting to Save Money](#), when you sign up for my email list. This will look slightly different for each family. Don't plant something your family doesn't like

and won't eat a lot of. If you only like a few eggplants a year, don't bother planting them. If you eat cucumbers and potatoes all year long, then plant them.

4. Start small. If you're anything like me, you like to jump in both feet first. When planting, it's easy to slip in another row or grab two more packets of seed. But the care, harvest, and preserving of all those plants can be overwhelming. Don't set yourself up for failure. Start with the main crops your family eats the most of. Once you've mastered those, add in more.

5. Where to get you seed. I'm a [big believer in heirloom seeds](#). Our garden is completely heirloom plants only, in fact our [bean seed has been saved and passed down](#) in our family for over 100 years. You can ask gardening friends for some heirloom seed or order on line. Two companies I trust for non-GMO, organic, and heirloom seeds are [Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#) and our affiliate partner [Seeds for Generations](#). Seeds for Generations is an heirloom company ran by a father and his children, which started when he was teaching them about gardening. I love those kinds of stories and supporting small folks.

6. When to plant. It's important to know when to plant your seeds. In order to do this, **you need to know the last frost date for your area**. Reading the back of the seed package will tell you when to put your seeds out according to the date. We put our warm weather plants out the third to last week of May. We harvest almost all of our warm weather plants by mid-September. [Find your last frost date here.](#)

Keeping track of all your gardening things will make life much easier. Here's a great [free chart on when to start your seeds for both indoors or direct outdoor sowing](#).

7. Commit to your garden. Know and commit to spending time in your garden. Tell yourself you're going to do one thing every day for your garden. Some days it might just require walking through and inspecting things. Other days you'll be weeding, picking, or watering.

8. Don't be afraid of failure. Even the most experienced gardeners have plant and crop failure. Gardening is a journey. Every season and year you'll learn more and new things. If you have a total flop on your tomatoes this year, talk to other folks, read books, listen to podcasts, and learn what to try differently. Everyone suffers a gardening loss at some time. Don't let it stop you from learning and pressing on.



9. Have a natural pest control plan. We live way out in the sticks. Deer are one of the worst pests to our garden. We have our fruit trees and vegetable garden fenced. This also helps if our cows happen to get out. Here's a great article on the [10 Tips for Organic gardening and pest control](#)



10. Don't let the size of your planting space deter you. Not everyone has a huge yard or acreage for planting. Don't let this stop you. Many plants can be grown in containers. Small blueberry bushes do well in containers, as well as almost every herb, strawberries, garlic, and tomatoes.

Reader Tip

Muriel – Choose plants that are suitable for your climate.

Day 11

I'm super excited for this topic as foraging for wild edibles is a true survival skill that our ancestors used to live. Unfortunately few people today know how to do this nor do they take advantage of what nature offers.

I love it because it's free food (and I'm always happy about that) plus I know it's as organic and GMO free as you can get, because the only one who has had a hand in its creation is the good Lord. Even if my house or stores were gone, with these skills, I'd still be able to find something for my family to eat.

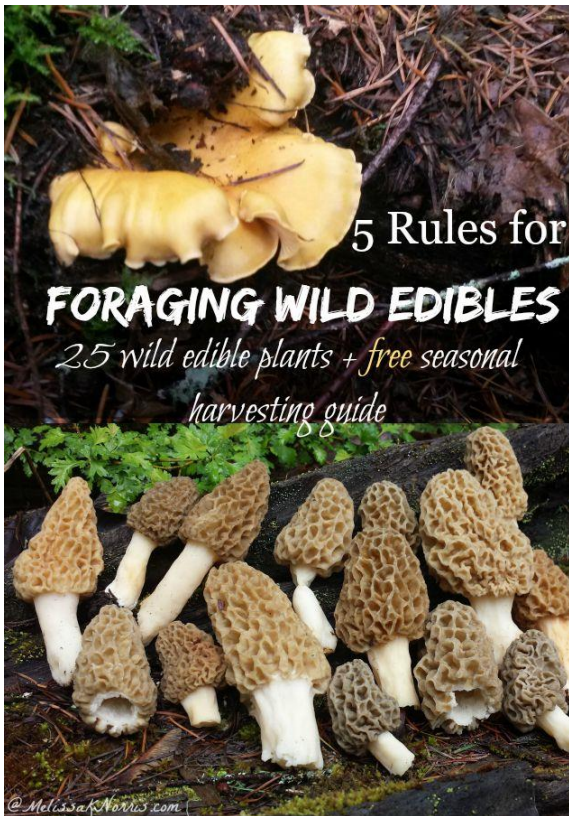
Today's article focuses on wild edibles that will make a meal or close to it.

5 Rules for Foraging Wild Edibles + 25 Wild Edible Plants

Foraging is an art that our ancestors knew of and practiced, and could very well save your life. While I'm a firm believer in growing your own food with heirloom garden seed and preserving as much of that as possible, there is a beauty in being able to go out and harvest something God provided without any help or work on our part via foraging.

From a preparedness standpoint, if you have to leave your home, or your home is destroyed from fire or other natural disaster, you can still step foot outside or wherever you may have to relocate to and be able to feed yourself and your family if you have some foraging knowledge and skills.

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Foraging is simply going out into nature and gleaning wild edibles for your food.

There are a few rules we need to follow with foraging though. Because as wonderful as it is, and it is wonderful, it can also be dangerous if you don't know what you're doing.

5 Rules for Foraging Wild Edibles

1. Only forage for food that you know for certain is safe. Foraging is not the place to be a rebel or take risks. There are poisonous plants out there and some have lookalikes. A field guide with photos is an excellent place to start, especially one that lists the poisonous lookalikes. I particularly like the Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants because it has drawings and photos to help you make positive identifications.

For mushrooms, I highly recommend the book (it was my husband's Father's Day gift a few years back) All That the Rain Promises and More it has excellent pictures, what to look for, and eating instructions. We use it all the time.

While a field guide is all well and good, there's nothing like having a knowledgeable person take you out into the field for a hands on lesson. I'm fortunate enough that my family has been foraging mushrooms for generations where we live and we've been picking and eating them since I was born. It's a family tradition I'm very grateful for and we're passing down to our children. It's a favorite family past time. Here's how to forage [Morel Mushrooms](#).

When in doubt, do not consume a foraged item.

2. Only forage food in a safe area. Not only do we need to know our food is safe, we need to know it's not been sprayed with chemicals or exposed to pollutants. Anything near a roadway is not a good candidate for foraging, nor are areas near crops unless you know the farmer or land owner hasn't or doesn't use spray.

3. Be a good steward. Don't forage on private property without asking for permission first. If you're granted permission, then make sure you leave the property as you found it. If gates are closed, leave them that way, if they're open, leave them that way.



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**Free Seasonal
Wild Edibles
Harvesting Guide**

Also, know enough about the plant that you don't wipe it out. Now obviously, things like dandelions aren't going to be endangered from over foraging in a field or yard. But if you're picking morel mushrooms (read how to [forage morel mushrooms](#)) then you know you should always leave part of the stem in the ground to produce spores for next year's crop and to keep mushrooms in a breathable bag as you pick to leave spores behind and populate new areas.

4. How to prepare wild edibles. You need to know the proper and safe way to prepare your foraged wild edible. For example, you should never eat wild mushrooms raw. You should always thoroughly cook them to kill any bacteria that may be on them.

Some plants the fruit is safe to eat but not the leaves, kind of like rhubarb. Use a reliable source for cooking and eating instructions before consuming.

Preparing wild mushrooms Morel mushrooms need to be soaked in a salt water overnight before rinsing and cooking. But most other mushrooms break down too much if soaked overnight. For Shaggy Mane's, Bear's Head, Lion's Mane, and Chanterelle's we brush off as much forest debris as possible with our hands or a paper towel. A quick rinse under cold water for anything stubborn, and then lay them out on an absorbent towel before sautéing, baking, frying, or other preferred method of cooking.

Generally, we sauté most of our mushrooms. Chanterelle's are delicious when sautéed with butter, onions, and garlic, though we've also roasted them this way as well. Bear's head and lion's mane we prefer to sauté on a low temperature with a bit of butter. Truly, one of our newer favorite mushrooms.

5. Test a small amount first. Don't eat a huge amount of a wild edible your first time out. Prepare a small amount and eat a few bites to see if you have a reaction. Even though it may be a perfectly safe wild edible, you could have an allergic reaction to it.

Plantain is considered an excellent herbal remedy, but my mother is allergic to it. So start small, make sure you or members of your family don't have any reactions, and then go for the gusto.

[Asparagus](#) (wild, this was what we used to can up over 25 quarts of pickled asparagus this year)

[Autumn Olive Berry](#)

[Cattails](#)

[Chanterelle Mushroom](#)

[Chicory](#) (you knew I'd have a coffee substitute in here, right!)

[Chickweed](#) (this is the second plant I learned to forage)

[Chokecherries](#) (not chokeberries)

[Dandelion](#)

[Elderberry](#)

[Field Pennycress](#)

[Garlic Mustard](#)

[Japanese Knotweed](#)

[Hawthorn Berry](#) (hawthorn should not be used if you're on any kind of medication for your heart)

[Hazelnuts](#)

[Hickory Nuts](#)

[Juniper Berries](#)

[Lambs Quarters](#)

[Lion's Mane Mushroom](#) (similar to Bearhead's Mushroom which we find here in our neck of the woods)

[Lobster Mushrooms](#)

[Miner's Lettuce](#)

[Morel Mushroom](#) (first thing my father taught me how to forage and I taught my children)

[Nettle Leaf](#)

[Oregon Grape](#)

[Purslane](#)

[Rose Hips](#)

Day 12

Growing your own food is high on the list of self-sufficiency, but if you're not growing heirloom or open pollinated seeds, then you're missing out on being truly self-sufficient and frugal.

Because nothing says more frugal or self-sufficient than never having to purchase garden seed from the store again.

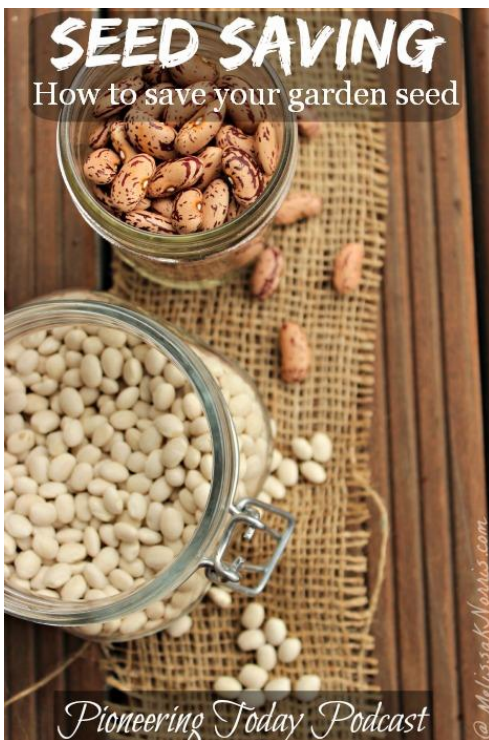
Did you know it wasn't until the 1940's that the hybrid seeds sold in most grocery stores were actually put out into the market? Before that all of our seeds were passed down from one season to the next exactly as God made them.

And thankfully, because of folks like you and me who don't want our food to come from GMO's or people who try and patent nature, we can still save our own seed from year to year.

In fact, my family has been saving two strains of bean seed for over 100 years, as far as I can trace. Some seeds require a tad bit more steps when saving them than others, so read on to know how to save your seed.

Podcast #36 Seed Saving How to Save Garden Seed

Seed saving is one of the lost arts to many modern gardeners. It's my aim to change that. Learning how to seed save is one of the most important things you can do for your self-reliance, preparedness, and frugal nature. It's also an important tradition we're in danger of losing.



Podcast: [Play in new window](#) | [Download](#)

We've been saving our own bean seed for over a hundred years as far as I can tell. Seed saving is something I love to talk about.

You can only successfully save heirloom garden seed. I recommend Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds if you're looking for heirloom seed.

Reasons to seed save are no cost for garden seed; it's frugal ya'all! It's the only way to be self-reliant, prepared and to do what the pioneers did. It keeps us from being dependent on stores. Did I mention it's free? Yeah, I kind of love that. But more importantly I love the **taste of heirloom seeds**.

Want to know the real difference between heirloom, hybrid, and GMO seeds? Here's my [intro on Heirloom Garden seed](#). Can you tell I'm a little bit in love with heirloom seeds?

Don't know if your seed is heirloom? Just put the name of your variety in Google and see if it's heirloom or hybrid.

Hybrid seed is usually sterile, or if you do get it to sprout, the harvest won't taste right, grows stunted or unlike the plant it was saved from.

Reader Question of the week: How do you save pea and cucumber seeds?

Answer: You save peas the same way you do bean seed. Cucumber seeds need to be fermented, following the steps for tomatoes below. However, cucumbers will cross-pollinate so if you didn't take measures to keep them from cross-pollinating, you may get a new variety when planting next spring.

To save seed you need to let it get overripe and go past the point you'd eat it at. Let it get mature.

Bean and tomatoes are self-pollinating plants for the most part. You don't have to worry about cross-pollination with seed saving. I still separate two kinds of white beans if planting in the same garden space. Here are [pictures on stages and how to save bean seed](#).

You can pull up the bean vines to continue drying and maturing if a big rain or hard frost is coming. Otherwise allow them to mature and dry on the vine. You can **hand shell the beans** (this is the method we do). Bean should be hard. If your fingernail makes a mark, it needs to continue drying. You **can store beans in the dry pod** in a bucket in a dark cool place, but you run the greater risk of mold, so be sure to check periodically.

To let seeds dry put on a rimmed cookie sheet and allow them to dry out of direct sunlight. **Seeds should not be touching**. If seeds are allowed to reach 95 degrees or higher, they'll no longer be viable. If you have high humidity, you can put a fan on low on the seeds for the first day or so.

Some people like to store their seeds in the freezer. We did not have luck with this method. Plus, if you lose power, your seeds may thaw and have too much moisture if you're not ready to plant right away.

We store our seeds in a glass jar on the pantry shelf, out of the light and away from moisture.

For tomato and cucumber seeds you need to ferment them. Seeds that are in really wet plants have a special gel to keep them from germinating or sprouting while inside the tomato or cucumber. **Fermenting breaks down this coating and also kills any seed borne diseases or bacteria.**

Cut your tomato in half. Scoop out the seeds and the gelatin-like coating surrounding them with a spoon or your hand; they'll be wet and sticky. Place in a clean glass jar. I use these Fido jars without the rubber gasket. You can also use a Mason jar and cover it with cheesecloth or plastic wrap with holes. It needs oxygen to ferment. However, if not using the Fido jar it will stink and you might want to store in the garage.

Stir the seeds once a day. Look for bubbles and mold. Once mold covers the entire surface of the seeds (can take between 1 and 5 days, mine took 3 days this year), pour water into the container. The good seeds will sink to the bottom, the hollow seeds and the rest of the ick will float to the top. Pour off the junk, being careful not to pour out the tomato seeds. Continue doing this until they're clean.

Put seeds in a fine mesh wire sieve and rinse well. Use an absorbent towel and then place seeds on a high gloss plate or rimmed cookie sheet. Be sure they're not touching. Stir every few hours the first day with your fingers, then once a day.

Make sure to label each variety of seed you're saving. Only save seed from healthy plants. Be sure to save seed from several plants. You'll eventually create a garden of your best producing and tasting plants, completely tailored to you and your growing climate!

Day 13

There is nothing like grocery shopping from your own backyard. It is an amazing feeling that I never get tired of.

Like any shopper, I like a bit of variety. And we're not vegetarians, so meat and protein are a must. As a baker, eggs are another must. Whew, that's a lot of musts.

Now when we first started with backyard chickens, I have to tell you, we gave up after the first summer. We had one chicken left and I gave her to our neighbor. I bought my eggs from her for a year.

If you've failed at backyard chickens, do not feel bad. Now we've had our laying hens for over three years. And I didn't do it how a lot of people say you should.

I actually went to someone who had success and followed her directions. There is something to be said from getting advice from someone else instead of forging ahead on your own.

This is my best advice for backyard chicken success.

Get laying hens. Yes, chicks are cute, but they take months before they begin producing eggs. Chicks require heat lamps and careful watching before they develop their feathers. You'll be paying for food without having anything in return, other than the cute factor. Which truth be told, the cute factor wears off before the eggs start coming.

Older hens have street smarts. If you're going the free range route, young chickens are more likely to get themselves into trouble. We live in the country where neighborhood dogs and coyotes are real problems. Yes, I've chased a coyote away from my unawares chickens in the middle of the day before.

The older hens know to be on the lookout for predators. Not to say they won't succumb to predators, but not nearly as fast.

Free range hens pros and cons. Free range hens are great for a few reasons. One, they mimic nature. God didn't create the chicken coop, though I don't believe He has a problem with us using them. When hens are allowed to free range, they have a much more varied diet. You'll have fewer bugs around the yard and back porch, score!

Your feed bill will go down. Way down. We don't have to feed hardly anything when the hens are full on ranging during the summer months.

Free entertainment. You get to watch your chickens and they have quite the personalities. I enjoy watching them waddle around the homestead.

Cons. They poop. Everywhere. On your back deck, in the middle of the walk way, up the stairs.

They will want to take dust baths in your flower beds and scratch away your beauty bark. Worse than a dog digging a hole.

They might stop laying in the hen house and you'll turn into a backyard sleuth trying to find where the eggs are. They're very good hide and seek players.

They're more susceptible to predators.

We finally decided on a combination of free range and a chicken tractor. When the winter is severe, they go into the coop and runout area. We let them have free range most of the year, but do pen them up during part of the summer when the harvest is on. They like my berries and fresh tomatoes as much as I do.

We do enjoy the chickens and if you live in an area where you can have them, I totally recommend starting out with a small flock. Start with the hens who are already of age and laying, you'll avoid hens that turn into roosters that way too

Day 14

Being prepared is a mixture of skills, knowledge, self-sufficiency, and good old-fashioned work.

The pioneers and original homesteaders never referred to themselves as preppers, but they were both. I've heard it said (I don't know the original source) that not all preppers are homesteaders, but all homesteaders are preppers. And I have to say I agree with that.

Today I wanted to do a round up of three articles on how to raise your own pork, beef, and poultry. We raise almost all of our own meat, though I do occasionally buy chicken breasts when they're on a good deal.

I have to say, it's quite a feeling to know my larder is full with our own meat and that it was all raised on pasture and with organic and non-GMO food, most of it supplemented from our own crops.

Below is our guide to raising your own meat!

12 Tips on How to Raise Pigs for Meat

By [Amy Maus](#)

Learning how to raise your own pigs for meat is a great option for any homestead or farm wanting to become more self-sustainable and without the level of commitment of raising beef cattle.

We have been raising pigs on our farm for well over 10 years. We began raising just a few piglets for our own consumption and now actually breed piglets for sale and raise milk fed, heirloom pork for customers, which is the main venture on our farm.

I really think pigs are one of the easiest animals to raise on a homestead. They mature quite a bit faster than a beef cow and render way more meat (and lard) than a chicken or rabbit (and frankly pulled pork and fresh bacon are just amazing!!!)

So maybe you have thought about raising a pig (or two) and don't know where to start? Here are some tips and pointers I hope will help you on your way to raising your own delicious pork.

1. **Buy piglets** – For someone interested in just raising a few pigs a year for meat it's easier to buy piglets than raise breeding stock. Piglets vary in price due to location, time of year (they are more expensive in Spring when kids in 4-H are trying to find them) and by breed. In my area piglets run about \$125/each but they can be as low as \$75 depending on market demand.

2. **Age matters** – we sell our piglets at 8 weeks of age. The industry standard is 6 weeks of age but we find that piglets that are allowed to remain with the sow those two extra weeks have stronger immune systems and do not need to be fed starter feed. Of course, that means we have to feed the sow extra to keep up her condition but we think healthier piglets are worth it. If you can find piglets that have been allowed to nurse a bit longer it's worth the extra cost.

3. **Space Considerations** – Before you bring home piglets you need to have a pen and some sort of shelter. I will talk more about fencing in a minute but there are some considerations to take in account when planning

your pen. If the pen is small, the piglets will grow faster because they will not have as much room to exercise. However, in a small pen the ground can be really destroyed. Also, in a smaller area, parasites have more of a chance to grow. Finally, a small pen in the Spring when the weather is wet can result in a great big mud pit. We prefer to use rotating areas in the warmer months and really large areas closer to the house in the colder months (we actually put pigs on our garden areas during the winter so they can till them up in preparation for Spring planting).

4. **Fencing** – When piglets are young, it's better for them to be in a cattle panel, hog panel or pallet pen. Electric netting, string or wire don't work well with small piglets because they can get out (spoken from lots of experience and a piglet that took off for two weeks in the surrounding woods of our property). We keep piglets in a small cattle panel pen with electric wire on the bottom until they are about 12-15 weeks old and then we transfer them into pens made with electric string or wire. Usually by this age they are trained to the electric and are large enough not to mess with going through it. It's good to have an exit way or gate that is not electric, however. Pigs can be so well trained to electric fencing that when we want to move them they will not go near a place that there USED to be electric fencing.

5. **What do I feed this pig?** – There are lots of possible ways to feed your pig. The easiest is to buy a commercial hog grower. Pigs grow fastest on this type of ration. Unfortunately, most commercial hog grower formulas contain corn and soy which is probably GMO. A lot of them also contain medications. Another option is to make your own feed from a grain and protein source or find a natural pre-made feed in your area. In addition to pre-made feed, pigs love all types of produce. You can even grow crops specifically for your pigs like mangels (a fodder crop of specific type of field beet), forage turnips, beets and pumpkins. On our farm we feed a locally sourced barley and pea combination with added swine minerals. Our pigs also get lots of fresh milk, table scraps and local apples and pumpkins. Please do not feed your pigs bakery scraps and the like and expect a healthy pig with great tasting meat. You eat what your pig eats so quality matters.

6. **Demand vs measured feeding** – Another thing to consider when raising pigs is whether to set up a self-feeder and let the pigs eat whenever they want or feed them a set amount each day. There are pros and cons for both. Demand feeding makes the daily workload smaller except on the day when you have to fill the pig feeder. Also, if pigs always have food available they will be less likely to root as much and so your ground stays in better shape. Pigs that are demand fed also tend to grow faster so your time to maturity is less. The problem with demand feeding is that pigs can eat a LOT of food and this can get expensive, especially as the pigs get older. We have found that if you are only raising one or two pigs demand feeding is the way to go. It's when you are raising 10 or more that it can become cost prohibitive. We give each of our piglets five pounds of their grain mixture each day. In addition to this they get milk, table scraps and produce. This allows us to have market weight pigs at around 8 months or so.

7. **Medicines and de-worming** – I am not a fan of chemical de-wormers because of the mutations and resistances they create. On our farm we have found garlic to be a much more effective de-wormer anyway. We add approximately one pound of garlic granules to one ton of feed. In addition, oregano oil is also superb at fighting parasites and infection. Finally, we keep geranium essential oil handy for bleeding (pigs can get in scuffles) and tea tree oil for cuts and scrapes.

8. **To castrate or not?** – Castrating pigs is a controversial issue. There are many who find the practice cruel and unnecessary but others who say it needs to be done to prevent boar taint. If you are raising two male pigs you will need to determine whether you want to have this procedure done. However, when you are raising piglets of opposite sex it's wise to go ahead and castrate. When we first started raising piglets we were told they wouldn't start to breed until they

were 9 months old. Since we butcher at 8 months we didn't think we needed to castrate. Bad advice and we ended up with pregnant market pigs. We now castrate all male piglets raised for meat.

9. **Breeds matter** – Different breeds of pigs have different qualities, including differences in size, meat quality and temperament. These are things you will want to investigate when choosing your piglets. We raise heritage breeds of pigs (Gloucester Old Spot, American Guinea Hog, and Tamworth) because of their docile and friendly temperaments and excellent meat quality. The American Guinea hog is a much smaller breed of pig and will not yield a conventional carcass weight but because of their easy handling ability and chef quality meat it's a tradeoff we are willing to make.

10. **Butcher weight and hanging weight** – Most pigs are butchered when they weigh around 180-250 pounds live. This will result in a hanging weight (meat and bones minus the head, feet and organs) ranging from 160-225 pounds. How much meat you end up with in your freezer is totally dependent on the types of cuts you choose during processing.

11. **Should you call the butcher?** We have butchered many a pig on our farm. Once you learn to do it it's not that hard. The whole process takes about 3 days. The first day is the kill and hang, the second is skinning and cutting up the pieces, the third is usually sausage processing. A downside to butchering yourself is that unless you know how to cure bacon and ham you won't end up with those cuts (you will have fresh ham which is really good but not like traditional cured ham). The benefits of butchering yourself are the know-how and the cost savings. Traditionally, having a hog butchered costs anywhere from \$150-\$250 depending on processing and curing.

12. **Taste is superior** – Finally, why would you want to go to all the work of raising your own pork? By raising your own you control what they eat which makes for a healthier product for your family. Also, raising pigs is a lot of fun and I love to watch their antics. However, I find the best reason for raising homestead pork is the taste. Once you try it you will never want supermarket pork again ☺ Happy pig raising!!

Do you have a question about raising pigs? You can email me at homefarmsense@gmail.com.



Amy is a wife and mother of 18 children. In addition to parenting and homeschooling their mega family, they also run a small family farm, which we affectionately call "[Autumn Creek Ranch](#)." They love the work of Joel Salatin (me, too) and have patterned much of what they do by his example. For natural animal care, health, and recipes, visit Amy's website HomeandFarmSense.com

Pros and Cons of Raising Your Own Grass Fed Beef

I grew up on a small cattle ranch nestled in against the foothills of the North Cascade Mountains. White face Herefords dotted the green pasture like daisies. The sound of my father's old red Ford pickup truck rolling across the dirt track of the long abandoned railroad track called the herd better than any cattle dog.



Every evening from October to May, I drove the truck while Dad tossed out about 35 bales of hay from the back. We've never bought beef from the store. After my husband and I were first married, we ran out of beef (never to be repeated) and had to purchase some meat from the store until butchering time rolled back around.

I had never cooked store bought meat. I had no idea how different it was, and not in a good way. The odor (it wasn't rancid or bad, but it smells different) made my nose curl. I couldn't believe the amount of liquid I had to drain even though I'd purchased lean. And the taste. It was the difference between real sweet cream butter and margarine.

We now have our own herd of natural grass fed beef. I use the term herd generously as we only have 6 cows. Like any homesteading venture, there are pros and cons.

Cons

Space-Unlike chickens, cows need more than just a backyard, so you need some acreage to raise cattle. Depending upon your climate, an acre per cow is a good rule of thumb.

Cost of feed-Even with adequate pasture, you'll have to purchase feed for the winter months. Our hay bill is usually around \$900 for the year, depending on the season, and going rate.

Fencing-There's the initial cost of fencing. We use barbed wire. It's fairly easy to put up and unlike electric fence where you have to worry about the electrical ground, weeds/brush touching the wire, and a constant power source, barbed wire is good to go. However, cattle can be notorious for getting out of any fence. Be ready to herd them back.

Care-Cattle don't take an extreme amount of care, but they do require some. They need a constant supply of fresh clean water, and during the winter, feeding.

Breeding-If you keep a cow to breed back every year, you either have to purchase a bull, artificially inseminate, or haul your cow to a bull or a bull to your cow every year. Unless, you're lucky enough to have a bull in the neighboring field who hops the fence when it's time, and then goes back home. (This only happened to us one year and was with a bull we didn't mind cross-breeding)

Pros

Taste-You can't beat the taste of naturally grass fed beef. I'd talked about the difference so passionately that a co-worker bought half a beef from us (This isn't a sales pitch as we can't meet the demand now). After having our beef, his wife refused to ever go back to store bought beef. You can taste the difference!

Price-While the cost of feed can be a lot up front, the cost of natural grass fed beef is much cheaper to raise than to buy in the store. Our local butcher charges a \$55 kill fee (divided by how much of the beef you purchase) and \$.50 per pound cut and wrap. If you butcher and wrap it yourself, then this cost is eliminated. Beef tastes better when allowed to age and as we don't have the proper hanging facilities, we hire ours out. The average rate in our area is between \$2.10 and \$2.75 a pound, making every cut of beef around \$3.00 a pound, including your expensive cuts of steak.

Plus, you get to decide which cuts of meat you want and how it's packaged.

Peace of mind- I know exactly what goes into our cows. We buy our hay locally from local fields so I know they haven't been treated. Our own pasture is managed organically, even though we're not certified. (It costs too much for our tiny operation) Our cattle are cared for humanly. I'll never have to worry about my children eating pink slime.

While raising your own grass fed beef isn't for everyone, if you have acreage, it's something to consider. I love that my children grow up knowing where the food comes from. And I suspect they'll be as grateful of that as I am now.

Even if you can't raise your own, you can look for a local ranch, and purchase from them. Or contact your local butcher and ask for referrals.

For more info on raising your own beef, listen to our Pioneering Today [Podcast Episode #24 Raising Your Own Grass Fed Beef](#)

10 Tips on How to Raise Chickens for Meat

Growing and raising as much of our own as possible is really important to us. The more research we do on food bought in the grocery store, the less we find ourselves purchasing. From being fed GMO food, hormones, injected with antibiotics, and cruel living conditions, we have a hard time buying our meat from the store. We already raise our own grass fed beef and have a small flock of laying hens.



But raising chickens for meat? That's one area we hadn't ventured. Until now.

Let me tell you, meat chickens are quite a different experience than our hens. We purchased ours from a local farming store as chicks. There are two camps when it comes to meat chickens. Some swear by a heritage breed and others raise the Cornish X or White Cornish broilers.

Heritage breed chickens take longer to raise, resulting in a higher cost on feed, and an older bird by the time they're ready to butcher. This isn't all bad, as they're easier to come by, and can be used as a dual purpose chicken for both eggs and meat.

White Cornish broilers are a hybrid chicken, meaning they've been raised specifically for meat. They are ready to be butchered at just eight to ten weeks of age.

We decided to go with the White Cornish broilers due to their short raising period. You can either mail order chicks or purchase them from a store in the spring. We purchased ours from a local feed store.

1. Inspect before you buy. I like purchasing the chicks from a local store so you can look them over before you bring them home. Be sure you see the chicks up and walking before loading them. One of the chicks in our dozen had a broken leg. It was lying down when we purchased it and we didn't know until we got home its leg was broken. It died within a day of coming home.



2. Have a heat lamp ready. When chicks only have their down, they need a heat lamp to keep warm. It's also important to have them in a pen or area without corners. Chicks can become trapped in corners and trampled by the other birds. They'll need the heat lamp until their feathers come in, usually about 2 to 3 weeks.

3. Be prepared to feed a lot. If you're used to raising regular laying hens, be prepared to feed much more often and a lot more feed. Our hens will go through their feed in about four days. The meat chickens went through the same amount in a day. Granted, we had about twice as many meat chickens, but they were young and not full grown.

4. Keep the water full. Just like their feed, they go through a lot more water. Be sure they have plenty of fresh water in their pen.

5. They're lazy. There's no nice way to put this. Meat chickens don't move around like our hens. Their feed and water need to be close by. They lay around a lot. Their bodies are larger and as they grow, they can't stay standing for long periods of time. Be sure they have shade, their feathers are slower to come in and they have light skin. If you let them out into a run or pasture, keep food and water in the coop *and* where they're ranging.

6. Don't back out. Once you have the meat chickens, do not change your mind about butchering them. They're bred to be raised to a maximum of ten weeks. If you go over this, their legs will break and give out due to the weight of their bodies. Or they'll have heart failure. The whole point of raising your own meat is to be humane, don't let them suffer because you got cold feet.

7. Mark the calendar. Count out from when you purchased the chickens to their full maturity date of eight to ten weeks. Many county extension offices have chicken butchering equipment for rent, but you have to reserve it in advance. Be sure you book it in advance for your set time frame. It only costs \$25 to rent the equipment and we get to keep it for 48 hours.

8. Only dish up healthy feed. Be sure and only purchase unmedicated feed for your chickens. We purchased organic feed to be sure they weren't getting GMO products in their food. Remember, you're going to be eating what they're eating, m-kay?

9. Keep their pens clean. Don't stuff your birds into a tiny living area. Be sure they have room to move about. If they can run around on pasture, that is best. If not, be sure there's enough space for them to spread out and you keep it clean.

10. Don't become attached. Anytime we're raising animals for food, we don't think of them as pets. We don't name them. We do make sure they're cared for and treated humanely. Our children know upfront the animals are for food. We don't lie, fib, or try to hide the fact. Our children are very well adjusted with the fact we raise our own food and they know what that entails.

For those of you who don't eat meat, I respect your decision, please respect my decision to raise livestock for meat.

Next we'll share on the actual butchering and meat processing details.

In response to concerns about the cost of feeding these chickens, Carol suggested that "one thing you can do to reduce your cost is to supplement your feed with home grown. Even lawn clippings (from non-treated lawns, of course) can be a good way to expand their diet."

Day 15

An important part of self-sufficiency and preparedness is being able to feed yourself and your family if the grocery stores are bare or you can't get to them.

It's how our great-grandparents survived and with all of the chemicals, pesticides, GMO's, and non-food ingredients in our modern food system, we raise all of our own meat ourselves. Yep, I don't buy meat from the store.

We raise our own beef, pork, and chickens. My husband's boss is awesome and provides us with a salmon bonus and we hunt grouse and swap/barter for venison with our neighbors (though we hope to get our own this year).

However, along with raising your own meat comes knowing how to butcher it. This is true for hunters alike. And while it used to be common for everyone to know how to butcher an animal at home, many folks have never participated or even seen it done.

Today I want to share two articles on butchering your own meat. One of the most important things you'll need is a good knife, no matter what animal you're butchering.

I do my best to keep these posts, photos, and videos as tasteful as possible, but in order to actually document and teach, you will see some blood, just the way it is.

How to Butcher a Chicken

Knowing how to butcher a chicken at home is a skill not for the faint of heart, but one essential if you want to be self-sustainable and raise your own livestock from start to table.

I know many people hire out the butchering of their meat animals. We do it for our cattle, one due to the size of them, but more importantly because we don't have the equipment, including a cooler for allowing the meat to age properly.



But knowing how to butcher a chicken is quite different from knowing how to butcher a full size cow.

We have butchered our own pigs, but this fall, we'll be sending the pair of pigs we have now to the local butcher as well.

For those of you wanting to know how to butcher a chicken, then this is the post for you. I did my best to take tasteful pictures of butchering a chicken at home, but if the sight of blood makes you faint, either grab the smelling salts and a soft pillow, or have someone read you the post so you don't see the pics, okay?

How to Butcher a Chicken at Home

1. Rent the equipment. Having the right equipment makes all the difference. For \$27 we were able to rent from our local county agriculture extension office all of the chicken butchering equipment including the cones (here's a [great video on the cones and showing the actual deed](#)), the scalding tank, and the big most lovely thing in the world when it comes to butchering chickens, the automatic plucker!

Don't have a way to rent the equipment? You can purchase chicken kill cones to slaughter your chicken in as easy as manner possible for both you and the chicken. You'll also want to make sure you have a nice butchering knife to help you cut up the chicken during processing. A sharp knife is essential to clean cuts. You don't want to be sawing away and a good boning knife is key.

2. Take away the food. The night before butchering chickens remove their food. You don't want to have food in the crop or vent of the chicken (the area the hold their food in before swallowing) when removing.

3. Set it all up before you begin to butcher the chickens. Light the scalding tank before you're ready to make sure you know how and it's working. Hook up the water hose and extension cord to the plucking machine (only requires 110 volt). Turn it on, make sure it works. Have all of your knives sharpened and laid out. You'll need to turn on the scalding tank (its propane, so know how to light the pilot light) a few hours before butchering to heat the water. You want the water at 140 degrees. Too hot and you'll tear the skin when plucking.

4. Got ice? Wash out a large bin and fill it with some ice and cold water. We placed all of the chickens in here after they'd been plucked, but before gutting and removing the feet. Have an extra bag of ice handy to put the finished chickens in before you begin wrapping them for freezing

How to butcher a chicken



5. Place the chickens in the cone. Their head hangs down allowing you to make a clean cut. **Note:** We don't just slit the throat; we completely cut off the head of the chicken. Knowing how to slaughter or kill a chicken at home seems brutal to some, but we feel it's much more humane to know the whole process of butchering a chicken yourself and making sure it's done in the quickest and kindness way possible. Allow the blood to drain out; it only takes a few minutes.



6. Dunk chicken in scalding tank. About two minutes of dunking the chicken in the scalding tank is just right. Too long, and you'll begin to cook the skin and it will tear upon plucking. Be warned, this is the stinky part. If you can do this on a cool day, you'll be much happier.



7. Place chicken in the plucking machine. It doesn't take long for this little beauty to pluck all the feathers off. It also rinses the chicken at the same time. Is there anything prettier than a bald chicken? (Okay, while butchering I mean otherwise I just sound really weird...)

8. Create an assembly line. Don't try to cut up each chicken from start to finish before moving onto the next. We placed all the butchered and plucked chickens in the ice water bath until they were all done.

9. Cut off the feet. At the joint of the leg, cut off the chicken feet. You can save these to make a gelatinous broth or toss them. Up to you.



10. Remove the neck. Cut around the opening of the neck and then pull out the vent (where the chicken held its food) and pull the neck out. If you cut too far back, you might cut some of the skin away from the top of the breast, but you'll get the hang of it after your first few chickens.



11. Gut your chicken. Take your butcher knife and cut around the anus. Pull out the anus and make a larger cut to pull the intestines and organs.



12. Have a bucket to discard guts and intestines. If it's hot out, you may want to fill the buck with some water to keep the flies at bay.

13. Package your chicken. Rinse chicken off again under cold running water. We chose to freeze our chickens whole to roast later. We used plastic produce bags that our wonderful local grocery store let me have for free. Others have used plastic freezer bags. We tried to get all of the air out and wrapped it in freezer paper.

We butchered 10 chickens and it only took about an hour. That's because I had to document everything from behind the camera or it would have gone faster. My dear husband did all the work while I "filmed." Our kids were involved (my 5-year-old daughter begged to stay for the whole part; we let her watch everything but the initial neck chopping).

We ate one of the chickens that night for dinner. It was pretty cool to know it came from our farm.

So there you have it, how to kill or butcher a chicken at home.

Pioneering Today-How to Butcher a Whole Pig for a Roast

After asking several of you if this would be a subject of interest, the answer was yes. **The [video](#) is done as tastefully as I could while still showing you how to do things.**



The pioneers had to butcher their own meat and while you can go to a butcher, we prefer to do things ourselves if we can. Below is the video link to show you how to butcher and prep a whole pig for a pig roast. It starts after the pig is shot and bled, beginning with the scraping off of the hair.

To scrape off the hair, you have to dip your pig in hot water. The water needs to be 150 degrees, or hot enough to hold your hand in for only five seconds according to old timers (I recommend a thermometer). If it's boiling, then you'll cook the skin and you don't want to do that until you begin roasting your pig.

Tug on the hair and if it starts to come loose, transfer your pig to a table and begin scraping off the hair with a bell scraper and sharp knife. Even if your pig has patches of color, it will scrape off leaving a nice white hide.

Once all the hair is scraped off, use a small torch to sear off any small remaining hairs.

Now you need to gut your pig, the same as you would for a deer or cow. If you've never gutted an animal, have someone with experience come over to show you how. If you nick the bladder or intestines, your meat will be tainted.

After gutting the pig, put him in a cooler.

Day 16

We covered foraging for wild edibles yesterday (herbs are coming up soon) and one of the beautiful things about gathering or harvesting any food source is finding a way to safely preserve it for eating later.

Most wild edibles aren't an option for canning, unless it's berries you're making into a syrup or jam/jelly. Greens don't can well and wild mushrooms aren't safe to can like domestic versions. While you can freeze them, dehydrating leaves all of the nutrients in foods and is the best option from a preparedness standpoint.

In today's article we go over why it's the best option for preppers and tips to ensure success when you're dehydrating different foods. Plus, I share what to do with those tomato skins instead of tossing them out!

5 Reasons Dehydrated Food is a Preparedness Must & 5 Tips for Dehydrating at Home

Dehydrating food is an excellent way to preserve your food, build your own pantry, cut down on your food bill, and up your preparedness level. In fact, dehydrating could be called the prepper and survivalists top food preservation mode.

Benefits of Dehydrated Food for Storage

Removing the moisture from food allows it to store indefinitely in proper conditions, making it a preferable choice for the preparedness minded individual. Smoking is another form of dehydrating food and creates delicious meats and cheeses, as well as preserving them. Learn [how to smoke cheese at home](#) here.

Dehydrating allows you to harvest your food in season and preserve it for year round eating. From foraging, to harvesting from your garden, or even purchasing food in season, dehydrating lets you build your own food supply for year round use. **Note: Dehydrating or freezing is the only safe way to preserve wild mushrooms** as canning is not recommended for wild mushrooms.

One of the beauties of dehydrating food is its portability and ease of storage. **When all of the moisture is removed from the food, it shrinks up considerably.** This is done either through salt or the movement of cold or hot air through the food. Because organisms that cause food spoilage need moisture to grow, dehydrating them makes the food a perfect candidate for long term food storage. Plus, unlike a freezer, dehydrated food requires no electricity to maintain its stability.

Check this out, **when dehydrated, one pound of fresh apples becomes just two ounces.** Each food will vary on how much it shrinks down, but you can see why dehydrated food quickly becomes essential when you're on the go or for bug out bags. Some dehydrated foods need water for reconstitution (like onions), but many items can be eaten as is, which is ideal in emergency situations.

Fruit leather, strawberries, grapes, blueberries, apples, peaches, pears, bananas, pineapple, and zucchini chips are all easily eaten without reconstitution or the need to soak in water. Plus, they're quite delicious and packed with nutrients.

While I love home canned food for many reasons, you can't beat dehydrated food for the ease of carrying or storage. From meals on the go, to hiking and camping, in your emergency bag or extended times in the wilderness, you can pack much more dehydrated food than any other form. Dehydrated food requires no refrigeration and very little storage space. It can easily fit in backpacks, purses, or pockets.

Resources for Dehydrating Food at Home

Drying food is one of the oldest traditional methods of food preservation known to man. In hot climates, food can be dehydrated simply by laying it out in the sun on a screen or rack. A solar Sun Oven (which I'm so grateful Sun Oven sent to me in exchange for my review, because I was skeptical of it working in the Pacific Northwest where sun isn't something we have a lot of, but it is quickly become my new favorite toy) is also an off-grid dehydrator!

I purchased the Nesco Dehydrator dehydrator two years ago when my garage sale one bit the dust and have been very happy with it ever since. This is a very frugal dehydrator, however, if you want to go with the cream of the crop, then get the Excalibur Dehydrator. You won't be sorry.

Another option is to build your own solar dehydrator. There are many plans to be found online as well as on YouTube. An awesome [video](#) to watch is by An American Homestead where they show us their new solar dehydrator.

5 Tips for How to Dehydrate Food at Home

For **optimal long term storage, dehydrated foods should be stored in a dark cool area in an air tight or vacuum sealed container.** Pantry shelves or cupboards work well, but under beds or anywhere out of direct light is fine.

The foods you can dehydrate are limitless, from fresh fruit, vegetables, herbs, to meat, and even liquid. You can **make your own soup mixes, fruit leather, jerky, beans, onion and garlic powders, powdered cultures, to powdered eggs.**

Canning tomatoes? Save the skins you'd normally discard and dehydrate them, then grind up into a tomato powder for use later in sauces and soups.

There are many options for dehydrating your food from hanging meat on racks next to a warm outdoor fire for smoking, to racks indoors next to your wood stove, and in your oven if it goes down to 150 degrees. You can dry herbs by hanging them upside down in bunches in a dry warm area for about a week.

When dehydrating your food, the **biggest tip is to chop or slice all of your food as close to the same size as possible.** The more uniform, the more they'll dry at the same rate. An easy way to do this is to use a mandolin. Another option is a food chopper for items that need to be chopped or minced instead of sliced.

Think about how you want to use the food before drying. If you're drying apples, do you want apple rings to eat as snacks, or wedges to use in pies and desserts, or chunks to add to oatmeal? You might decide to dry some in all forms, but thinking it out ahead of time will be key.

Place your food on the dehydrator trays. Make sure none of the food is touching one another. You want the air to be able to circulate all the way around each piece. Fruits don't put off much odor, so you can dry different fruits at the same time.

Strong odor items like onions and garlic should be dried by themselves or you'll have onion flavored strawberries. Some folks will put their dehydrator outside or in the garage when drying onions and garlic if the smell is too strong.

Select the appropriate setting on your dehydrator. Be sure to check on the food periodically throughout the drying time. You'll want to rotate trays, especially if one tray is drying faster than the others.

Use the manual times as a guideline as the time it takes to dry your food will vary upon your climate, how thick you cut the food, and how much water it had in it to begin with. For storage purposes, you can't over dry your food. The drier, the longer it will store. Some people prefer their fruit to be dry but still flexible, while others prefer it on the crisper side.

Once your food is dried to your liking, you'll want to package it. You can place them in Mason jars and use a vacuum sealer attachment to make it air tight. You can use mylar or vacuum sealer bags. Another option is to double bag Ziploc bags and squeeze as much air out as possible. Be sure to always mark your containers with the date for proper food rotation in your pantry.

To reconstitute vegetables, soak them for 10 minutes to 2 hours, but no longer, as they can start to spoil if soaked too long. They'll return to almost fresh state and cook as you would regularly.



Want to save hours and days of drying time when dehydrating berries? Here's our complete tutorial on [How to Dehydrate Berries the Easy Way.](#)

This handy [conversion chart](#) is a great resource for using your dehydrated foods.

Reader Tip

Sally: One of the grand things about dehydrating is that it can be an all year way to preserve food. When you find those marked down veggies at the store in the middle of winter you can bring them home and dehydrate. It is faster

than dragging out the canner for a few pounds of what ever. When there is a frozen food sale such as mixed veggies you can bring them home and dehydrate. It is amazing how it all begins to add up and it feels good on a cold winters night to make a hearty stew with all those veggies in your cupboard.

Day 17

While I enjoy all aspects of preparedness and self-sufficiency, I have a special fondness for canning. There's nothing like hearing the ping of a jar sealing.

And lining the shelves of our pantry with home canned food makes me feel all kind of happy; especially when it's food we've grown ourselves, making it basically free.

However, if you're new to canning, you may be a bit confused between water bath and pressure canning, and which is safe for what foods.

This section will help you determine which foods can be safely canned via which method, and the benefit of one verses the other.

Pioneering Today-Canning 101 Water-Bath vs. Pressure Canner

Have you ever been confused about the difference between water-bath canning and pressure canning? Huge thanks to one a reader who pointed out she didn't know all of the canning terms and equipment.



So for those of you new to canning or even seasoned-pros, I hope to share the basics and tips to make your canning adventures as easy and successful as possible.

Water-bath canning is processing your canned foods in boiling water for a specified amount of time. **Acidic foods can safely be canned via the water-bath method.** These are jellies, jams, preserves, marmalade, fruits, fruit spread, fruit sauces, tomatoes (with acid added via lemon juice or vinegar), pickles, relishes, and chutneys.



Water-bath canner

Pressure canning heats your canned food under steam pressure, allowing for much higher temperatures and faster cooking times. **All low-acid foods must be canned using a pressure canner.** Low acid foods include vegetables, meat, poultry, seafood, and combination recipes.



Pressure canner

I know people used to can with just the water-bath and may have not experienced problems. But newer strains of tomatoes don't have the acid levels and unless you can check the ph level at home, I wouldn't risk it. Growing and preserving your food is rewarding but hard work, I'd rather know it's done safely and correctly using these guidelines.



Time saving tip- I also use my pressure canner to can my applesauce and apple pie filling ([how to pressure can apple pie filling](#)), though you can use a water-bath because this is an acidic food. One of the **benefits to the pressure canner is you can raw pack all of your vegetables and fruits**. It will cook fully while it's being canned.

Wash your jars, lids, and bands in hot soapy water and rinse well. You can keep your jars heated in hot water in your canner, but I keep mine in the hot wash water until I'm ready to fill them. New canning guidelines no longer require pre-heating the lids, just put them on cold. (If water-bath canning for less than 10 minutes processing, sterilize jars by boiling them for 10 minutes before hand)

Pint sized jars are two cups and quart jars hold four cups. Make sure your pressure canner holds both sizes so you only have to make one purchase. See [5 Tips for Choosing the Best Pressure Canner for You](#)

Proper Headspace for Canning

Fill your jars with prepared recipe. If raw packing your fruit and vegetables, pour your boiling water or syrup over raw fruit/vegetable. Leave 1/4 inch headspace (**space between top of jar and your food**) for fruit juices, pickles, jams, and jellies 1/2 inch for fruits and tomatoes, 1 inch for vegetables, meats, poultry, seafood, and combinations recipes.

Remove air bubbles by sliding a spatula between the side of the jar and your food. Run it around the outside of the jar and tap on the top of the food.

Wipe the rim and threads of the jar with a damp, clean cloth. Place lids on jars, screw band down until resistance is met. Don't over tighten.

Place jars in canner. Be sure to use a rack, this keeps the jars from sitting directly on the heat source or bottom of the pot. If jars aren't on the rack, they can become too hot and burst or crack. For water-bath make sure the water covers the top of your jars **by at least 1 inch of water**. Follow the amount of water your manual suggestions for your pressure canner, more is better. Mine calls for a quart and a half.

Start the time for your recipe when the water is at a full boil for water-bath or when the pressure control starts to jiggle when using a pressure canner. For pressure canner, you'll need to lock your lid into place, but don't put the pressure control on yet. Allow steam to come through the vent for 10 minutes. This allows the pressure to build and the air to exhaust, very important so don't skip this step. Then select the correct pounds of

pressure and put your controller in place. Once it begins to jiggle and hiss, at least 3 to 4 times per minute, start your timer.



Jars of apple pie filling cooling on a towel

When time is up, allow canner to cool according to the manufacturer's guide. Carefully remove jars, with either a jar lifter (will save those fingers) or using an oven mitt. Set warm jars on a double folded towel. This way you're not putting hot jars on a cold counter thus avoiding jar breakage. Allow to cool for 12 to 24 hours without moving.

After jars are cool, test the lids for a seal. Press the center of the lid with your finger. If it doesn't flex, jar is sealed. Remove band and store in a cool, dry, dark place like a pantry shelf. If it does flex, you may try and re-seal or place in the fridge to eat!

To test the seal on re-usable tattle canning lids, take off the band and lift the jar by holding onto the just the lid. Make sure and keep your hand directly under the jar in case your lid isn't sealed and comes off. We don't want a mess after all. For more info on [canning with re-usable tattle canning lids go here.](#)

Reader Tips

Donna's Mom and sister didn't have racks so they would use dishtowels on the bottom of the canner to protect the jars. They never had a jar break. In response Melissa said you could also use old bands on the bottom to lift up the jars as well.

Day 18

While there are usually many angles or way to go about things, canning is not one of those.

Lately, I've seen astounding amount of I'm sure well intended advice or instructions on canning that is plain unsafe. I am a huge advocate of raising and putting up food ourselves just like our pioneer forefathers, but I'm not going to continue doing things they did that we now know are unsafe.

To me, part of being prepared is also preparing things correctly from the get go to avoid harm.

I want everyone in the world to can food at home. Home canned food is not only frugal and a large part of our preparedness and food storage, but it makes it easier to eat healthier when you're running busy. It's the ultimate make a head convenience food.

Today I share 6 common mistakes or bad practices in canning, the things that are non-negotiable, and share how to do it correctly.

I love canning, in fact, I maybe addicted to stuffing food into Mason jars to line my home pantry shelves and food storage. But, there are some serious dangerous practices going on in the canning world and we're going to talk about them.

Podcast: [Play in new window](#) | [Download](#)

6 Canning Myths You Must Know

1. If it's canned in the store you can "can" it at home. Nope. I wish this was true. I truly do, but commercial canners can reach much higher temperatures than our at home pressure canners, which means they are able to can things we can't. Some examples, pumpkin butter and pumpkin pie filling. Just because it's canned in the store doesn't mean you're safe to can it at home.

You'll see store canned chicken noodle soup, but you can't can this at home with the noodles in it. I have a complete post on how to [alter your soup recipes to make them safe for home canning](#).

2. My grandmother and great-grandmother canned this way for years and they never got sick. You might be willing to gamble with your health and that of your loved ones, but I'm not. We know that botulism isn't killed by the temperature of boiling water, which is 212 degrees Fahrenheit. Boiling food for longer doesn't make it safe, even if you boil food for six hours, it still won't reach above the temperature of the water, 212 degrees.

Botulism grows very well in an anaerobic environment (without the presence of oxygen, like sealed jars of canned food). It doesn't grow in acid, so you may safely can acidic foods at home with a water bath, but for your vegetables and non-acidic foods, you must pressure can them.

Most people are canning food to be frugal, create healthier food than the grocery store, and to be prepared for disaster. Let me tell you, a hospital visit isn't cheap, becoming sick isn't healthy, and preparing for a disaster while using means that could create one doesn't make much sense to me. Botulism isn't a form of food poisoning like the stomach flu. You can die from it.

I don't tell you this to scare you. Canning food at home is completely safe, but you need to follow updated guidelines.

3. Oven canning is just fine, it's the same temperature as boiling water after all. Oven canning is not a replacement for using a water bath. First, it's a dry heat, and the glass canning jars aren't made for dry heat, so you're risking breaking your jars. Second, you don't know that the internal heat of the food inside the jars is reaching a high enough temperature to kill off all the bacteria because dry heat is very slow to penetrate the jars and to sustain said heat long enough to kill the bacteria. Third, water bath and pressure canning help a jar vent, or simply put, it pulls out the oxygen from inside the jar. You're not going to get this on a reliable level in an oven. They're not designed for it.

Again, there are lots of things I buck the rules on, but my family's safety isn't one of them. Use a water bath or pressure canner.

4. My jar sealed so I'm good to go. No. Sorry, just because your jar sealed doesn't mean it's safe. Some older recipes call for pouring your hot jam (or pickle brine) into the jar, putting on the lid and band, and turning it upside down to get a seal. You will get a seal in most cases, but generally the seal is weak and will come undone a few months into the jars shelf life. Most important, a seal in no way means there isn't bacteria present, which is what the whole water bath and pressure canning process does.

I have to confess, when I first started pickling, I did this with some of my pickles in order to help keep them crunchy. I ended up losing almost every single jar because they came unsealed on the shelf, even though they'd initially sealed. Lesson learned. I'm thankful it wasn't at the expense of my family's health.

5. Just scrape the mold off of the jam/jelly and eat the rest. This used to be common practice, but once you see mold, even scraping off the top layer, the mold spores are already throughout your jam and jelly. We eat mold spores every day, little small ones we can't see, and for most of us, it doesn't cause any harm. But (you knew this was coming, right?) to someone with a compromised immune system, it can result in a fungal infection in the lungs. This is extremely hard to get rid of and to treat.

A better practice is to can your jam and jelly in smaller size jars. If it's getting mold from being opened in the fridge too long, then simply can it in smaller jars.

If you see mold when you pull the jar off the shelf, then your seal was compromised and you should toss it out. **The golden rule of canning is if in doubt, throw it out.**

6. Canning is dangerous. Despite all these myths, canning is safe if you follow the guidelines and stay up to date with your practices. I've eaten home canned food my entire life and canned on my own for over 16 years. We've never gotten sick, ever. I want to reassure you again, canning is easy and fun, just follow the "rules". Canning isn't the place to be a rebel.

Home canned food is often much more nutritious than store bought canned goods. One, most home canned food is canned from produce picked from the vine and processed almost immediately. Your home canned jams

and jellies don't contain food dye, high fructose corn syrup, or other GMO additives, and usually, they have less sugar. Especially if you're using my low sugar recipes.

Reader Comment

RayK I have done water bath canning, but have found that foods canned this way don't have the shelf life that pressure canned food does. Things like tomatoes and kraut will last for many years if pressure canned, but generally only one season if processed in a water bath. You have to make realistic choices (pressure canning pickles comes to mind-yuck), but pressure canning will definitely extend the shelf life of your canned foods.

Day 19

If you're like me, even though we grow and put up a lot of our own, we don't produce everything ourselves.

There are some items I still purchase and I've found that by purchasing them in bulk, I save a lot of money and build up my food storage quickly. These are 6 tips I use when purchasing items, along with a [free bulk spice and herb storage guide](#) with the exact spices and herbs we use, plus the amounts for a year.

This list is meant as a guide for you, as each person has different tastes and you might add in different herbs or use more of a certain one. But it will give you a great starting place, plus some links on preserving your own herbs like I do.

6 Tips on Buying Food in Bulk

One of the first rules of food storage is to purchase in bulk. Actually, that might be one of the first rules of frugal grocery shopping, but it also applies to food storage.

3 Rules for Food Storage

I have a hard and fast rule in regards to food storage. **Never purchase things you won't eat in regular life.** I believe it is a waste of money to purchase emergency food you won't use in your ever day life.

I have this rule for two reasons. One, what if the emergency never comes? And I seriously hope and pray that it never does. But if you're investing a bunch of money into food you'll only use in an emergency, then you might be banking your money on something that doesn't happen.

Second part of the rule, **if you're not using your emergency or food storage food on a regular basis, you're going to have enough things to deal with when an emergency happens and learning how to cook said emergency food is not going to be another stress you want to add on.**

And third part of this rule (boy, I sound bossy, don't I? Let's say it's the mother in me coming out... because that sounds way nicer than bossy), if you have children and a spouse, getting them to eat something they don't normally eat can sometimes be a huge issue.

Whew, glad we got that part covered. Now onto the fun stuff.

Normally, purchasing in bulk will save you money. Happy dance, like full on grooving over here. And this is good news any time of the day, but especially when you're building up your food storage.

If you're not sure what items to begin with in your food storage, I've got ya covered in the section, [for 8 Foods Everyone Should Store and How](#).

Fresh fruits and vegetables are not a storage item, unless you preserve them for use later. This is where my [Ultimate Home Food Preservation Guide](#) comes in. All of my recipes, tutorials, and how-to's, plus a ton of others from folks I trust and follow cover all aspects of home food preservation. Because preserving your own

fresh fruits, vegetables, and meat is a very important part of any food storage plan. Specifically, because this is an area you can replenish every year.

A major part of some food storage advice I see has a flaw, because there is no way to replenish it without the stores. You may not be able to grow everything yourself, but finding a local source will mean you can still purchase or barter if transportation was shut down. And I much prefer helping out a neighbor and keeping small family businesses going with my money when possible.

That being said, I don't have a local source for all items in my food storage, and that's where this buying in bulk guide comes in.

The items I keep in my food storage and buy in bulk are items you'd typically see the pioneers purchase when they went into town. Think Little House Laura Ingall's living.

Places to purchase food in bulk

Costco

Amazon

Azure Standard

Local Co-op

Local Farmers

Mormon Church Store House (no, you don't have to be a member, because I'm not and never have been. And I double checked, it's open to the public but you do have to call for hours, though some folks say you need to go in with a member, here's a [map where you can find a location near](#) you if you're interested)

Tips to Buying Food in Bulk

1. Wheat berries. I buy my wheat berries in 50 pound bags. I purchase these about twice a year. When I open my last bag, I purchase another. This way, I'm never almost out and have a buffer. Otherwise, if I wait until I'm out, then don't get my order in or to the store before an emergency happens, I'm left with a hole in my food storage. This also ensures I'm practicing proper rotation with our food.

I've purchased my wheat berries from a few different sources. The best deal I've found for organic hard white wheat has been from our local co-op. If I order a bag in bulk, then I get 10% off. However, their organic spelt berries are much more expensive than ordering online.

If it's just a small dollar amount difference, then I'll still purchase local, but if it's a large amount then I purchase on-line. If you don't have a co-op, then the Palouse Brand hard white wheat berries, local to my area, also have really good prices.

I've seen some people say wheat berries aren't a good food storage for the fact you have to have a grinder. My answer, it's much healthier to grind your own flour than said flour from the store (refer to the section on why you should be grinding your own flour) and you should start now! My goal is to be living the healthiest I can now, and simply swapping out my flour is an easy way to do that. Plus, it adds to my preparedness skills and isn't something I'll have to deal with later.

2. Sugar is another item I store in bulk. I usually keep 25 pounds of brown sugar on hand and 25 pounds of organic evaporated cane juice. I don't use nearly as much sugar as I used to in my baking, but I do use it for our homemade jam/jelly and in some baking.

I purchase my sugar in bulk from Costco primarily. It's a better price than the regular grocery store. Many people like to buy in bulk from Azure Standard, but we don't have a drop zone in our area, so it's not an option for me. I've also purchased from the bulk bin at our local co-op, especially things like coconut palm sugar and other specialty sweeteners, but Costco has the best deal and since they're carrying a lot more organic items now, I check there.

3. Dried beans. We grow enough shelled beans to almost get us through the year, but I do supplement with a 25 pounds bag of pinto beans from Costco. One thing to keep in mind is if you're eating strictly from your food storage, as in emergency type conditions, then you're going to go through it faster than you think. I keep a buffer of dried beans on hand for this reason, beyond what we grown and dry ourselves. Remember, dried beans are good for about 2 years before they begin to get too hard when cooked. And once they're too old, it doesn't matter how you cook them, they'll still be hard and tough.

Most of us still end up supplementing some of our food from the store, eating out, etc. even if we feel we're eating mostly from our food storage or pantry at home.

4. Rice. I purchase rice in bulk. It's much cheaper and can be cooked in such a variety of ways. You can add it to soups, stuff it in a tortilla, eat it all by its lonesome, and also make puddings out of it. There are lots of options for rice. Remember, brown rice will go rancid quicker than white. I personally love wild rice, so I try to stock a blend. Costco has a 25 pound bag of Jasmine rice that I use for our bulk, and then I mix it in with quinoa or other rice to make my own mix.

5. Spices. Trust me, spices go a long long way to making plain old beans and rice palatable and downright delicious. Seriously. My kids beg me to make homemade refried beans all the time. It's one of their favorites. Now, spices in the store can get expensive. Those little glass bottles add up quickly and if you're cooking a lot from scratch, you're going to go through them fast.

I purchase my spices and seasonings (herbs and teas, too) from Mountain Rose Herbs (Link on our [Resource Page](#)). They're a pretty awesome company out of Oregon. You can choose what amount to buy your spices and they give discounts for bulk orders.

I recommend going in with some friends if your order isn't large enough for the bulk discount if possible. I often combine my mom's order with mine. Chili powder is one I use a lot of because I make all my own seasonings for tacos, chili, stews, and other dishes. Their prices have far beat out the stores, plus, they're usually organic, Non-GMO, and when harvested wild, harvested responsibly so as not to deplete an entire area. That is some awesome sauce right there.

[Grab my Spice Storage Cheat Sheet and see which spices I store and how much for the year.](#)

6. Salt. I keep all kinds of salt on hand. I use canning salt for canning and keep at least a box on hand. (Canning salt means no iodine or other additives so it won't discolor or taste funny in your home canned foods) My sea salt I found at a discount store, but I keep at least five pounds of sea salt on hand for everyday use, cooking, baking, and fermenting; you name it going on in the kitchen. If you want to cure meat with salt, then you need some curing salt which has nitrates in it.

If you have the extra money or room in your grocery budget, I'd purchase these items in bulk now. But I know not everyone can afford to do all of it at once. I would buy one item a week in bulk. The beans and rice were both just under \$10, making them fairly easy to slide in on our budget.

Don't go into debt to build up a food storage, but add in items as you're able.

Reader Suggestions:

Muriel says: On the brown sugar: I've found it much easier to just store white sugar and a bulk tin of molasses. You can make brown sugar easily by adding 1 or 2 tablespoons of molasses to a cup of white sugar. It takes a few minutes, but keep mixing and suddenly it will stop being white sugar with mass of brown gunk in the middle you will have a lovely bowl of fresh brown sugar.

Another thing I have been doing of late is making my own Minute Rice by dehydrating already cooked rice. I'm thinking of trying the same thing with cooked beans as well. Depending on the type of emergency, having food that requires less cooking time (and fuel!) might be handy.

Day 20

When I first started looking at food storage and eating more traditional food, I began looking at our flour. Flour isn't really meant for long term storage, and any store bought flour, regardless of whole wheat or organic, has had its vitamins and minerals stripped from it to make it shelf stable.

We started grinding our own for both the health benefits and the preparedness aspect. And I've never looked back. Plus I kind of like feeling like a true pioneer and grinding my own.

Many people bake their own goods, like bread, to escape the questionable ingredients in most store bread, but they don't realize the condition of their flour. I didn't. Now don't get me wrong, homemade bread is still better than most store brought and I'm so glad you're doing it. But our food is only as good as the ingredients we put into it.

It wasn't until I began looking into flour and grinding it at home that I discovered the difference between the two and how big it really is.

Why You Should Grind Your Own Flour & Choosing a Mill

Learn how to grind your own flour at home. Flour milled at home is healthier and fresher, plus it makes me feel like a true pioneer woman.

Do you ever wonder about the flour you purchase from the store? While I've been baking our own bread for almost a year and a half now, I've been using store bought flour. I know our bread is now preservative free, but what about the flour, the main ingredient?

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My desire is to be as self-sustainable as possible. I also believe it's the healthiest way to live. I started researching the benefits of grinding your own flour.

Grinding Your Own Flour

When you grind it at home, you're leaving in all the nutrition. It will store for one to two weeks, or you can store the ground flour in the freezer. I borrowed a friend's electric Blendtec mill to try out for myself.

When you grind a whole wheat berry (it looks like a piece of grain, not a berry), you are grinding the bran and germ into your flour. Because the germ has oil in it, the flour can turn rancid, so it's removed in commercial flour. But most of your fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants are in the bran and germ.

Resources for Grinding Flour

Free guide on learning how to bake with fresh flour: [6 Tips for Baking with Freshly Milled Flour](#)

How to Choose the Best Home Flour Mill

Manual Flour Mill

Pros

- 1. No electricity.** You won't be using any electricity or upping your power bill. If the power goes out due to a storm or unforeseen major catastrophe, you can still grind your own flour.
- 2. Toned arms.** Turning the handle creates a toned upper body. I'm a girl who likes to multitask. How about you?
- 3. Ability to grind oily products.** A manual mill allows you to grind oily grains, nuts, and seeds. Homemade peanut or almond butter?
- 4. Nostalgia.** I love vintage and antique things in my home. A hand turned flour mill definitely says homesteading.

Cons

- 1. Mounting to a solid surface.** A manual flour mill must be mounted to a table or counter top.
- 2. Time.** It takes much longer to grind up your flour with a manual mill than an electric one, especially if you need to grind up a large amount at one sitting.
- 3. Weight.** Some manual flour mills weigh up to 20 pounds. Moving around a piece of equipment at that weight may become cumbersome.

Electric Flour Mills

Pros

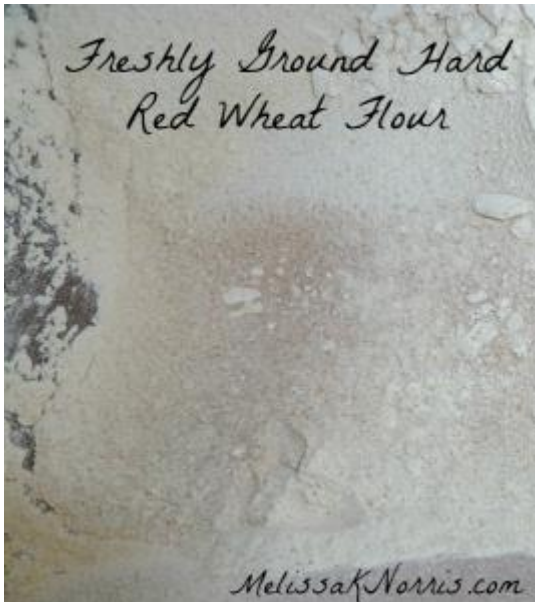
- 1. Ease of use.** You simply plug it in, flip the switch, and pour in your wheat berries. No clamping down to anything.
- 2. Fast.** I ground up 6 and 1/2 cups of fresh flour in less than 3 minutes.
- 3. Adjusting the grind.** Adjusting the grind on an electric flour mill is as simple as turning a switch. The grinder I borrowed had 5 different settings for setting the fineness of the grind.

Cons

- 1. Noisy.** It sounds like a vacuum cleaner.

2. Dependency on electricity. It does require a power source.

3. No oily products. You can't put anything oily through electric grinders. It gums them up and will make them useless.



I use an electric flour mill. While I love the idea of the manual grinder, I don't have the counter space or a good spot to clamp it down, nor do I have the time to use it. I need at least 10 to 14 cups of flour every week and time is of the essence. I can grind up extra flour to store in the freezer in case of an emergency.

The initial price of a home flour mill isn't cheap, but I view it as an investment. I'll use it every week and it's hard to put a price on something that improves the health of your family. Second, I'm guessing it will almost pay for itself in a year. Third, I can store the wheat berries much longer than bags of flour, increasing our food storage. I purchased organic red hard wheat berries for just \$.85 a pound at our local co-op. I used 4 and 1/2 cups of wheat berries and got 6 and 1/2 cups of flour.

I now prefer hard white wheat for bread baking, it's not quite as dense as the red. For delicate or baked items, Spelt is a wonderful flour. It has a higher protein count, but lower gluten, and it is a primitive non-hybridized wheat. I use it for cakes, muffins, cookies, and pie crusts.

Which is right for you? Do you use a flour mill or grind your own flour? Do you have any recommendations on which flour mill is the best?

Be sure to check out our [6 Tips to Baking with Fresh Flour](#).

Day 21

In many ways, our ancestors were healthier than we are today, even with our modern medical system, and a lot of that goes back to being active (howdy, growing and doing everything yourself is quite a workout, forget the gym, try bucking hay bales and digging post holes, you'll be buff in no time) .

Another thing is they didn't eat processed food. There were no chemicals injected into their food. It was made from what they grew, could barter and swap with a neighbor, and supplemented with a few items from the general store.

One of the items a good pioneer used was a sourdough starter. Did you know yeast in the little packets you purchase from the store wasn't even invented in its current state until the 1940's?

Man has been using wild yeast for hundreds of years to make baked goods and in less than one century, many in today's culture don't know how to bake with sourdough or wild yeast.

Sourdough is actually healthier for you because it's a soaked grains method, which means it begins to break down the phytic acid in wheat, making it easier for our bodies to digest and absorb the nutrients. Pretty cool, huh?

And it's not just for bread. Sourdough is literally one of the most versatile items in your kitchen, from bread, rolls, pancakes, waffles, tortillas, cake, muffins, chips, biscuits, you name it, and sourdough can do it.

And all it takes is just two ingredients from your food storage to get started!

Today's article goes into more information on how to make a traditional sourdough starter, recipes, and a free video to get you started.

Sourdough Starter Video and Recipes

My sourdough starter is three-years-old and I can't wait to say someday it's in its decades.

Our ancestors used sourdough in their everyday life and kitchens, but sadly, many cooks don't know a whole lot about using sourdough other than you need a starter and have to feed it. It's important we not lose these traditional arts and way of life.

I had tried sourdough in the past and for the life of me couldn't keep the starter alive. Lovely mold greeted me and in frustration I threw it out and waited years before trying again. Part of the reason for my failure was using regular store bought yeast and not understanding how to feed it and discard the starter correctly.

When I found Traditional Cooking School by GNOWFGLINS I got all kinds of giddy when I saw their Sourdough E-course and E-book. My sourdough starter was only a few weeks old at the time and their info ensured my success and helped me produce edible sourdough products. If you've ever eaten something too sour, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

Did you know sourdough products are healthier?

Sourdough is healthier for you than regular bread products because it's fermented. Like so many others, I didn't know the health benefits of sourdough either. I just thought it was really awesome to capture my own wild yeast and not to be dependent on store bought yeast. Now that I understand phytic acid and how fermenting helps our bodies to absorb the nutrients, I'm hooked!

My sourdough starter sits on my kitchen counter and is a living part of my kitchen. When I made my first loaf of sourdough bread without any store bought yeast and got a beautiful rise, I almost wept it was so pretty. And because I'd had so many failures prior to that moment, I appreciated that delightful loaf even more. **My main problem was trying to bake bread without a strong enough colony of natural yeast.**

Because I like things that make my life easier, I figure you do, too. Trust me when I say this is a comprehensive, but easy to follow course and book. We love the sourdough tortillas and they're on our menu at least once a month, usually twice...or three.

Sourdough means never having to pay for yeast again

Using sourdough is frugal. Using sourdough means you don't have to purchase yeast from the store. One less item on my grocery list is always a plus. Not to mention, it ups our preparedness level, knowing I can still bake bread, tortillas, cakes, cinnamon rolls, and many other products without depending upon yeast purchased from the store.

I'm now a regular contributor to Traditional Cooking School by GNOWFGLINS and an affiliate for their products (If you make a purchase by clicking on my link, I receive a small commission, but it costs you more. Thank you for helping support this website). In fact, I printed out the e-book and had the recipe for sourdough waffles on my counter just this morning.

Note: They also have instructions for a gluten-free sourdough starter!

[I'm really excited to share this FREE video with you on how to create your own traditional sourdough starter](#) **affiliate link (no sugar or added yeast).*

Even if you already have a sourdough starter you'll love all the amazing free sourdough recipes!

sourdough chocolate waffles



Including my Chocolate Sourdough Waffle recipe, healthy enough for breakfast and delicious enough for dessert!

What are you waiting for, go on over and get [your free recipes and video.](#)

Day 22

Today we're going to address cooking without power. This is something every single person needs to know how to do and practice often.

You'll never find me advising to invest or put things into play in your home that you don't practice on a regular basis. We use many of these all the time, even when we do have power.

It's fun and a great way to involve the whole family, plus, when an emergency strikes or the power is out, you won't be struggling and burning dinner or having people go hungry because you didn't realize how long it would actually take.

You'll know how to do it!

Like any true pioneer, cast iron is my favorite go to pan in the kitchen. In fact, it's the only skillet I use, period. I love cast iron.

Cast iron is something you'll need for almost every single way I talk about in cooking outdoors. I created a free e-guide for you [Cast Iron Care- How to cook, clean & store it.](#)

11 Ways to Cook Off-Grid Without Power

I love meeting kindred spirits where the pioneer spirit is alive and at work. One of my favorite things about the pioneer days is their ability to accomplish so much without electricity. It's amazing when one looks at how they lived and what they did. Many of us would be hard pressed to make it a few days, let alone years, without our electricity and stores.

Podcast: [Play in new window](#) | [Download](#)

Now, I'm not saying I don't appreciate my power and the use of said stores. As long as they're here, I plan on using them. However, I also believe in knowing how to do things without said benefits. I'm often an eclectic mix of old-fashioned and modern. You, too? See, I knew we'd be fast friends.

Cooking outdoors and off-grid, aka without power, is something I believe everyone should know how to do. While I don't cook every meal without electricity, I do have the confidence and knowledge that I am able to do so.

Just this afternoon as my father helped me shell beans to can we were talking about his growing up through the Depression years. He said, "I know what it was like and I'll always live thinking it could happen again and wanting to be prepared for it." As beans dropped into the bowl at our feet he said, "But you know something, hard times bring people together."

I believe he's right.

And I also believe he's right in wanting to be prepared.

We go without power every winter. Some times for a few hours, a few days, and once for a few weeks. I have a feeling most folks will experience a prolonged power outage in their lives a time or two. Or like us, a time or



two every month or so...

When the power is out, there's nothing like still being able to serve your family a hot full course meal. Here's several ways to choose from to cook and bake (because trust me, living without baked goods is not really living) your food without power. I hope you learn how to do several of them well before you need to.

You'll need a few cooking tools to make use of your off-grid cooking. Actually, I use some of them indoors, too, but that's what makes them so versatile and awesome and why ya need to have them in your arsenal.

Here are my favorite and most reliable items to use in your off-grid outdoor cooking.

Spider Dutch Oven— absolute must for cooking over an open fire. I actually own 3 in different sizes.

Dutch Oven w/ Casserole Skillet— This is the coolest thing ever. The lid turned upside down becomes a skillet. You get two items in one. Can I get a high five?

Dutch Oven Lid Lifter— Trust me, those Dutch ovens get hot. Cast iron retains heat (yeah, baby) and those burning coals are not something you want your fingers near. For less than \$10 you'll save yourself a lot of hurting.

Outdoor Percolator — AKA coffee maker. Because a world without coffee isn't a place I want to be for very long. This little percolator will make coffee on almost every single way we have of off-grid cooking.

Visit [the Resource Page](#) for more info and purchase links

13 Ways to Cook Off-Grid without Power

1. Dutch oven cooking. I love cooking outdoors with my cast iron Dutch ovens. Let me say it again, I love cooking outdoors with my Dutch oven. It makes me feel like a bona fide pioneer woman, saves me money on my electricity bill, and I swear, food tastes better when cooked outside. Whatever the case, here's [Dutch Oven Cooking Over an Open Fire](#) with full on pictures and a round-up of some fun [Dutch Oven Recipes and tips](#)



FREE Cast Iron
Care, Cleaning & Storing Guide
**Download My
Copy Now!**

[here.](#)

[Grab your FREE Cast Iron Care, Use & Storage E-Guide](#)

2. Outdoor Cannister Camping Stove. This stove is the perfect starter stove. It's light weight, talking 3.9 ounces peeps, and great for boiling water or reheating food. Wanna know the best thing? It's under \$10. Yes, for less than \$10 you can have a stove to cook with outdoors.

3. Solar Cooking. Use the power of the sun to cook your meals. I love this one because all you need is a sun oven to cook a meal. Not having to worry about fuel, smoke, or heat makes this method my new favorite way to cook outdoors.

I received an All American Sun Oven from Sun Oven (in exchange for my review) and it's seriously my favorite new toy. I didn't think a solar oven would work all the way up here in the Pacific Northwest and I was shocked when it heated up to 300 degrees in just twenty minutes. Not only does it save on electricity, but no heating up the house on hot days, and it can double as a dehydrator.

4. Wonder Oven. Basically, you bring food up to temperature, pop it in a wonder oven, and it continues to cook without any fuel. You still have to have a way to bring food up to temp before putting it in, but these are easy to make at home. Think the off-grid slow cooker. Food cooks all day while you go play!

Not having to stand over a stove or feed a fire all day option

5. Outdoor fires and smoking. I love how this uses just a plain old outdoor fire and smoke to cook and preserve food. This is true pioneer fashion at its best. Did you know you can even smoke your own cheese at home? [How to Smoke Cheese at Home](#)

We've owned several smokers and the Weber Smoky Mountain one is by far our favorite. We only have to load it with fuel once and it holds the temperature for over 12 hours without adding anymore.

6. Cooking on top of a wood stove. We use our wood stove as our main and only heat source. I love being able to use our heat source for a second purpose and frequently cook on it even when the power is on. Here's my [tutorial on how to cook on a wood stove](#).

7. How to cook on an open fire. This is the way many a pioneer cooked on their trip's west or on the frontier. And if all you have is a cast iron skillet, it will get the job done. Did you know you can make a pumpkin pie in an open fire, without a skillet? This is one of the coolest recipes I've ever seen, and I've seen a lot, [Pumpkin Pie "Pioneer Style"](#).

8. Earth Oven. An earth oven is an oven made from clay, sand, water, straw and newspaper. I kind of love DIY and being able to make my own outdoor oven would be a priceless skill. Here's [how to cook in an earth oven and make your own](#).

9. Tea-light ovens. Yes, you read that right. You can cook a meal using tea lights. And, you don't have to purchase those expensive ones, you can make your own for less than \$40! Sometimes little things can have powerful impact... here's [how to make and use a Tea Light Oven](#).

10. Volcano Stoves. Volcano stoves are the ultimate in versatility. You can use either wood or charcoal. It packs down to 5" and comes with a carry bag. The neat thing about this little stove is you can use it on multiple surfaces and it can be used to grill, bake, Dutch oven use, or open fire cooking. Because you know I'm all about multi-use tools!

11. Propane and Grills. One thing most folks have is a propane grill or camp stove. But not everyone realizes just how much and how many different things you can cook or do with them. You can use your outdoor grill for canning (hello, no more hot kitchen in the summer), cooking meats, corn on the cob, and even baking. The Camp Chef Explorer Stove is our favorite propane stove for both canning uses and cooking seafood. My husband loves crab but I hate the way it makes the house smell, so we only do our crab and seafood boils on this outdoors. Best part, the legs come off and it breaks down into a fairly compact bag for storing and traveling when not in use. We take it camping and use it for all of our cooking when the burn ban is on.

12. Solo Stove. The Solo Stove allows you to cook and boil water with only using twigs as fuel. You don't have to gather large amounts of cooking wood, purchase, or carry fuel with you. It only weighs 9 ounces so it's light for back packing, camping, or anytime you need to travel on foot. You can boil water in less than 10 minutes and not as much smoke as a regular fire.

Note: I'm an affiliate for Traditional Cooking School as well as an instructor and the below links are affiliate links. Thank you for your support.

13. Outdoor Pizza Oven. This [video shows how to make pizza and other baked goods in an outdoor oven](#) plus shows where to get the info to build your own outdoor oven. I'm seriously drooling over this oven and it's on my list of must have's. What's your favorite way to cook off-grid? Want to learn how to cook outdoors with ease and on a shoestring budget? Traditional Cooking School by Gnowfglins and I paired up to do just that. I personally teach a Dutch oven cooking, open fire cooking, and smoking meat portion in this course, and that's just three parts to the whole. Check out all that's covered in this [awesome e-course Outdoor Cooking](#)

Day 23

A bit of a confession, it's harder to start a fire without matches or a lighter than I thought. In fact, I confess to how long I struggled in the first part of the video.

With any of these preparedness tips and articles we've been sharing with one another over the past 24 days (go you, 24 days and we're still going strong and rocking it, high five me) my biggest tip is you have to practice these skills.

Do not leave them until the safety of your or your family is at risk. Make it a priority to put these tips and advice into action.

I have to tell you, I was a bit nervous filming this video. My pulse was pounding like a hammer on roofing day, but I did it and I hope it helps you out and you learn something.

The two simple tips I share on using the fire striker method literally cut my fire starting down by 15 minutes and a Band-Aid.

4 Tips on How to Start a Fire w/out Matches or Lighters Outdoors

When it's cold, there is nothing as welcoming as a nice crackling fire. I've been known to cozy on up to our wood stove many a chilly damp night.

Having a fire is a basic skill that humans have used since the beginning of time and it can literally save your life. But, if you've never built and maintained a fire before, it can be a little bit harder than you'd think, especially if you use the wrong fuel or techniques. Hello, all smoke, sting my eyes till I'm crying, no heat, and now I'm cold and mad.

Let's erase that last sentence. Because you my friend are going to skip all over that whole part, and go straight for the crackling, flames dancing, high five you just built your first fire kind of thing.

4 Tips on How to Start a Fire

First thing you need is a means to start a fire. Obviously, there are matches and lighters, which are what most people use on a daily/regular basis. You should have them on hand; especially a set of strike anywhere matches. Keep them dry, wet and fire are not friends.

However, a true fire builder and preparedness person will have another **way to start a fire that doesn't require constantly purchasing the item from a store.** This is the friction method, and though you can rub two sticks together, I recommend investing in a magnesium fire striker. It's a one-time purchase and when done correctly, produces a fire very quickly. (However, when not done correctly you can sit there for 15 minutes and get a blister for your trouble, check out my video for two simple tips to avoid that and get your fire started super quickly!)

We bought the Exotac polyStriker XL fire striker for my son for his birthday and he had much better luck with it than the smaller strikers.

Second thing you need is tinder. This is what your baby fire will eat to grow. Many folks will use a crumpled up paper bag or newspaper. Dry moss, dry grass, small dry wood shavings (are ya getting the dry part



), and one of my favorites, is dryer lint.

Third thing is your kindling. This can be small pieces of dry wood or actual small dry twigs and sticks. But they need to be small for our little flames.

How to keep your fire going

When your fire is first started, in your excitement, it can be tempting to pile a whole bunch of wood on top of your flames to make sure your fire doesn't burn out, but **fire needs oxygen and you may end up smothering it.** The best way is to add two to three pieces of wood in a teepee fashion to ensure enough air flows between the wood.

Fourth thing is larger fuel. This is small to medium pieces of wood and last, you'll put on regular pieces of firewood or logs.

A note about wood. **You're going to want seasoned or dry wood.** If you use green or wet wood, then you're going to be producing smoke, lots of creosote, and very little heat. Green wood is when you fall a living tree and the moisture in the wood hasn't had a chance to dry out yet, we want seasoned or dry wood.

Hard wood will burn hot and for a longer period of time than a soft wood. Maple is a good all-around choice where we live.

And though it's not life or death, every campfire needs something to cook on in it and though it's not very pioneerish, s'mores are my favorite. So get your fire started and invite me over, I've got my roasting stick and Dutch oven ready!

Grammyprepper asks: I know this was a 'basic' lesson, but aside from teepee fires, what about 'log cabin' fires for heat and longer burning as well as being able to sustain fire in rainy situations?

Answer: I haven't used the log cabin technique by name (but love that name now that you said it and realize that's what it's called). As long as your baby fire can get some coals established and you don't block the oxygen flow, then the log cabin technique (I feel cool knowing its name now) will work well, you're basically building a protective barrier around it. Good tip!

Day 24

As advanced and modern as we like to think of ourselves in society, I feel we're actually a lot worse off in many ways than our great-grandparents. We may have more technology and I'm not saying I'm not grateful for it, but sadly, we're turning into a generation of people who lack skill sets and a sense of pride in their work. (I know this isn't true of everyone, in fact, if you're reading this, then it most likely does not apply to you)

Podcast: [Play in new window](#) | [Download](#)

We're entrenched in a world of hurry up, keeping up with the newest and greatest thing, looking for that one thing that's going to give us an edge, a to-do list a mile long, and multi-tasking like we're an octopus with eight arms. I'm not judging, because I'm guilty of all of these things in one form or another. And if you're honest with yourself, I'm willing to lay money down you are too, to one degree or another.

There's a lot of things we have going for us today, but there are a few areas where we need to take a look and **reconsider going back to our great-grandparents** (or grandparent's depending upon your age) and learning from them.

6 Things Our Great-Grandparent's Did Better Than Us

1. Use local. While there's nothing more local than growing it yourself (hello backyard grocery shopping, I love you) the next best thing is buying it from someone you know. During the Great Depression Years and before, if you weren't raising it yourself, then you knew the person you were buying it from. My grandparent's and father had a milk cow, but for those who didn't, there was a dairy and local milk man who delivered the milk by wagon. You could go by the dairy, see the cows, and talk to the man providing your milk, literally.

If you needed lumber, you went and put in your order at the local mill. You saw the log, told the sawyer what you wanted, and you'd come and pick it back up from him when it was done.

We still buy our milk local. It comes in a glass bottle and I return the bottle to the store when I purchase more.

A store bought outfit was a big deal. Most people wore home sewn clothes, many made from the flour sacks when times were lean. Or when Papa's shirt couldn't be mended anymore or Mother's dress was too frayed, it was cut down into a small dress or shirt for the youngest member of the family.

Not enough material left for clothing? Then it went into the rag bag to be made into a quilt or rag rug for the floor.

You learned how to sew. Seams were made to last and buttons were sewn on tight and re-used. A button box was something almost every house had and they were prized items, not to be thrown out when you no longer liked the clothes or outgrew them.

People had dedicated skill sets. Sewing, quilting, basket making, carpentry. People took pride in the things they were making with their hands. They knew the people who would be wearing or using their handiwork. It wasn't just an assembly piece in a factory.

2. Skill sets. Our great-grandparents had skill sets and knew how to use them. They didn't rely on stores and huge chains for their needs and goods. They learned how to do things themselves, they were the original DIYers and a lot of times, their lives depended upon it.

Their work became their art form. My father always told me, "If a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well. Give anything you do your best." As you can imagine, I was kind of being a grump about having to help him fix fence and may have been not doing such a hot job of holding the wire tight while he mended it.

As an adult, I see the wisdom in his words and remember them when I'm doing something I'd really rather not be. I may have had this pep talk with myself before while scrubbing a pan or two out.

3. Sewing. They made their own clothes and knew how to mend them. I realize there are still quite a few folks who know how to sew, but it's not being taught at home or in schools like it used to.

Look in your closet or in your children's closet. How many items are handmade? How many times do you throw out a piece of clothing because it gets ripped instead of mending it? You might not become a full on seamstress, but learn the basics.

How to mend a seam, how to gather fabric, how to hem. These basic skills will let you do a lot more than you think. Find someone who sews and ask them for a lesson. Most are happy to teach someone. You don't need to buy a sewing machine to learn some good hand sewing skills. I didn't get a sewing machine until much later in life (and I'm still not what I'd called a skilled seamstress by any means), but I can mend and fix most things by hand with just a needle and thread.

My mother taught me how to stitch a sampler when I was young. My grandmother and mother were both making a quilt top when I was eight and I wanted to be like them. A family friend took me to buy fabric (such a generous gift) to make my very own quilt. My mom sat me down and showed me how to stitch the pieces together by hand. Over time, my stitches became more uniform and neat, until you could barely see them when turned right side out and up. I still use that stitch to mend seams on our clothes, blankets, and pillows today.

4. Cooking and baking from scratch. There weren't store bought versions of everything. You stocked a full larder. You were grateful to have food to put on the table and didn't complain that it wasn't what you "wanted". You swapped recipes with your neighbor or at church potlucks. (Anyone else love potlucks?) You handed down your most favorite and best dishes to your children, as they were right there with you learning and helping to put the meal on the table.

Looking for from scratch versions without any processed ingredients? Check out our full [Recipe section](#) to get you started. Or check out my book available for pre-order *The Made-From-Scratch Life: Simple Ways to Create a Natural Home*.

5. Self-sufficiency. Even though we raise all of our own meat and a good portion of our vegetables, in our day to day life, we're still quite dependent on a lot of modern conveniences brought to us by large companies or

entities. I mean, let's face it, I bring this to you via the internet... but I'm okay with that because I know if I have to, we have the skills and the means to make it on our own.

We save our own heirloom garden seed, we have fruit trees and plants, I preserve and put up a lot of our own food, we forage, and have quite a bit of our grandparent's old-fashioned knowledge, and now that you've read this book you do, too!

6. Helping one another. There was a reason our great-grandparents had barn raisings and roofing parties. They knew how important it was to help out a neighbor, because when they needed help, that's who they'd be calling on. Communities banded together to help those who ran into misfortune.

Needed a cup of sugar? You ran over to your neighbor's house to borrow it and knew they'd do the same for you. Actually, a neighbor came over and borrowed cumin from me when she was making relish, and I ran out of dill and went to another neighbor who had extra this past summer. We were all doing a bit of summer preserving and what one didn't have, the other did.

There are many ways of helping someone, sometimes it's simply being a friend or watching out for their place when they're gone.

In an emergency, your neighbor very well might be the person that saves your life.

It's one of the reasons I've been so excited to do this 30 Day Preparedness Challenge with you guys! We've been a true community of helping each other out with tips and suggestions in the comment section. I'm honored to be a part of your journey and what I consider our "on-line neighborhood."

Day 25

One thing I think is sadly missing in a lot of preparedness topics is that of saving money and being frugal.

All though most people think of preparedness in regards to a natural disaster of some sorts (and that does play a part, we felt an earthquake here yesterday, though it was very minor and no damage) more people will experience a financial emergency before that of a physical or natural emergency.

I know we've had unexpected bills, when I was pregnant with our second child my husband's employer cut everyone's hours and they were on part work and part unemployment.

Some of you may be feeling a financial pinch right now. Others want to be prepared and build up more of a savings account or cushion.

Whatever the case, today's article focus's on things you can do to save money now. And... there's a bonus link to a second article on being frugal, so think of it as a two for one deal, which all my frugal peeps love!

Podcast #59 10 Ways to Afford Homesteading When You're Broke

Living the simple life is something many dream about, but let's be honest, in order to raise your own food, preserve it, and increase your self-sufficiency, you need to invest in some tools and equipment. Most of want to be more self-sufficient, but how do you go about transitioning or getting started when you're strapped for cash?



I've been thinking about this for weeks after reading so many of your responses to our reader survey. Which, huge thank you to all who filled it out and responded. You've no idea how much it has helped me know what kind of things you need more information and help on.

By far, one of the biggest challenges is finding the extra cash or money to use on your simple life projects. Oh, my friends, I hear you, I do. My husband and I were just crunching the numbers after raising and harvesting 25 chickens.

Podcast: [Play in new window](#) | [Download](#)

If you're like me, there's never enough money to fund all the things we want to do, and sometimes, barely enough to cover what we need just to make ends meet. And I don't foresee this changing for most of us.

So while more money would certainly help us, realistically, that's not the answer to our financial issues. We'll discuss in part 2 ways to add income though.

My father is a wise man, he was raised through the Great Depression, entered into logging in the 10th grade, and has been self-employed, while raising 10 children, for his entire life. He knows a thing or two about stretching a dollar and he's always told me, **"It's not about how much money you make, but about how much money you save of what you do make."**

Wise words.

And this is where we need to start, each and every one of us.

The best place to find extra money to fund your endeavors is by saving some of the money you're already earning.

In other words, your job right now is to be frugal. This is going to take time. You most likely won't save a huge amount of money right away, but it all adds up over time.

10 Ways to Afford Homesteading When You're Broke

1. First thing is to get everyone on the same page and on board with what you're saving up your money for. If it's a [pressure canner](#), dehydrator, solar oven, water treatment, bills (because getting out of debt should be a major priority) whatever it is, make sure your whole family knows why it's important to have it and why you'll be cutting back on some things until you've saved enough money to purchase it.

In fact, it may be you who needs to be reminded of why and what you're saving for. Because trust me, old habits die hard and you'll be tempted to fall back into old habits. **Remember your why.**

2. Use cash. I know, you've heard this before, it's nothing new. But there's a reason so many folks say it, because it works. If you stick to only spending the cash you designated, you won't overspend.

3. Meal plan. The area I can cut back the quickest on is our food budget, especially during the summer and fall months when the garden is producing and prices are low at local produce stands and farmer's markets. It also means I won't end up at 6 o'clock at night with nothing for supper and be tempted to use pre-made food or go out to dinner.

Instead of making your favorite dinner, cook with the items you already have on hand. Shop from your pantry. If you're used to purchasing items, find one of the items you purchase pre-made on a daily or at least weekly

basis, and learn how to make it at home. We did this first with bread, this [5 minute a day no knead bread](#) works well when you're pressed for time, and then worked our way into [making our own yogurt at home](#). With these two items alone, I save \$7 dollars a week.

Need some from scratch recipe ideas? Here's our full [recipe page](#)

4. Little things add up. Sometimes we just look at the big bills and large ways to save money. I did this with our mortgage (by paying bi-weekly I knocked 7 years off our mortgage, which is pretty huge). But I've justified small purchases with the thought; it's not that much so it won't matter.

When you're serious about saving up, every little bit counts. Sometimes those little things add up to being a whole lot. Track your purchases.

5. Volunteer at a food bank. If you volunteer at a food bank, you also get to take home groceries. Many people don't meet the qualifications for food banks and I'm not endorsing fibbing about your income to get food from them. But, if you put in your time as a volunteer, you get to bring home food as well. This may be a way to stretch your grocery budget and also help others.

6. Look into gleaning. Gleaning is a biblical practice. Farmers were told to leave part of their harvest for the orphans and widows to come and pick in order to feed themselves. In our county, there is an organization called The Gleaners. You pay a dollar a day (can pay monthly or yearly) and then you may come to their "store" and shop daily or weekly. You do have to volunteer a set amount of hours a month as well.

You can also find large farmers and glean at the end of the harvest. Sometimes for free or sometimes at a greatly reduced price per pound and u-pick.

7. Preserve your own food. It doesn't do you much good to have food if you let it go to waste. Often times the food you will get from a food bank or gleaning is close to being past its prime. You'll need to preserve it soon, sometimes within the next 24 hours.

8. Wait 24 hours before making a purchase or save the receipt. I might be the only one who sometimes doesn't follow her own advice and ends up making an impulse purchase. It's always from the clearance rack and a really good deal.... but that doesn't mean I truly need it.

I've found by waiting at least 24 hours, I usually don't need it like I thought I did. Or, if I do purchase it, I leave the tags on and the receipt in the bag. If I've had it at home for a few days and don't use it, then I re-evaluate if I really need to keep it. Truthfully, about 9 times of 10 I end up returning it.

9. Re-Use and Re-Purpose. Many times we throw things out because we're tired of them, not because they're worn out. If it's broken, see if it can be fixed. Learn to do simple mending, like re-attaching a button or sewing up a ripped seam.

I had a pair of fifteen-year-old sweat pants I tossed in our rag bin. Part of the material had worn so thin it couldn't be mended, but the legs were fine. I used a piece last night to stitch up a small sachet of dried lavender for my husband's truck as an air freshener.

We found an old cast iron sink, buried in the dirt for decades, we washed it and put it to use as a pig feeder. After the pigs are gone, I plan on using it as a new herb garden container. You can check it out on [Instagram](#)

10. Grow your own food. This is how we save quite a bit of money. In fact, I've got a whole podcast on this very subject and the foods we grow at home and never purchase from the store. [7 Foods Never to Purchase from the Store](#)

Bonus article→ [7 Tips to Spending Less & Living the Good Life](#)

What are your ways to help save money and live more frugally within your means?

Don't miss Part 2 of this series [4 Ways to Make Money Homesteading When You're Broke](#)

Day 26

One of the oldest forms of purchasing was the barter system. No matter what market is on top or whose dollar is the most valuable, a reliable way to exchange goods without money is bartering.

It's how people have survived and swapped goods for centuries.

And like many things of today, it can be sort of a lost art if you're not familiar or have never watched it in action. My father was raised through the Great Depression and hails from the hollers of the Appalachians of North Carolina, where money didn't matter all that much, folks knew how to survive without it and did so.

One of the skills I consider him a master at is bartering. It's a thing of beauty to watch and I feel fortunate to have watched him in many a deal. One of the neat things to see is the true enjoyment in a good barter, experienced by both parties and those watching.

Money can be an elusive thing, and if an economy fails, it can be absolutely worthless, but tangible goods will always have value. And if you know how to barter, you'll always be able to get things you need and provide for your family.

So today I want to share the 6 rules of bartering I've learned from watching many a deal, including how to barter even if you don't have a tangible good in hand (But because you're part of this series, we know you'll be prepared with things to trade due to your food storage).

Bartering is a life skill our ancestors knew how to do and used often, but in today's society, bartering isn't as common practice as it used to be. However, bartering is a skill still used by many and is definitely something any self-respecting homesteader, preparedness, or self-sufficiency person will want in their tool chest.

Bartering is simply using something you possess in exchange for something someone else has. Actually, it's the same thing as using money, because we've put a value on money (though the value of our money today is definitely up for debate) and set the value of the item we're buying at a certain amount. However, for the sake of this article and most references to bartering, it is the means of exchanging goods *without* money.

Watching someone experienced with bartering is like watching a skilled dancer and partner go through an intricate dance so effortlessly, you don't realize how hard the dance is until you try it for yourself, and discover you not only step on your partner's toes, but your own as well. Or, if you're me, you might end up tripping yourself.

My father grew up during the Great Depression and has bartering skills like no other I've seen. **He learned from people where this was a way of life, when people didn't have money**, but they had other things and got by just fine without it. Credit cards were unheard of and purchasing things on credit has never been something my father has ever practiced.

He's never demanding or rude, but can move through the negotiations smoother than freshly spun silk. Even witnessing his negotiations my whole life, I still don't have his depth of skill and have even had him go with us when we purchased a used truck last year.

But, I have learned a lot from watching his negotiations and want to share those with you.

6 Rules for Bartering Success

First rule of bartering, you have to have something someone else considers valuable. You can't come to the table without anything to offer.

However, it doesn't necessarily have to be something that's tangible. **You can barter a skill set in exchange for another skill set.** For example, you might know how to fall a tree, but need help with some electrical work. Your neighbor or an acquaintance is an electrician who needs a tree fell on his property. You agree to fall the tree and he agrees to wire your shed for you or install a new light on your house.

Neither of you actually bartered an item, but a service, a skill set. We've used this type of bartering many a time.

It can also be **a combination of skill set traded for an item or help.** For example, we had a large amount of fire wood, more than my husband and I could chop, stack, and clean up. So we offered our neighbor some of the wood if he helped us chop it up in exchange for his help. Worked great!

Second rule, both parties need to feel that they received a good deal. Nobody likes to feel like they got the short end of the stick. And if you plan on staying in an area and bartering, you don't want to be known as a cheat or someone who is unfair, at least, I wouldn't. You'll find it harder to find someone to barter with and frankly, I don't think any of us want to be known as someone who takes advantage of others.

Now, you might be bartering something that you don't have much use for or doesn't seem important to you, but if the other person places a high value on it, then they're going to be thrilled with deal. It's all in the eye of the beholder, right?

Third rule, have a set value for the item in mind. In other words, know what you're willing to take for the item and what you're not before you begin bartering, and don't budge. Sometimes, in the heat of the barter, you might take less or make a trade for less than you really want. If you tell yourself ahead of time, you're less likely to budge from what you want.

This doesn't necessarily mean the dollar value of an item, but what you're willing to exchange it for. Say you have a saddle, but no longer have a horse or ride anymore, you might have paid several hundred (or thousands, depending upon the saddle) dollars for this saddle, but it's useless to you at the moment. However, you might really be in need of a tiller for your garden. So even if the tiller is less expensive than your saddle, you'd be willing to trade because the tiller is much more valuable to you than the saddle, especially when you count in the amount of food you'll be able to grow on the newly tilled land.

Fourth rule, don't be in a huge hurry. There's a certain art to negotiation and it often involves several back and fourths, though not always. If you already determined what you'll take for the item, and the person you're bartering with isn't willing to give you what you want, be okay with walking away. You might find something better to barter on or the person may see you're not budging and come back and accept your deal.

Fifth rule, let the other person present the first offer. If possible, let the other person offer up the first terms of the bargain or negotiation. This lets you know how what value they place on your item and what value they're putting on their own and gives you a bit of an advantage. It's not always possible and doesn't mean if you go first that you'll end up on the lower end of the deal, but if possible, see if the other party will go first.

Sixth rule, don't show your excitement too soon. I'm horrible at playing poker. I wear my emotions on my face and if I really want something, it's hard for me not to show it. But when bartering, you don't want to show too much enthusiasm too fast, as not all people adhere to our second rule and play fair. If you show you really want an item, they might drive a harder bargain than they would have previously.

Where to barter?

There are many places to barter, even more so now with social media and the internet. There are usually **bartering groups for your county or city on Facebook.**

There are often **swap meets or bartering fairs in cities.** Flea markets are another place you can barter.

A reader shared with me there was a bartering fair in a wooded area near his home. There were blankets and other handmade goods available for barter, but the most sought after item for bartering were 100 pound bags of wheat. And if you've been following our food storage series, you know wheat is an item I recommend stocking up on, and in bulk.

Check the **local section of newspapers or bulletin boards for bartering places or meetings.**

Never be afraid to ask someone if they're willing to barter or accept something else in exchange for an item. You'll never know unless you ask.

Day 27

Most of us don't pay attention until things reach a dangerous level. I'm guilty of this and I'm thinking many of you are as well.

We'll be getting deeper into more nitty gritty things of preparedness and self-sufficiency, but I felt we needed to take a minute and go over these items first.

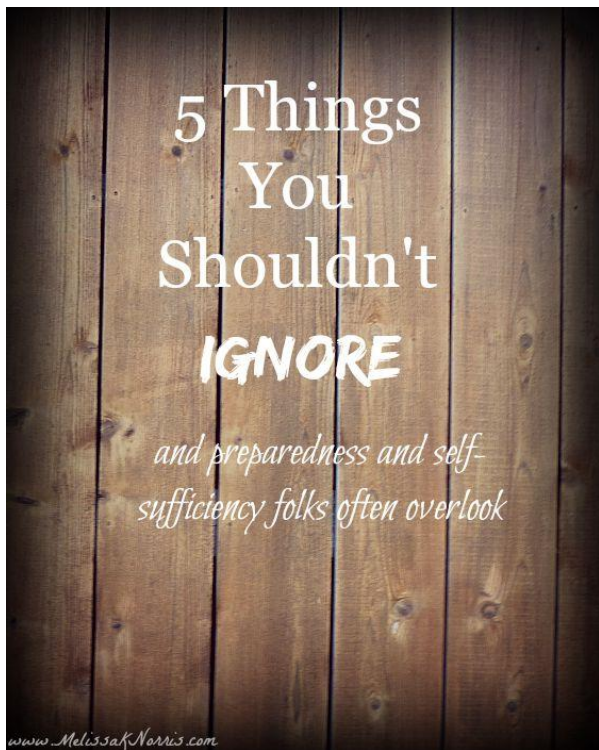
And I have a feeling you'll agree with me. Or, at the least, that it will open your eyes to some areas in your life that you might have let slide lately or have been ignoring.

Because the 5 things you shouldn't ignore are the backbone of a self-sufficient life.

5 Things You Shouldn't Ignore

You might think fitness and health is an odd thing to have in a Preparedness 30 Day Challenge, after all, it's not typically something you see on most survival type websites. However, our health is one of the things we take for granted until we no longer have it or something is wrong.

I'm willing to bet that although some of us will never go through a full on natural disaster on a large scale, at some point, all of us will be affected by failing health. I know I have, both in my twenties and my thirties.



When something isn't right

I mentioned to those on my newsletter list last week about going through thyroid and adrenal gland issues. It's not something I've ever talked about in my writing before and it's something I'm seeing more and more people have issues with.

Mine started about a year and a half ago with severe symptoms. I've always been cold when others aren't; a sign of low thyroid. Then I started experiencing extreme fatigue. If I sat down in the afternoon or evening without working on something, I fell asleep. I slept twelve hours straight one night and the next afternoon took a three hour nap. I mostly quit exercising; I simply couldn't drag myself into it. There were other symptoms at play as well.

Four months ago I started taking thyroid medication and working on getting my adrenal glands back into full function.

For over a year I'd been struggling with extreme fatigue, my hair thinned to the point I had a lifelong friend I hadn't seen in 6 months exclaim, "What happened to your hair?" (It wasn't in meanness and it didn't hurt my feelings, this was one of my best friends, but I knew then I wasn't imagining it.)

I've had my thyroid tested on and off for years because I've always had several of the symptoms, but every doctor said it was in the normal range. I finally went to see a Naturopath because my symptoms weren't in the normal range.

We did lab work and though my levels were in the "normal range" (which is quite broad actually), we decided to use herbs and a natural thyroid hormone prescription. It's made a big difference and she's working with me to fine tune things.

After 3 months on the new regimen, I finally started my old regular exercise routine. I had let it slip because even though I knew it would bring me energy, I just couldn't find the strength or time to do it.

I've been 4 weeks back at it and though I've been sore (funny how you think you can jump back in to the same level, or maybe that's just me) I'm noticing a difference. I do have more energy, my stamina is improving, and muscles are coming back.

I feel much better than I did, but I'm still working on things. I'm learning some things will just have to wait until tomorrow or the next day, and that's okay.

What it really looks like when you're self-sufficient

What's this got to do with preparedness you ask? Let's take a look at what life looks like without power, raising your own food, caring for livestock, and doing-it-yourself.

Early this summer we were at the height of our livestock production here on the homestead. We had 25 meat chickens in a chicken tractor, six cows, three pigs, and our hens. Two gardens, plus the greenhouse for the tomatoes and peppers, were being planted. One of the gardens was on a section of field that borders our

property that belongs to my Aunt. This section doesn't have water so watering by hand was needed to help the seeds germinate.

This included twice a day moving of the chicken tractor (which you pull by hand, when I do it, it takes all my weight and both feet planted firmly in the ground to get it to budge), lifting five gallon buckets of water and pig feed, buckets of chicken feed, and the up and down squats it takes when one is planting and weeding by hand. Whew!

Fences had to be put in and double checked, that means pounding posts in by hand, chopping and clearing brush, and packing wire and posts. Ever chased a pig before? They're faster than you think.

Canning means being able to life a very hot fully loaded canner on and off of burners.

And this was with running water and full on electricity.

When the power goes out, you'll be lugging a lot more water around. Perhaps from great distances. If you're using wood heat for warmth and cooking, you'll be packing in more wood than normal.

Quite frankly put, **you'll be physically working more than you are now.**

And you'll also probably be a bit more stressed.

The whole point of working on preparedness is to be ready when something does happen or as things come. Our health should not be ignored in this.

I don't want to wait until an emergency situation to begin my healthiest me. And I don't want you to either. Life is too short. Let's begin now.

5 Things You Can't Ignore

1. Sleep. How many of you are trying to get so much done you put off sleep in order to keep up? I was one of those. I'd stay up late to finish a blog post, work on a project, or just to have some time to unwind and be by myself. That sacrifice of sleep was costing me. It was actually eating into my day time hours without me realizing it.

In fact, my sleep cycle had gotten so off, I had to reset it. And I didn't realize how the blue light in my bedside clock was triggering me to stay awake.

2. Exercise. Many of us feel like we don't have the time. I hear you. But I've learned if we want to do something, we'll make the time. I started putting a morning workout back into my routine. There's no more, if I feel like it or if I'm busy. Everyone is at a different fitness level. Start where you are and make it a goal to always do a little bit more than you did the week before. For example, when I first started, I was only getting in six full push-ups in a set. So the following week, I made myself do eight. Now I do a full squat, all the way down to that 90 degree mark (and yes, it totally burns, but in a good way).

3. Healthy food. I'm already a big fan of real food. We kicked processed fake food to the curb at our homestead over six years ago (for the most part). But even too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. I found when I was tired I was reaching for something sweet for energy, and then I had the sugar crash and extra calories adding up

on me, even if they were organic and GMO-free. Really keep track of what you're eating in a day; you might be surprised at the snacks sneaking in.

4. Time off. We need time to just be. We're so busy running from one thing to the next, at least I do, that I don't spend enough time just sitting or being. Don't cram every minute and hour of the day with your to do list. It'll all still be there when you come back, but you'll be refreshed from time away from it. Go for a walk outdoors. Simply sit in your back yard and watch the clouds roll by. Read a book. Watch your favorite movie. Do something you love for the pure enjoyment of it!

5. Your gut. I don't mean your physical gut, but your intuition. For years I felt something was off with my thyroid but never investigated my lab numbers myself. If you think something is wrong or not functioning quite right, you're probably right. Don't be afraid to ask your doctor for explanations or to search until you find a health care provider who listens to your concerns and you trust.

Last, but certainly not least, I know some of you don't feel like you can really do a lot of physical stuff. You have health issues or different circumstances.

When I'm feeling exhausted and like I can't simply do-one-more-thing, I remember this:

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10

Day 28

If you haven't noticed, I kind of have a fascination with old-fashioned things and knowledge. Maybe a full on obsession... but in a good way.

I believe there is so much wisdom to be learned by those who went before us. I feel privileged to help preserve and pass it on to others.

As much as I love the old-fashioned ways, I also appreciate the things we've since learned with science and some old-fashioned things continue to make good stories and should be documented for histories sake, but aren't anything I'm going to be trying on myself for my family. No mercury or leaches here.

However, when I find an old-time way that is valid and safe, I'm totally using it! And I'm super excited to share this information with you, because if you haven't guessed, it's all about natural remedies that work.

I know there are more natural remedies out there that I haven't learned yet and I would love to hear from you.

6 Old-time Natural Remedies That Work

Ever wonder if those old-time natural remedies really worked? I love old-fashioned things, but I also know some things we used to do way back when just weren't smart. That's what we're looking at today my friend, the smart things!

Seems everywhere I look, people are turning back to the old ways. There's something to be said from our mother's, grandmother's, great-grandmother's wisdom, or great-great-grandmother (you whippersnapper you).

One of my favorite things is learning about old-fashioned skills I can use in my every day modern life. You, too? Ahh, I love kindred spirits. And because we're kindred spirits you need to make sure you get yourself on this [Pioneering Today Free newsletter to get our weekly old-fashioned tips and articles](#), and our Ultimate Home Food Preservation Guide, putting up food like our great-grandparents!

I bet when you come down with the sniffles or common ailments, your mother or grandmother had a bunch of different remedies she'd recommend. Some of them are plain odd and really have no place except for the fondness of telling the tale.

My grandmother told my mother quite seriously when she was pregnant with me to never lift her hands above her head or the cord would tangle around the baby's neck. And she seriously meant it. My grandmother was a smart woman; she survived the Great Depression and was widowed twice. She had her last child in her forties. She could squeeze four quarters and a penny out of a dime. But some of the things she was taught about medical things, we now know to not be true.

Resource for Old-Time Ways and Living

One of my absolute favorite old-timey ways is the Foxfire Books! I purchased the first of our set for my husband for Christmas, and they instantly became one of my favorite treasures. Full of pictures and old-fashioned wisdom from the Appalachians, you're going to love them.

This is the edition I have, with over 100 page section on herbal remedies, is Foxfire 11.

You have to take old-time remedies with a grain of salt and do a bit of investigating before using them.

After researching common old-time advice and “cures” this is a list of 6 that have been proven or have evidence that they actually work. This isn’t an exhaustive list, but a great place to start. We’ll be diving further into herbal medicine and treatments coming up soon!

6 Old-Time Natural Remedies that Work

1. Chicken soup is good for a cold. Grandma knew her stuff on this one. Chicken soup is good for a cold and there’s science to prove it, even though us homesteaders knew it before they did, cuz we’re cool like that. This [article from the New York Times](#) says: “In a study done in 2000 by Dr. Stephen Rennard at the University of Nebraska, lab tests on both homemade and commercial chicken soup with blood samples from volunteers, showed that chicken soup could help reduce upper respiratory symptoms.”

Homemade chicken soup made with traditional bone broth and lots of vegetables is going to be even more beneficial. As we move into cold and flu season, I recommend stocking up on your stock. (You got that little pun, right?) Here’s [How to Make and Bone Broth & 5 Ways to Preserve It](#).

2. Mustard plaster for chest congestion. My husband’s mother and grandmother swore by this one and he still remembers having to wear the stinky mustard plaster. This is one of those that goes both ways. It’s actually better for sore muscles and pain because it’s a counter irritant (good info here on the [actual enzyme](#)), think capsaicin cream, and warms the skin.

Note: mustard plaster applied directly to the skin can result in blistering burns! Do not apply it directly to the skin. Here are instructions on [how to make a mustard plaster, application and how long to leave it on](#).

3. Baking soda for a bee sting. My daughter was stung by a bee a few weeks ago. The sting itself wasn’t hurting, but she was scratching it like crazy. I mixed up a paste of baking soda and water and applied it directly to the sting. It took away the itching and she was back to playing and running around in no time. This gets a thumbs up from me!

Note: If you’re allergic to bees or suspect an allergic reaction, Benadryl or Diphenhydramine is always smart, along with a call to a Doctor.

4. Inhaling steam. When your nose is congested and you feel like you can’t breathe, take a hot shower, fill a sink or pot with hot water and make a tent. Take a towel and cover your head with it while leaning over the hot water, trapping the steam and allowing you to breathe it in. Make sure you use common sense and don’t burn yourself. The steam will help loosen up your congestion (sounds much nicer than saying snot, right?) and allow you to cough up the ick easier.

Menthol (derived from the mint family) is often used in humidifiers and as aroma therapy and you can try adding a vaporizer or diffusing the oil to help. However, some small children and others may have sensitivities to peppermint and especially eucalyptus, so it’s not recommended to use this method with infants or small children. Watch for any signs of irritation when using this method of adding in the menthol family to your steam.

5. Honey. A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down.... well, actually, if you're using good raw honey, your medicine is in the sugar. A cup of warm honey tea with a bit of lemon doesn't just help warm you up; it actually helps your cough symptom.

Honey is now being (again, us homesteaders were ahead of the curve on this one, because we're cool that way) recommended as a cough suppressant in the medical community instead of over-the-counter products. Is there anything cooler than being able to use your food storage as your medicine cabinet, too?

Here's an article from the [MayoClinic that talks about honey](#) being an excellent cough suppressant all on its own.

I prefer local raw honey for all of the benefits it offers. If you can find a local beekeeper or local source, I'd go with that, otherwise look for raw honey at your local co-op or grocery store.

Learn [how to make this ginger infused honey](#) for a powerful two for one punch!

Note: Do not give honey to children under 1 years-old due to the risk of botulism.

6. Ginger for nausea and upset stomach. If you had an upset stomach, there's a good chance your granny might have given you some ginger tea. Turns out, ginger is actually a powerhouse in the medicine cabinet and can be used for not only aiding the digestion system but a multitude of other ailments. Check out [this article from WebMD](#) on the powers of ginger.

Note: Ginger is known to help aid the digestion system, but **if you're on blood thinning medications or have a blood clotting disorder (such as my daughter) you shouldn't use ginger.**

I'm super excited to dive into herbs with you coming up soon, but I'd love to hear what natural remedies or old-time cures you use or have been passed down in your family.

More Reader Recommendations

Georgia recommends: Slice, and boil a large onion in a pint of water. Cool and strain. Add 2-3 Tbsp. (or more!) of honey. Keep in tightly covered glass jar in fridge. Take a couple of spoonfuls as needed. Very effective for colds, coughs and congestion.

Combine peppermint and sage (great if you can get them fresh, but dried is good, too) in equal parts. Add boiling water to make a tea, also to inhale the steam from. Smells a lot like menthol. Great for colds.

If you're out and get bitten by mosquitoes or get into stinging nettles, get some plantain leaves -those leaves with a slender seed stalk sticking up in the center that grow flush to the ground -the ones that bother the perfect lawn folks as much as dandelions. Crush up the leaves with your fingers and apply directly to the bite. They're called Babka leaves in our neighborhood. You can probably get a photo off the internet.

Also good for stinging nettle and bee stings, what we call pitcher plants or jewel weed. Crush up the little orangey-yellow blossoms and apply to the sting. They often grow right next to nettles- what a wonderful Provider we have! jewel weed: It's also a great remedy for poison ivy. Best research the how's and whys, but it cured a family member's poison ivy, and it commonly grows near that. Also, a common name for it is touch-me-not.

I think pitcher plant may be an erroneous name from my childhood days-long time ago!

Ron shares his experience with athlete's foot. There is a yuck factor involved but it works.

I had some serious athlete's foot after Vietnam. Nothing worked. I read about a method used by Native Americans and gave it a try.

I stood in the shower and urinated on my toes. Then I showered normally. Two applications and I have never had the problem again. Fast forward many years and my high school aged son had a bad case of athlete's foot. I told him what to do and it worked for him with one application.

Jenni has a slightly different method for stings: A paste of 1/2 baking soda and 1/2 meat tenderizer with water is also good for stings. I used this for my son when he got a sting in the face. He was crying, had a large red blotch, and I could see the puncture. After one hour, there was no evidence that he had even been stung – no redness, no itching, no swelling, and definitely no crying.

Day 29

I have to tell you, I really don't consider myself an herbal expert, but when I sat down to write this article, I realized I've learned more than I thought.

I went through my herb garden and cupboard and made a list of the things I use every week (or close to it). Herbs are now a part of my everyday life and that is actually a pretty cool feeling.

It's so important we keep this way of life preserved and handed down to the next generation, but it's also important we know the science and safety issues with each herb.

So this article is the marriage between the two.

7 Herbs for Natural Remedies Your Grandparents Used

Using herbs for homemade remedies has fascinated me forever. Is there anything cooler than going out into God's creation and picking a plant that can help you with an ailment?

Warning: Once you start learning about herbs you'll never venture out into the yard or go on a nature walk in quite the same way again. You'll be constantly looking at plants and identifying them and you'll most likely get your friends and family involved, too.

Podcast: [Play in new window](#) | [Download](#)

Let's talk for just a sec about using herbs. When I first got into more natural remedies I had **this misconception that if it's natural, it's safe.** Not all natural remedies are safe for every person or every situation. You have to really understand the herb or essential oil, how it works, dangers and side effects, because they do exist.

I don't say this to scare you or turn you off from natural medicine. Not in the least, but **we have to be responsible when using herbs and nature as medicines.**

I'm not a doctor. This isn't meant as a diagnosis or a treatment plan for you, just so we're clear, it's for educational and entertainment purposes. I believe this to be true for modern and holistic/natural medicine, each person has to be responsible for what they use and do their own due diligence. I talk about treatment plans with my doctor, my naturopath, my pharmacist (who happens to also be my boss in my day job), and do further research online or in books. I recommend you do the same.

Now that we've got that all taken care of, let's dive into the herbs.

7 Herbs You Need In Your Natural Remedies

1. Calendula. I mispronounced this for a few months, just so you know. Calendula is a wonderful all around herb for the skin and kind of all-around work horse. It has anti-inflammatory and anti-septic properties which

makes it a great candidate for multiple skin issues and also for wound care. It smells wonderful (big plus for me) and also has history as a dye due to its orange blossom.

Because calendula is considered a gentle herb, you'll find it in a lot of natural products for children and infants, as well. I infuse oil with calendula blossoms to make a homemade soothing salve, featured in my new book [*The Made-From-Scratch Life: Simple Ways to Create a Natural Home*](#)

Calendula is part of the Asteraceae family, so obviously, if you have allergies to marigolds or other members of this family, you'll be allergic to calendula, too. Calendula can also be used in tea and has been used to color butter and cheeses.

I purchased dried blossoms, but plan on growing it myself this coming year in the garden. For places to purchase, please visit [our Resource Page](#).

2. Lavender. Lavender is probably the most common and widespread known herbs for its calming and soothing properties. I have to tell you, I used to hate the smell of lavender, like wrinkle and turn up my nose at the same time. But I think this was to synthetic lavender scented items, because when I purchased my first essential oils kit, the lavender was one of my favorites. I put a few drops on my pillow every night when I go to bed.

I make lavender sachets for my husband's truck and keep dried bunches of it around the house.

Lavender works well to help soothe the skin and is often used in preparations for burn relief and pain. I also use lavender in this [DIY Herbal Face Scrub and Mask](#).

3. Echinacea. This is one of the herbs I use every week once my kids start back to school and cough and cold season go into overdrive, especially because at my day job I'm in constant contact with sick folk, just part of the territory at the pharmacy. I specifically love this tea blend from Traditional Medicine, but I don't use it every day, though usually at least a few nights a week, especially if I feel cold symptoms moving in.

In fact, one of my co-workers asked why I never seem to get sick and I shared a bag of tea with her. Echinacea is used in teas and you can also purchase it in capsule form.

Echinacea is used for its ability to help support the immune system. Like calendula, echinacea is also related to the Asteraceae family, so beware of allergies.

4. Peppermint. Peppermint is a wildly prolific plant, most well suited to a container. Just trust me on this unless you want mint plants gone wild all over your homestead. It tastes great; I even bruise a few leaves and toss them in my water bottle for a flavor pick me up.

Peppermint is known for helping soothe upset stomach and help support bowel function (oh the stuff we talk about here, right?). Though peppermint is known for its use with stomach issues, if you have GERD or acid reflux, peppermint can help relax the sphincter muscle, allowing acid from your stomach to climb up to the esophagus, making symptoms worse.

If you're feeling congested, just the scent of peppermint oil can help with congestion. Just make sure you don't get the peppermint oil on your skin as it will sting and burn.

Peppermint is one of my favorite things to pair with chocolate and often used in baking. Here's how to make your own [peppermint extract at home!](#)

5. Licorice root. I'll be the first to tell you I can't stand licorice candy, mainly because I don't like the flavor of anise, and a lot of licorice candy is flavored with anise, according to WebMD, which I just learned. However, licorice root has its place in an herbal medicine cabinet. Licorice root is for a variety of ailments from digestive issues, cold symptoms, to helping support adrenal glands, and [many other ailments.](#)

However, licorice root should be used with caution and only for short term and never in large amounts. If you have blood pressure or potassium issues, liver or heart problems, you shouldn't use licorice root. Here's a [link to the side effects and cautions of using licorice root.](#)

6. Sage. This silvery green leaf herb is one of my favorites because it's easy to grow, lasts almost yearlong in my garden, and is just so tasty. I have to confess (this might be confession day for me or something) that I didn't realize all of its health benefits until I started digging into research for this chapter.

Sage is used to support digestive problems (hello, always love it with my turkey on Thanksgiving), and supporting mind and mental performance. In fact, this article from [WebMD shares sage may help with Alzheimer's Disease](#) and menopause symptoms.

7. Chamomile. This little white flower plant is another common garden plant. It has been around for centuries and is used to support feelings of calmness and to aid nervous stomachs. Many people enjoy chamomile as a bed time tea. Because of its calming nature, it has also been used on the skin.

I happen to think it's also charming in the wooden planters flanking our front porch.

We've barely dove into the pool of herbal use, but these 7 herbs are a great place to start, along with the old-time natural remedies that work. No worries, we'll be diving further into how to prepare and use these herbs in the next section!

Recommendations by Readers

Cathy: Fennel seed. A heaping teaspoonful of fennel seeds boiled in a cup of water for five minutes, drain away the seeds and cool the tea. This is wonderful for stomach aches and gas in adults and children. With a doctor's ok, it can be given to an baby with colic.

We use this all the time, as a family member has a digestive disorder.

This remedy has been in the family for at least three generations.

Lorraine: Calendula is very easy to grow and a great way to bring in pollinators when planted in the vegetable garden. I plant flowers and herbs throughout the vegetable garden. Calendula Resina has the highest concentration of resins and is supposed to be the best for medicinal purposes. It is really easy to save the seeds and will re seed itself too. Now you've got me thinking of spring and planting.

Sage tea is great for sore throats.

Linda: Comfrey is a standby for us. It's easy to grow & I use it as a base for my all-purpose salve (along with calendula). You can make an infusion (fancy word for tea) & apply a compress to bruises, even a black eye

Cheryl: I wouldn't be without comfrey! Besides being a great herb for healing, it is a good mulch plant and chickens love to eat it.

Day 30

It's one thing to know which herbs are good to have at home, from both medicinal to culinary uses (I just made a roasted garlic, sage, basil, onion and tomato soup that is soooo good), but we also need to know how to prepare the herbs for medicinal use.

There are several different ways and I'm a firm believer in being prepared with multiple options!

In fact, this is the perfect time of year to begin making your preparations with herbs for year round use. My mint and sage are growing like.... well mint and sage, because they are one of the hardiest herbs I've ever put in the soil on our homestead and I highly recommend them, even if you have a less than green thumb.

7 Ways to Use Medicinal Herbs at Home

Learning how to use herbs in your home medicine kit is an age old tradition our forefathers and mothers knew. Seeing a resurgence in folks like you and me who want to preserve these old time remedies makes my heart warm like a hearth stone near a crackling fire.

It's one thing to know which herbs are good ones to start with and work well for different ailments but we need to know the different ways to actually use our herbs once we've identified them.

I am not a medical doctor or professional, this is not meant to treat or diagnosis, it is for educational and entertainment purposes only. If you or your loved one is sick, always seek medical care and advice from a trained medical practitioner of your choice. Never use herbs or herbal treatments without first doing research on that herb and its effects by a trusted source.

Resources for Using Medicinal Herbs at Home

No doubt about it **you need a good reference guide** for knowing how to use which herbs for what and the ways to prepare them.

Two places to start is (beginner's herb guide) *Rosemary Gladstar's Medicinal Herbal Guide* and a home manual titled *The Herbal Medicine-Maker's Handbook*. (links to both books is available on our [Resource Page](#))

7 Ways to Use Medicinal Herbs at Home

1. Herbal Tea. Some herbs are meant to be ingested and brewing a strong tea is a good way to do this, especially during cough and cold season, because warm tea will help soothe an irritated throat like little else.

There are a few ways to make your tea; you can use fresh or dried leaves.

How to prepare herbal tea at home

Fresh leaves: Rinse fresh herb leaves under cold running water and place about three large leaves in the bottom of a cup. Pour hot water over and allow to seep for up to 7 minutes.

Dried leaves: A tea ball (I use a stainless steel tea ball all the time and even have put spices in it when making jams or brines) or infuser works the best when using dried leaves. Fill your tea ball with dried leaves and pour hot water over and allow it to steep for about 7 minutes, or to your desired strength.

Many people like a cup of chamomile tea at bedtime.

Flavoring options:

For therapeutic use I'll put some raw honey in my warm tea if I have a cough, otherwise I prefer not to add sugar, but if it needs some sweetness, then I use a few drops of [stevia](#) extract. I don't detect any bitter or weird after taste and have been using it for over a year now, I even use it when making sauces... shhh, don't tell my kids, they can't tell the difference.

Learn how to dry your own herbs in our [Ultimate Home Food Preservation Guide](#)

2. Herbal Poultice. This is where you take the leaves (or sometimes root of the plant) and place them into a piece of gauze or muslin, apply to the affected area (feel like I'm at work typing out prescription instructions with that one) and leave it on for the preferred duration of time.

How to Prepare an Herbal Poultice

There are two ways to make a poultice, one is using the leaves and roots raw and the other is heating them.

For **the raw poultice:** finely chop up the leaves/roots or use your blender and make a puree. Place this into your gauze or muslin. For a case study and more in depth look at using [comfrey for this method go here.](#)

For **a hot poultice:** Take the leaves/roots and place them in a saucepan with a double ratio of water to herb (example 1/4 cup herbs to 1/2 cup water), bring to a simmer and cook for a couple of minutes. For more information on this method check out [how to make an herbal poultice and compress tutorial here.](#)

How long to leave poultice on: The time will vary depending upon the ailment and the herb, for example, mustard poultice would not be left on for a long period of time due to its hot burning nature, where as a comfrey poultice might be left on for up to 24 hours. You need to replace your poultice regularly.

You'll want to use gauze or a breathable fabric over your poultice to keep the poultice in place and to help protect your clothing.

3. Infusion or Decoction. An **herbal infusion is simply an herbal tea fully matured**... instead of allowing the herbs to steep for minutes, you let the tea seep for an hour, putting it on super strength. Confession: I've done this with tea simply because I forgot about it.

A **decoction is when you boil the smashed or chopped** herb, root, or sometimes bark in water and allow it to boil and steep for some time, so basically, the extended hot water bath version of an infusion.

4. Syrup. I have to say if you have children or picky finicky people in your household, then a syrup will probably be your easiest option as far as compliance goes. Medicinal syrups are shelf stable and last longer than infusions or decoctions, which means you can make them ahead of time so when you're not feeling up to par, you don't have to deal with making something, it'll be ready to go.

To make the syrup you'll start out making a decoction and then add in your sweetener. For full instructions here is a great tutorial on [how to make medicinal syrups](#).

5. Tincture. A tincture is basically making a homemade extract, in fact, that's exactly what it is. You can use either alcohol or apple cider vinegar, though your shelf life is better with alcohol and less chance of mold. Here's [how to make extract](#), or mint tincture, swap out any herb for different tinctures.

Tinctures can be taken by themselves, added into syrups or salves and lotions.

6. Salves, balms, creams and lotions. Many homemade salves, balms, creams, and lotions, even lip balm will benefit from the addition of medicinal herbs. Usually this is done by infusing your oil with the herbs of your choice. This is a really simple procedure but takes a bit of planning ahead.

To infuse oil with herbs you want to use dried herbs to avoid any extra moisture which can contaminate your oil. Place dried herbs in a clean Mason jar. Pour oil over herbs, making sure the herbs are completely submerged beneath the oil. Leave enough room in the jar that you can gently shake the herbs every few days.

Place jar in a sunny windowsill and allow it to steep for 6 to 8 weeks, shaking every few days or so. After 8 weeks, strain herbs and use infused oil in recipe of your choice.

Tip: Olive oil works well for this as coconut oil solidifies at 76 degrees. I love to do this with calendula blossoms and it's the base for my Homemade Soothing Salve featured in [The Made-From-Scratch Life: Simple Ways to Create a Natural Home](#) along with other awesome recipes and tips for natural living.

Another favorite is this [homemade peppermint salve for dry skin](#).

7. Herbal Steams. An herbal steam not only makes your house smell wonderful while eliminating those fake chemicals in other scented options, but it has therapeutic benefits as well. I enjoy cooking on our wood stove during the winter months and also like to put a kettle of water on to act as a humidifier, but adding some medicinal herbs to the mixture will punch things up even further.

You can use any herbs you like, but for congestion both peppermint and eucalyptus are favorites; however people who are sensitive to seizures, infants, or young children should proceed with caution.

Add herbs to a pot of water and allow to lightly simmer. Or, you can add herbs to a heat proof bowl and pour just simmered hot water over it.

Online Resources

You've completed the 30 Days to Preparedness, but you're in no way done. I'm excited to hear about your adventures and what you're learning and to help.

I've created this online [resource page](#) to help you on your way <http://melissaknorris.com/30-day-preparedness-resource-page/>

For more old-time wisdom, be sure to check out my [Pioneering Today Podcast](#) for episodes and transcript show notes to help you on your journey to self-sufficiency, frugal living, and from scratch living.

Thank you so much for joining me on this journey and investing in yourself and your family.