THE WELL-KEPT PANTRY

A practical guide to food security, winter growing, and everyday household preparedness

SOULFUL TABLE | HOME & EVERYDAY LIVING

A living checklist for today's kitchen: what to buy first, how to store it, what actually lasts, and how to nourish a household through an uncertain season.

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A well-prepared home is not defined by how much it owns. It is defined by knowing what matters, keeping it in good condition, and being able to use it.

IMPORTANT: This guide is a practical household planning aid, not a substitute for an individual medical, infant-feeding, dietary, water-safety, or emergency plan. Food shelf-life ranges are **quality planning estimates**, not guarantees of safety; storage conditions and package labels take priority. A five-year plan means being able to maintain a useful reserve over time, not leaving all products untouched for five years.

A quick route through this guide

The essentials: water, food, sanitation, and safe cooking

What to buy first on a limited budget

Shelf-life reference: five-year candidates vs rotating foods

What expiration dates really mean

Long-term packaging, rotation, and safe preservation

How to eat during a shortage, including a 7-day menu

What households stored before supermarkets and cars

What to plant outside and keep through winter

Seeds, seed saving, and germination testing

A beginner indoor hydroponic setup

Complete food, hygiene, and household checklists

A 4-week starter plan and worksheets

Source guide

1 | Start with the needs that cannot wait

The order matters. Safe water, something edible without cooking, and sanitation outrank bins of long-storage grain. Buying a five-year food bucket does not help much if it takes fuel, clean water, a grinder, or cooking equipment you do not have.

Water: Store at least **one gallon per person per day**. Start with three days, work toward 14 days, and add more for heat, illness, pregnancy, pets, and dry-food cooking. For two people: three days = 6 gallons; 14 days = 28 gallons, **plus**

any additional cooking and special-needs water. Use commercially bottled water or food-grade containers. Replace home-filled water every six months; follow purchased water's printed date. [1]

Food: Keep at least three days of ready-to-eat food requiring no electricity. Then build 14 days of meals based on inexpensive staples. For rough planning, 2,000 food calories per adult per day is a *worksheet example*, not an individual prescription; needs vary with age, body size, activity, pregnancy, and health. Check labels and add up food your family will actually eat.

Other essentials: Handwashing supplies, a way to handle waste, important medicines, first aid, seasonal warmth, reliable light, a can opener, and a safe cooking method.

First 72 hours: tiny, useful emergency core

☐ Water: 3 gallons per person, minimum; add more for special needs

☐ Three days of ready-to-eat meals (canned beans, vegetables, fruit, ready-to-eat soup, crackers, shelf-stable spreads)

☐ Manual can opener; spoon, bowl, cup

☐ Bar soap, toilet paper, toothbrush, garbage bags

☐ Flashlight/headlamp, batteries, basic first aid

☐ Specific medicines/medical supplies and infant or pet supplies if needed

☐ Important contacts and a simple family plan

2 | How to spend money wisely: buy this first

If you can afford only a few items, avoid expensive specialty kits. Choose familiar, flexible foods and functional basics. Exact store prices vary, so this list ranks **value and usefulness**, not a claimed cheapest national price.

Purchase priority	Choose	Why it earns space
1	Drinking water + safe containers	The first non-negotiable necessity
2	6–12 cans of beans or lentils	Ready-to-eat protein, fiber, iron, energy
3	Oats labeled certified gluten-free	Affordable breakfasts; easy to prepare with safe water
4	White rice + dry lentils or split peas	Dense, economical staple calories and protein; store well
5	A bottle of cooking oil	Essential dietary fat and concentrated food energy; rotate
6	Canned dark greens, carrots, fruit, or freeze-dried produce	Vitamins, minerals, and dietary variety
7	Iodized salt + modest seasoning	Important nutrients and practical flavor; rotate iodized salt
8	Bar soap + toilet paper + a can opener	Basic hygiene and ability to access food
9	A safe cooking/heat and lighting method	Dry staples are only useful if you can prepare them
10	Fortified shelf-stable foods or suitable B12 supplement, as needed	Plant-based diets need dependable vitamin B12; rotate

If you can buy five groceries, not counting water: (1) canned or dried lentils/beans, (2) certified gluten-free oats or white rice, (3) cooking oil, (4) canned greens/carrots/fruit, and (5) a B12-fortified shelf-stable food or another calorie-dense staple that fits your household. Use *canned* beans and oats when fuel is uncertain, *dry* beans/rice when safe fuel and water are available.

Why nutrient density isn't enough by itself: Kale and leafy greens are rich in vitamins but low in calories. Oil is rich in calories but not a complete food. Beans supply fiber/protein but little fat. Building meals from multiple categories is more reliable than chasing one superfood.

Your first month: three sensible spending levels

Minimum: Three-day water; three-day no-cook food; can opener; soap and sanitation.

Better: Add two weeks of familiar staple foods, oil, produce, cooking fuel, hygiene reserves, and household-specific needs.

Longer-term: After using the basics successfully, invest in airtight dry-food storage, extra water capacity, seeds, garden soil, and an optional indoor greens system.

An illustrative 14-day adult pantry basket

This is a **quantity starter**, not an exact prescription. Build for the people in your household and tally package calories, protein, dietary fat, and micronutrients rather than assuming a particular pile of groceries is complete. For an example adult planning at roughly 2,000 calories a day, start with a target near **28,000 food calories for two weeks** and adjust for actual needs. The basket below may supply more or less depending on brands and portions.

Supply	Illustrative quantity per adult	Why it helps
Water	14 gallons minimum plus cooking water	CDC two-week target
White rice	6–7 lb	Calorie-rich, packable starch
Dry lentils/beans	4 lb combined	Protein, fiber, iron; needs fuel/water
Certified GF oats	2 lb	Easy breakfast and fiber
Ready-to-eat canned beans/soups	6–10 cans	No-cook food for the first days
Canned/freeze-dried vegetables and fruit	14–28 servings or more	Nutrient variety; rotate canned foods
Cooking oil	0.5–1 liter	Essential fat and concentrated energy; rotate
Iodized salt, seasonings, fortified B12 option as needed	Enough for household	Nutrients, flavor, dietary fit; follow expiration

Check the labels: This is not a nutritionally complete or no-cook diet. Keep a separate three-day no-cook allocation, account for safe drinking/cooking water and fuel, and adjust portions for children, pregnancy, illness, and energy needs.

3 | What really lasts: shelf-life reference

Three tiers are more useful than one sweeping five-year claim. Under ideal cool, dry, dark storage, certain dry foods can exceed five years by a wide margin. Grocery packaging and room heat can shorten those times dramatically. Use any manufacturer date that is earlier, and rotate ordinary retail foods.

A. Realistic five-year or longer candidates (special storage conditions)

Item	Long-term planning range	Conditions or caveat
White polished rice	5+ years; up to 25–30 years in ideal packages	Dry, oxygen-resistant sealed container; cool storage. Around 70°F, 10 years can be more realistic than 30. [2]
Dry beans, lentils, split peas	5+ years; 20–30 years possible in ideal packages	Low moisture, oxygen protection; vitamins decline, older beans harden and require more fuel. [3]
Whole dried corn intended for human food	5+ years in specialized dry-grain storage	Only thoroughly dry, sound grain; grind when needed; do not use treated seed corn
Oats, certified gluten-free	Long-lived only when packaged for it	USU reports long storage in sealed oxygen-reduced cans; retail paper tubs are not equivalent. [4]
Commercial freeze-dried vegetables and fruit	Often 10–25 years, product dependent	Choose manufacturer-rated sealed packs; micronutrients such as vitamin C can decline over time. [5]
Plain dry sugar or pure honey	Very long/indefinite when properly sealed and dry	Crystallization is normal; honey is never suitable for infants under 12 months. [6]
Plain non-iodized salt	Very long if kept dry	Iodized salt should rotate because the iodine benefit is not guaranteed indefinitely
Durable household goods	Often 5+ years, if inspected	Steel pot, manual opener, glass jars, cloth towels, blankets, tools; no chemical expiry assumed

Purchase rather than guess: For any freeze-dried meal, powdered milk alternative, dehydrated potato product, nutrient supplement, water-purification tablet, emergency water pouch, or specialty pantry product, look for a specific manufacturer's **unopened shelf-life rating of at least five years**, storage conditions, and trustworthy packaging. Do not infer the rating from the product category alone.

B. Useful rotating pantry (not a five-year guarantee)

Food	General quality planning range	Action
Commercial low-acid cans: most plain beans and vegetables	About 2–5 years unopened	Rotate; examine seals and damage. [7]
Commercial high-acid cans: tomatoes, many fruits, pineapple	About 12–18 months	Use earlier; acidity affects quality/linings. [7]
Home-canned food	Best quality about 1 year	Only use tested processing methods; label and rotate. [8]
Ordinary dry oats, gluten-free flour, brown rice	Often months to 1–2 years depending on product	Rotate; higher oil content makes rancidity possible
Nuts, edible seeds, seed butter	Generally months to around a year at room temperature; longer chilled/frozen	Keep cool; discard if rancid; not five-year storage
Cooking oil	Often 6–24 months unopened, product-dependent	Small bottles, first-in-first-out; discard if rancid
Dry pasta, gluten-free varieties	Often 1–2 years; type dependent	Check type, oil content, and label
Commercial shelf-stable plant milks	Commonly several months to about 1 year; product-dependent	Choose fortified products and follow use-by/best-by instructions
Spice jars, dried herbs	Often 1–3 years for best flavor	Smell and potency decline, not a five-year nutritional reserve
Vitamins, medicines, toothpaste, sunscreen, infant formula	Follow labeled expiration/use-by	Never treat as indefinite stores; infant formula must not go beyond use-by
Bar soap, detergent, feminine products, toilet paper	Dry goods may store for years; formulas vary	Protect from moisture; rotate liquids/dated products; inspect rubber/elastic and adhesives

Not every old product is dangerous, and not every fresh-looking product is safe. A best-quality window is separate from safety. See the decision page next.

4 | Best by, use by, and expiration: a sensible safety guide

For most US foods, **Best if Used By** refers to quality rather than a legal safety deadline. **Sell By** is usually for retailer inventory, not a discard instruction. **Use By** may also indicate quality for many foods, but always follow safety-critical labeling, especially on **infant formula**, which must not be used after the use-by date. [9]

What may be okay beyond a best-quality date?

A **commercially canned food** whose can is undamaged, whose seal is intact, and whose storage history is good may remain safe beyond its quality date. Texture, taste, and vitamins may decrease.

Dry rice or lentils in a sound, dry, pest-free container may remain usable after a printed quality date; very old beans may require additional soaking and heat.

Crystallized pure honey is usually a quality change, not spoilage.

Salt or plain dry sugar can remain useful while protected from moisture.

When not to take a chance

Never taste bulging, leaking, badly rusted, severely dented (especially on seams), spurting cans, or jars with a broken or bulging seal.

Never eat moldy, damp, insect-contaminated, or rancid food. Do not try to rescue food by boiling if it may contain botulism toxin.

Do not trust **smell alone**: botulism toxin may have no visible or detectable warning.

Do not use **infant formula past its use-by** or ignore medicine expiration dates.

Discard home-canned foods if the safe processing method, seal, or handling is uncertain. Low-acid beans and vegetables require tested **pressure-canning** methods. [8, 10]

If a flood affects food, follow CDC discard/salvage guidance rather than guessing.

Opened packages have new timelines. Many canned foods must be refrigerated after opening, and perishable leftovers cannot remain at room temperature for long. During outages, an unopened refrigerator generally keeps food safely chilled for about **4 hours**; a full unopened freezer about **48 hours** (24 hours if half-full). [11]

5 | Make your storage space actually work

A cool, dry, dark storage area is more valuable than an elaborate label. Utah State University Extension suggests cool storage around **40–70°F**; heat accelerates vitamin and flavor loss, while moisture encourages mold and packaging damage. [12]

How to pack dry staples for long-term storage

Start with **clean, sound, thoroughly dry, low-fat foods** such as polished white rice and mature dry beans.

Choose purpose-made oxygen-resistant Mylar-type bags or professionally sealed #10 cans. Use food-grade buckets as physical protection from rodents and accidental damage.

For foods and packages designed for them, add the appropriately sized **food-grade oxygen absorber**, then heat-seal the liner fully. Follow the absorber and packaging manufacturer instructions.

Mark the contents, packaging date, batch, and intended inspection/use period; store off concrete and away from chemicals.

Check for punctures, condensation, off odors, pests, rust, and seal failures at least every six months. Use the oldest sound packages first.

Do not oxygen-pack moist food, homemade wet mixtures, or unknown-fat foods. Oxygen removal is **not** a substitute for safe dehydration, refrigeration, tested canning, or freeze-drying. Do not home-can foods using improvised methods.

Where the historical pantry methods fit

Method	Good for	Important limitation
Drying	Mature beans, many herbs and fruits	Must reach safe dryness; rehydrate with safe water; homemade dried food is not automatically five-year food
Root cellaring	Potatoes, carrots, beets, some cabbage	Correct humidity and temperatures differ by crop; prevent rot and rodents
Curing	Onions, garlic, winter squash	Cure and store according to the crop; inspect weekly
Freezing	Seasonal produce, prepared meals	Depends on reliable electricity; not a no-power reserve
Pressure canning	Beans and other low-acid vegetables	Tested pressure canner and exact recipe, elevation, time, pressure required
Water-bath canning	Tested high-acid recipes only	Not safe for unacidified low-acid vegetables or beans
Fermenting	Appropriate vegetables in tested recipes	Follow validated salt/temperature/handling guidance; not every ferment is shelf stable

6 | How to eat during a food shortage

The simplest dependable meal pattern is **starch + protein-rich food + vegetable + fat**, with safe water and enough total calories. It can be plant-based, inexpensive, and adapted to allergies and favorite foods.

The four-part pantry plate

Energy: rice, oats, potatoes, gluten-free pasta, cornmeal, or other familiar grain.

Protein and fiber: lentils, split peas, cooked dry beans, canned beans, or shelf-stable soy products.

Micronutrients: stored carrots, winter squash, canned greens, canned vegetables/fruit, or commercial freeze-dried produce.

Fat and flavor: cooking oil, short-rotation seeds/nuts, modest iodized salt, garlic, dried onion, herbs, vinegar.

Plant-based nutrient watch: A diet built on legumes and grains may still be short of B12, omega-3 fats, vitamin D, calcium, iodine, and some fresh-food vitamins. Rotate fortified foods and supplements when needed; plant foods do not naturally provide reliable vitamin B12. These are individual considerations rather than a replacement for clinical advice. [13]

No-power / low-water options: plan ahead

Canned lentil soup, ready-to-eat beans with shelf-stable vegetables, and crackers.

Oats softened with safe water plus dried fruit; use a spoonful of nut/seed butter from a rotating stock if tolerated.

Canned chickpeas with canned carrots and a little shelf-stable dressing or oil; refrigerate leftovers if possible.

Ready-to-eat beans or vegetables warmed briefly only if you have an approved cooking setup.

When water or fuel is scarce: canned beans beat dry beans. Lentils and split peas usually cook faster than kidney or chickpea varieties. Older dry beans may take especially long to soften. Dry kidney beans must be fully cooked correctly; soak and boil them before using a slow cooker. [14]

A gentle seven-day pantry menu (mix and repeat)

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
1	GF oats + dried apples	Canned chickpeas + carrots	Rice, black beans, greens, oil
2	Oat porridge + cinnamon	Leftover rice-and-bean bowl	Lentil-carrot soup with potatoes
3	GF oats + seed butter	Canned bean and vegetable soup	Chickpeas with winter squash and rice
4	Apple-cinnamon oats	Warm lentils over rice	Split-pea soup and roasted potatoes
5	Oats + rehydrated berries	Black bean bowls	Tomato-lentil skillet with rice
6	Savory oats with greens	Chickpeas and carrots	Sweet potato and white bean stew
7	Oats + dried fruit	Leftover vegetable soup	Rice, lentils, squash, and herbs

Practical note: This is a menu framework, not a nutritionally complete seven-day prescription. Add sufficient portions, fat, safe water, and age/health-specific nutrients. Tomatoes, seed butters, oils, and many foods above need routine rotation. Cooking dried beans requires fuel and water.

What if you have almost no food in the house?

Identify safe drinking water first, then medicines and vulnerable household needs.

Inventory edible ready-to-eat items before cooking perishable food that may spoil.

Calculate the number of days of **actual meals** available, not merely the number of boxes.

Use perishable food safely while the refrigerator remains cold; follow outage timing rules.

Stretch ingredients through repeatable meals without skipping fat and protein for extended periods.

Seek food banks, local mutual-aid networks, community pantries, and official assistance early. Grow food for future weeks, not as a solution to today's hunger.

7 | Old-fashioned winter wisdom worth keeping

Before cars and easy transport, seasonality shaped everyday decisions. People stored what grew nearby, kept potatoes and roots cool, cured onions, saved dry beans and grain, dried fruit, preserved suitable foods, and ate simple repeated dishes until spring. They also relied on local mills, shops, markets, family networks, neighbors, and trade. A single household was rarely truly independent.

What translates well today is a **seasonal household cycle**:

Spring: inspect last year's seed, test germination, plan a small garden, use older pantry stock.

Summer: enjoy fresh crops, keep a harvest tally, dry or freeze safe surpluses, learn tested preservation.

Autumn: harvest mature storage crops, cure properly, inspect jars and bags, prepare for cold weather.

Winter: cook with beans, grains, and roots; grow modest greens indoors; track what runs out and what feeds everyone well.

A root cellar is not the same as a refrigerator or a sealed plastic bin. Root vegetables often prefer **cold, moist** conditions; onions, garlic, and winter squash generally favor **drier or warmer** storage. Separate crops by their recommended conditions. [15]

Storing harvest crops (quality estimates)

Crop	Typical seasonal storage potential	Conditions and caution
Potatoes	About 4–6 months under suitable conditions	Dark, cool, moderately humid; remove damaged/green potatoes
Carrots, beets, parsnips	Several months	Very cool, moist; remove tops; protect from spoilage
Winter squash	About 2–6 months, by variety	Cure appropriately; 50–55°F dry/ventilated conditions often work
Dry beans	A year in ordinary home storage; much longer professionally packed	Fully mature and dried; do not store damp pods
Garlic and onions	A few months, variety dependent	Cure and keep ventilated and comparatively dry
Cabbage	Weeks to months in a cold suitable space	Inspect; crop and cultivar matter

These are approximate **quality** periods, not five-year shelf lives for fresh crops. Storage temperatures and humidity can dramatically change results. [15]

8 | What to plant if you want a dependable harvest

Favor plants you already eat and can harvest, store, or preserve without expensive gear. Match outdoor planting dates and varieties to your local frost dates and growing season.

First-choice outdoor crops

Crop	Main value	Practical starting method
Potatoes	Filling calories; store through part of winter	Buy certified disease-free seed potatoes; plant in loose soil after local soil warms; hill as stems grow
Dry bush beans	Protein and dry storage	Direct sow after frost danger; let pods dry completely; harvest mature seed
Lentils and dry peas	Protein; climate dependent	Select varieties suited to your region; sow at appropriate cool-season time
Carrots and beets	Storage roots and micronutrients	Direct sow; thin seedlings; harvest before deep freeze
Winter squash	Carbohydrate and vitamin A	Give vines room; sow after frost; cure mature harvest
Storage onions and garlic	Flavor and winter meals	Plant region-suitable sets/cloves; cure and store dry
Kale, Swiss chard, lettuce	Frequent leafy harvests	Sow in succession; some do well in containers and under protection
Cabbage	Dense harvest for cool seasons	Start transplants or direct sow as advised locally; suitable for winter storage

A tiny garden with high value: One raised bed can contain leafy greens and herbs; a second can carry roots or beans; pots can hold greens. For substantial calories, outdoor space and time are usually needed. Start small enough to maintain.

9 | The seed kit: what to store and how to test it

Choose seeds by purpose

☐ **Quick greens:** leaf lettuce, kale, Swiss chard, spinach, arugula (cool growing).

☐ **Roots:** carrots, beets, radishes, turnips.

☐ **Storing crops:** winter squash, dry beans, dry peas, storage onions; **seed potatoes** purchased separately.

☐ **Flavor:** parsley, basil, chives, thyme; use only herbs your household enjoys.

☐ **Seed saving:** open-pollinated beans, peas, and tomatoes are simpler starting points than squash hybrids or biennial carrots.

☐ **Indoor hydroponics:** lettuce, basil, kale/leaf greens, depending on equipment and space.

Seeds are living material, not an eternal pantry food. Onion, parsley, parsnip, and some other species may be short-lived (around 1–2 years); beets, lettuce, and many squash seeds can stay viable around 4–5 years under good conditions. Germination declines, so do not promise five-year success from a packet. Store dry in labeled airtight containers in a cool place; keep seeds for planting separate from treated seed or foods intended for eating. [16]

A simple 10-seed germination test

Put ten seeds on a damp paper towel, leaving a little space between seeds.

Fold the towel, slip into a labeled closed bag, and keep warm but out of intense sun.

Check moisture and watch for sprouting over the normal germination period for that crop (many take 5–14 days).

Count healthy sprouts: 8/10 means roughly 80% germination in your informal test. Sow a little extra if the rate is low; replace packets with very poor results. [17]

10 | Indoor hydroponics through winter: an accessible first project

Hydroponics means growing plants with water and dissolved nutrients instead of soil. It can produce fresh greens in an apartment or during cold weather, but **it needs clean water, nutrients, containers, sufficient light, and reliable maintenance**. The simplest passive system uses the **Kratky method** and an air gap in the reservoir. It is an opportunity to supplement your pantry, not replace rice, beans, potatoes, and other calorie foods. [18]

Beginner shopping list: 1–3 lettuce plants

☐ One or more **opaque food-safe containers** with well-fitting lids

☐ Net pots and clean seed-starting medium compatible with edible crops

☐ Leaf lettuce seeds suitable for hydroponics

☐ Complete hydroponic nutrients formulated for edible leafy greens

☐ LED grow light, timer, and access to electricity (or genuinely adequate sunlight)

☐ Clean water and pH test strips; optional EC meter for accuracy

☐ Clean snips; mild dish detergent and sanitizer for between-crop cleaning

First planting: six practical steps

Start seeds in clean, lightly moist seed-starting plugs. Keep them warm with suitable light until roots develop.

Prepare a clean opaque container. Make a well-fitting opening for the net pot. Opaque walls help reduce algae.

Mix nutrient solution exactly as labeled, using drinking-quality water. A general acceptable pH range for small systems is around **5.4–7**, depending on crop and solution; test and correct with products intended for food-growing systems. [18]

Position roots for oxygen. Initially roots must reach water; as they grow, maintain an air gap and keep only part of the mature root system submerged. Do not drown all the roots.

Provide adequate light. Hydroponic lettuce and herbs commonly need about **12–14 hours** daily from an appropriately rated grow light, with darkness for the remaining hours. Check and maintain nutrient level and plant health. [19]

Harvest cleanly, wash produce with safe water, and clean and sanitize pots and reservoirs between plantings. Small lettuce crops can be harvested in roughly **6–7 weeks**, depending on variety and conditions. [18]

Avoid common mistakes: Treating plain tap water as complete plant nutrition; using unverified homemade fertilizer; leaving roots fully underwater; letting sunlight warm and green the reservoir; using treated ornamental seeds; or assuming a powered grow light works in a prolonged outage. Do not grow raw sprouts as an automatic emergency solution: raw sprouts carry recognized bacterial risks. [20]

11 | Complete household essentials checklist

Use this checklist as a practical essentials inventory. "Long-life" means a durable good or candidate for extended storage *with inspection*. "Rotate" means it needs replacement before quality, effectiveness, or labeled use-by expires. Buy only the amounts the household will use and can safely store.

Water and preparation

☐ At least three days of safe water per person; 14 days is the next goal — **Rotate home-filled water every six months**

☐ Food-grade containers or commercially sealed bottled water — **Follow label/rotation schedule**

☐ Water filter or tested purification option — **Replace elements/tablets per manufacturer**

☐ Manual can opener — **Long-life, inspect**

☐ Sturdy pot, cup, bowl, spoon — **Long-life, inspect**

☐ Safe cooking method, approved fuel, ignition source — **Inspect and follow fuel storage rules**

Pantry foundation

☐ White rice, sealed appropriately — **Long-term candidate**

☐ Dried lentils and split peas — **Long-term candidate**

☐ Dried black, white, or pinto beans — **Long-term candidate**

☐ Certified gluten-free oats — **Long-term only if purpose-packed; otherwise rotate**

☐ Commercial freeze-dried vegetables and fruit — **Use product-rated date**

☐ Canned beans and vegetables — **Rotate, usually 2–5-year quality range**

☐ Canned tomatoes and fruit — **Rotate, usually 12–18-month quality range**

☐ Cooking oil and seeds/nuts — **Rotate regularly; high-fat foods do not last five years by default**

☐ Iodized salt, herbs and spices — **Store dry, rotate for iodine/flavor**

☐ Fortified plant foods/B12 where relevant — **Follow expiration**

☐ Three-day ready-to-eat food reserve — **Rotate**

Bathroom and shower

☐ Plain bar soap for bathing and handwashing — **Store dry; inspect; rotate if degraded**

☐ Toothbrushes, dental floss, comb — **Long-life, inspect bristles**

☐ Toothpaste — **Rotate by date**

☐ Toilet paper — **Long-life if kept bone dry**

☐ Clean washcloths and towels — **Long-life; protect against moisture**

☐ Menstrual supplies or reusable alternatives when needed — **Inspect/replace per instructions**

☐ Shampoo, conditioner, deodorant when needed — **Rotate per manufacturer**

Cleaning and sanitation

☐ Plain dish soap and laundry detergent/soap — **Rotate formulations as required**

☐ Washing soda (sodium carbonate) — **Keep sealed and dry**

☐ Cleaning cloths, scrub brushes, cleaning gloves — **Inspect rubber and fabric**

☐ Heavy-duty garbage bags and ties — **Keep dry, inspect aging plastic**

☐ Bucket/lid and sanitation liners — **Long-life durable goods**

☐ Suitable household disinfectant — **Follow its labeled shelf life and safe directions**

☐ Never mix chlorine bleach with vinegar, acids, or ammonia; keep chemicals apart from food

Medical, warmth, and household basics

☐ First-aid kit, thermometer, tweezers, bandages — **Inspect and rotate sterile/adhesive items**

☐ Prescription medication and needed medical supplies — **Maintain proper rotation and clinician plan**

☐ Flashlight/headlamp, batteries or other reliable lighting — **Inspect and test**

☐ Blankets, sturdy shoes, seasonal clothing, underwear, socks — **Long-life, inspect**

☐ Important documents, contact list, small cash reserve — **Keep secure and current**

☐ Fire extinguisher, smoke/CO alarms, basic hand tools — **Maintain and replace per manufacturer**

☐ Infant, disability-support, or pet supplies where needed — **Prioritize household-specific needs**

12 | Four-week build plan and reusable worksheets

Week 1: cover the first 72 hours

☐ Count people, pets, infant needs, medical requirements, and dietary restrictions.

☐ Store three days of drinking water per person.

☐ Put aside three days of ready-to-eat food and a manual opener.

☐ Check soap, toilet paper, lighting, first aid, and a reliable communication plan.

Week 2: prepare for 14 days

☐ Expand water toward 14 days, plus cooking water.

☐ Add familiar rice, lentils, oats, canned beans, vegetables and fruit.

☐ Include cooking oil, seasonings, and a reliable source of necessary nutrients.

☐ Practice two meals made only from your pantry.

Week 3: organize and protect

☐ Choose a cool, dry, dark storage area and protect food from pests.

☐ Label containers with purchased/packed date and intended rotation period.

☐ Research suitable oxygen-resistant packaging for **dry low-fat foods only**.

☐ Start an inventory; mark the next inspection date.

Week 4: grow and learn one new skill

☐ Choose one outdoor storage crop and a small seed kit.

☐ Test older seed packets or start a simple lettuce/herb hydroponic container.

☐ Learn one modern tested preservation method without improvising canning safety.

☐ Make a seasonal plan: plant, harvest, store, rotate, share.

Household worksheet: the basics

Fill in	Your answer
Adults / children / infants / pets	_____
Water: people × 3 days × 1 gallon	_____ gallons
Water: people × 14 days × 1 gallon	_____ gallons
Extra water for cooking/pets/special needs	_____ gallons
Three-day ready-to-eat meal count	_____
14-day meal target	_____
Next six-month water change date	_____
Coolest practical indoor storage spot	_____
Family diet/medical exceptions	_____

Pantry inventory worksheet

Item / quantity	Bought or packed	Best-by or planned rotation	Storage/inspection notes
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Seasonal garden / hydroponics worksheet

Crop or seed	Planting window	Harvest / storage plan	Next action
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

13 | Reliable sources & further reading

The reference links below support the guide's food-safety, long-term storage, growing, and water recommendations. Please recheck manufacturer labels and official guidance when using the guide in future years.

CDC — Emergency water supply. https://www.cdc.gov/water-emergency/about/how-to-create-and-store-an-emergency-water-supply.html

Utah State University Extension — White rice. https://extension.usu.edu/preserve-the-harvest/research/storing-white-rice

Utah State University Extension — Dry beans. https://extension.usu.edu/preserve-the-harvest/dev/storing-dry-beans-1

Utah State University Extension — Food packaging and oats. https://extension.usu.edu/preserve-the-harvest/food-storage-packaging

Utah State University Extension — Freeze-drying safely. https://extension.usu.edu/foodsafety/research/can-i-freeze-dry-that-a-practical-guide-to-safe-and-effective-freeze-drying

Utah State University Extension — Sugars and honey. https://extension.usu.edu/preserve-the-harvest/research/storing-sugars

USDA FSIS — How long can you keep canned goods? https://ask.fsis.usda.gov/article/How-long-can-you-keep-canned-goods

National Center for Home Food Preservation — Storing home-canned foods. https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/store/storing-home-canned-foods/

USDA FSIS — Food product dating. https://ask.fsis.usda.gov/article/Is-food-product-dating-required-by-federal-law

CDC — Home canning and botulism. https://www.cdc.gov/botulism/prevention/home-canned-foods.html

CDC — Food safety after emergencies and outages. https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/foods/keep-food-safe-after-emergency.html

Utah State University Extension — Food storage conditions. https://extension.usu.edu/preserve-the-harvest/research/storage-conditions

NIH Office of Dietary Supplements — Vitamin B12. https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitaminb12-Consumer/

University of Minnesota Extension — Cooking safely, including dry beans. https://extension.umn.edu/food/preparing/cooking-at-home

University of Minnesota Extension — Harvesting and storing home garden vegetables. https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/harvesting-and-storing-home-garden-vegetables

Oregon State University Extension — Collecting and storing garden seeds. https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/techniques/collecting-storing-seeds-your-garden

Oregon State University Extension — Ten-seed germination test. https://extension.oregonstate.edu/imported-publication/will-your-seeds-grow-plants

University of Minnesota Extension — Small-scale hydroponics. https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/small-scale-hydroponics

University of Minnesota Extension — Lighting for indoor plants. https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/lighting-for-indoor-plants

CDC — Safer food choices, including sprouts. https://www.cdc.gov/food-safety/foods/safer-food-choices.html

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The everyday rhythm: Store what you eat. Eat what you store. Grow what you can. Preserve only with safe methods. Let a calm, useful pantry support your home in every season.

Soulful Table · A thoughtful home, a nourishing table.