



# *Spring Clean* YOUR FOOD STORAGE

## 7 Day Mini Challenge

brought to you by Jodi from <http://FoodStorageMadeEasy.NET>

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ENJOY THIS 7 DAY MINI CHALLENGE TO ORGANIZE AND INVENTORY DIFFERENT AREAS OF YOUR FOOD STORAGE OVER THE NEXT 7 DAYS!

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For today's challenge we are going to go through each fridge and freezer in our homes (some of us may have several as part of our preps) and give them a thorough spring cleaning. If you don't have time to do them all at once that's ok! Start with your primary unit and do more as time permits. You will follow the same process for each unit.

- **Remove Contents:**
  - Store perishables in a cooler or another fridge or freezer while working
- **Throw Away Rotten Food:**
  - Anything with mold, slimy, or smelly should be tossed. In your freezer, look for food that is freezer-burned. Some people may choose to discard these items, others may want to just put them at the top of the list to eat sooner rather than later.
- **Check for Expiration Dates:**
  - Go through items and CHECK and/or discard anything past its expiration date. There is a lot of debate about using foods past their best-by dates so use whatever method you feel most comfortable with for your family. My personal feeling is if it looks and smells fine I will keep using it. Others in my family will sneakily throw away items that are expired.....
- **Wipe Down Interior Shelves and Drawers:**
  - Remove shelves and drawers to clean them thoroughly with warm, soapy water. Dry before replacing.
- **Defrost Freezer (if applicable):**
  - If your freezer requires manual defrosting, take the opportunity to do so during this spring cleaning session.
- **Replace and Reorganize Contents:**
  - Arrange items neatly, grouping similar items together for easier access.
- **Replace Air and/or Water Filters:**
  - Check your appliance manual if you don't know where these are or what exactly you should be replacing.
- **Clean Exterior Surfaces:**
  - Wipe down the outer surfaces including door handles. Clean the door gasket with a solution of equal parts water and vinegar. Dip a cotton swab into the solution and run it along the gasket's seam. Repeat until it is clean and dry with a microfiber cloth.
- **BONUS TASK: Clean the Coils**
  - Check your appliance's manual for instructions on how to locate and clean the coils. Usually this is done by vacuum and/or dusting them lightly. The coils help keep your refrigerator at the preferred temperature to help it run more efficiently and keep energy costs down.



For today's challenge we are going to go through our kitchen pantries and declutter, organize, and clean them out! If you have a large chunk of time you can pull everything out and do it all at once. But it's also ok to do a shelf or two at a time so you don't leave a huge mess on your kitchen counter for three days.

- **Remove Everything:**
  - Take everything out of the pantry (or out of one shelf) to start with a clean slate.
- **Check Expiry Dates:**
  - Discard any expired or stale items. As with your fridge food, this is a personal choice as to what you consider ok to keep past best-buy dates. It's always a balance.
- **Check for Pests:**
  - Look for signs of pests like insects or rodents. Dispose of any infested items and consider using pest control measures.
- **Wipe Down Shelves:**
  - Clean shelves with warm, soapy water to remove dust and spills. Dry thoroughly before placing items back.
- **Use Organizational Tools and Containers:**
  - Consider using baskets, bins, or shelf organizers to maximize space and keep items neatly grouped. I love the Cansolidators from Shelf Reliance to rotate canned goods.
  - Some people like to replace items in boxes and bags with uniform plastic or glass containers. This can be fun and look good but don't get too caught up in perfection!
- **Put Food Away:**
  - Organize items into categories (e.g., grains, canned goods, snacks) to make them easier to find or based on how you use them.
  - Move older items to the front and newer items to the back to ensure everything gets used before expiration.
- **Label Containers:**
  - Label containers or jars to easily identify contents and expiry dates.
- **Take an Inventory:**
  - Determine how much food you would like to keep in your upstairs pantry. I try to keep most of my three-month supply foods upstairs.
  - Try to keep at least a few "spares" of most of your spices, condiments, canned goods, boxed goods, etc.
  - If you want to be really detailed, you can use this calculator to determine how much food you would need for 3 months.  
<http://foodstoragemadeeasy.net/fsme/docs/3monthfoodsupply-new.xls>



For today's challenge we are going to spring clean our water storage! If you already have a rotation schedule in place you can skip that part. However, it's always a good idea to re-evaluate your water storage, check containers, and look for any areas needed for improvement.

- **Inspect Containers:**
  - Check all water storage containers for cracks, leaks, or signs of damage. Replace any compromised containers.
- **Empty Containers:**
  - Empty out all water storage containers completely. Find a way to rotate old water so that it is not waster. For some ideas check out my [water rotation](#) blog post.
- **Check for Mold or Algae:**
  - Inspect containers for any signs of mold, algae, or other growth. If you containers have gaskets in the lids (like [Waterbricks](#) do) make sure to check those. Clean thoroughly if present, using a scrub brush and bleach solution if necessary.
- **Clean Containers:**
  - Wash/sanitize containers with a diluted bleach solution (1 teaspoon of bleach per gallon of hot water).
- **Refill Containers:**
  - Fill cleaned and sanitized containers with fresh water from a safe and reliable source. Do not use a garden hose to fill large water barrels. You must use a water safe hose.
- **Add Water Treatment (if desired):**
  - Consider adding water treatment tablets or drops to the stored water to prevent bacterial growth and ensure long-term freshness. You can also use 1/2 tsp. of bleach per 5 gallons of water if you don't have tablets or drops. Most municipal water has already been treated but this is just an extra precaution especially if you don't rotate often.
- **Inventory Your Water Supply:**
  - Calculate your family's water storage needs. Most sources recommend 1 gallon of water storage per person, PER day, for 3-14 days for DRINKING. Make sure to consider storing enough for pets and cleaning/cooking as well. If you are short of your goal, purchase a few more water storage containers.
- **Check Water Filters:**
  - Make sure you have the ability to filter additional water should you need to treat more water than you have store. Check to make sure any filters are still in good condition and that you have enough to meet your family's needs.



For today's challenge we are going to spring clean our core long term food storage supplies meaning **FOOD**. Typically this is in the basement or another food storage room and not just incorporated into your kitchen pantry/cupboards. We will be breaking this job up over two days because for some people it can be **A LOT!**

- **Check Expiry Dates:**
  - Go through all the items in your emergency food storage and **CHECK** any expired items. Many items will be fine even for years after the best-by dates but it is always good to at least check and possibly test one if you are storing batches of things.
- **Discard Bad/Rotten Food:**
  - Look for signs of bulging cans, discolored food or broken seals in home-canned items, signs of critters and bugs in dried goods, etc.
- **Create Master Inventory List:**
  - Use my food storage calculator ([PDF](#) or [spreadsheet](#)) to create a master wishlist of all the items/quantities you would like to have in your emergency food storage based on the number of people you are storing for. (If the link doesn't work try right-clicking it and choose "save link as" or you can copy and paste this into your web browser -> <http://yourthrive.life.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/NewCalculator-1.pdf>)
- **Record Quantities:**
  - Note down the quantity of each item you have in your master spreadsheet. This will give you an idea of where you are at with your preparedness levels and where the holes are in your food storage.
- **Make a Purchasing Plan:**
  - Come up with a monthly budget you can allocate to purchasing long term food storage items until you have everything needed on your master inventory list.
- **Start Buying Now:**
  - If you are missing some freeze-dried food items in your storage take advantage of Thrive Life's monthly specials which allow you to shop each month for savings of 25-35% off retail pricing and **FREE SHIPPING!**



Today is part two of our main food storage spring cleaning job. Yesterday you should have worked on creating your master inventory list, documenting what you already have stored, and getting rid of anything that is not good any more. Today we are going to sort and organize our spaces!

- **Wipe Down All Shelves:**
  - You can go shelf by shelf emptying them one at a time to clean them off or just take everything out if you are going to be moving things around anyway.
- **Categorize Items:**
  - Organize your shelves in a way that makes sense to you. Put like items together like canned goods, spices, condiments, proteins, home-canned items, etc.
  - Store home-canned items on lower shelves or add fronts to the shelves or bungee cords to hold them in place in case of an earthquake
- **Move Older Items to the Front:**
  - Make sure to follow a first in first out system with your foods.
  - Consider getting a rotating can rack to help with this!
- **Fill Empty Jars with Water:**
  - Empty jars take up the same amount of space as full jars. If you are waiting for canning season to fill some jars, stick water in them for extra water storage. You can even “can” them to make sterilized giving them a longer shelf life before needing to rotate.
- **Avoid Storing Items on the Floor:**
  - If your storage room has a concrete floor, use pallets, old carpet, or cardboard to creating a barrier between the concrete and any food or water containers. Chemicals from the concrete can leak through plastic into your food.
- **Add Labels:**
  - You can label your item categories by putting labels on the front of the shelves. This will help if you have helpers adding things (or removing things) from your food storage.
  - You can also label items with expiration dates right on the front so you can see at a glance what items may be reaching best by dates soon.
- **Take Pictures:**
  - Not only is it rewarding to have before and after pictures, but you can use pictures of your inventory in case you ever have to make an insurance claim. This in combination with your master inventory list should give documentation to what all you have in your food storage.





We are getting close to the end! Is your food storage looking so clean and organized? For today's mini challenge we are going to look at our powerless cooking supplies because what is the point of having a food storage if you have no way to cook it, am I right?

- **Gather Tools and Fuels:**
  - Collect all your powerless cooking tools and fuels from various storage locations in your home so you can do a proper inventory of it all.
- **Create Inventory List:**
  - Document your inventory of powerless cooking tools in a spreadsheet or notebook for easy reference.
  - Inventory your supply of cooking fuels such as propane, charcoal, wood, butane, Instafire, or other alternative fuels.
  - Don't forget to inventory any maintenance supplies needed for your cooking tools, such as matches, lighters, or cleaning supplies.
  - Create a "wish list" to fill in any gaps that you need for your fuel supply. (View [powerless cooking page](#) for ideas of potential tools you may want to consider)
- **Evaluate Your Cooking Tools and Fuels:**
  - Determine which options are best suited for different cooking needs and scenarios. Do you have options for indoor cooking? If you are depending on solar cooking do you have backup options? Do you have the right type of tools for the foods you are storing?
- **Inspect and Clean Tools:**
  - Check each cooking tool for any damage or signs of wear. Repair or replace as necessary.
  - Wipe off cooking tools with soapy water and keep them in good condition for when the time comes that you need to use them.
- **Check Expiry Dates (if applicable):**
  - If using stored fuels with expiry dates, verify that they are within their usable period. Dispose of any expired fuels. (Review this [powerless cooking fuels](#) handout for help)
- **Clean Your Storage Shelves:**
  - While your tools and fuels are off of the shelves, wipe them down and clear out any non-cooking items so you can keep everything in one place and nicely organized.
- **Put Items Away:**
  - Return the cooking tools and fuels to your storage location in a nice and orderly manner. Consider storing fuels near the tools they will be used with if allowed and space permits.
  - Keep these tools easily accessible so you can PRACTICE cooking with them. This will give you more confidence should there come a time when you have to depend on them.





We did it! We made it through the 7 Day Mini Challenge and hopefully our food storage areas are a little cleaner, more organized, and we have a game plan for the holes in our preparedness plans. Today will be working on our final task and for this one we will be spring cleaning our 72 hour / disaster kits!

- **Check/Rotate Food and Water Supplies:**
  - Rotate any food and water supplies that are close to expiration, replacing them with fresh items. Make sure you have a good water filter in addition to any stored water.
  - Include light-weight snacks like freeze-dried fruits and just-add-water meals
  - Don't forget to check/add cooking fuels/stoves so you can prepare your meals.
- **Update Emergency Contact Information:**
  - Review and update any emergency contacts, including phone numbers and addresses.
- **Check Medications and First Aid Supplies:**
  - Ensure that medications and first aid supplies are up to date. Replace any expired items.
- **Rotate Clothing:**
  - Check clothing items in the kit for size suitability, especially if you have small children. Replace with appropriate sizes if needed.
- **Refresh Personal Hygiene Supplies:**
  - Ensure you have essential personal items such as toiletries, sanitation supplies, etc. Don't forget to include diapers/wipes if you have babies!
- **Inspect Tools and Equipment:**
  - Verify that all tools and equipment (e.g., flashlight, multi-tool, radio) are in working condition. Replace batteries as necessary.
- **Include Seasonal Items:**
  - Adjust the contents of your kit based on the current season (e.g., for spring remove extra clothing layers and add extra things like sunscreen and bug spray).
- **Check Documentation:**
  - Review important documents stored in your emergency binder that should be part of your kit (e.g., copies of identification, insurance policies) and update as needed.
- **Don't Forget Pet Supplies:**
  - Make sure to have food, water, leashes, litter, poop bags, toys, etc. for all family pets.
- **Organize and Reassemble Kits:**
  - Neatly organize all items back into the disaster kits. Consider packing small light backpacks for children with the bulk of the extra supplies in the parent's packs.
- **REVIEW:**
  - Go over my Emergency Preparedness Plan handout to make sure you have everything.



Thanks for joining in my **Spring Clean Your Food Storage mini challenge**. I hope this little exercise has helped you to get your food preps in order this spring. Don't forget you can always go back and do it again at any time. I find I need to inventory and re-evaluate about once every six months so spring and fall is perfect timing for me!

To learn more from me and how I can help you with other areas of building your food storage please consider checking out some of the resources available below!

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