



How to Stock Your Kitchen for the Coronavirus Era (and Other Emergencies)

Experts recommend keeping a two-week supply of food on hand at all times, and with the new coronavirus in the news, people are beginning to do just that. But stocking up requires a strategy (not to mention some pantry space).

As a new coronavirus (SARS-Cov-2) spreads across the world and government officials warn that things may get worse before they get better, it's only natural that our minds will race. We worry about getting sick, and about our family getting sick.

Last week, officials from the CDC told Americans to expect further breakouts of COVID-19, a warning that turned out to have merit. With more cases expected, *some* form of social distancing is probably coming for a lot of us. And while there are myriad implications of staying indoors for days at a time, we're naturally thinking about the issues related to food and cooking.

Should we all be stockpiling a 14-day supply of food? If we *are* asked to stay at home for a period of time, how should we ration our food? How do we make sure that we can feed ourselves for a couple of weeks without going to the grocery store, but not go overboard and end up with two hundred cans of chickpeas? This guide aims to help answer these questions.

But first, let's be clear: as of this writing there are around 100 reported cases of COVID-19 in the United States, and one recent study suggests that 80 percent of all COVID-19 cases are mild. So please don't let this guide put you into a panic; instead, let it be a resource—one that, hopefully, you won't have to use.

1. First things first: Should we all be stockpiling food?

“Stockpiling” may be a dramatic way to put it. However, the government *does* suggest having a two-week supply of food and water ready for all emergencies, including pandemics. But “two weeks of food is quite a lot of food, and it requires a lot of storage and cash on hand. So three days of food feels much more manageable for people.

- Even if you don't feel personally worried about the risk of COVID-19, you may want to go to the grocery store soon as an act of social good. Stocking up on essential food and medical supplies now will mean fewer crowds (and thus fewer contamination risks) in grocery stores and pharmacies in the future.

2. What foods should we stock up on?

It depends on how much space you have to store the food, and how much money you can afford to spend. The easiest things to store would probably be canned goods.

- Good canned foods to have on hand: **canned beans** (chickpeas, black beans, etc.), **canned tomatoes** (either diced or whole), cans or jars of **tomato sauce and paste**, cans of **pumpkin or squash puree**, **canned soups** and **canned (or boxed) broths**, **canned coconut milk**, **canned meats & fish**. Shelf-stable smoked fish and jerky are also good to have around if you like eating them. Shelf-stable milk could also be good to have on hand.
- Shelf-stable dry goods, such as **crackers**, **nut butters**, **tahini**, **dried fruits**, **cereal**, **protein bars**, **granola/granola bars**, and **shelf-stable silken tofu**. Being well-stocked with cooking oils such as olive and vegetable oil, and basic seasonings such as **salt**, **black pepper**, and **vinegars**.
- Frozen vegetables such as **spinach**, **kale**, **peas**, **corn**, **fava beans**, and **okra** are great to have on hand. Frozen fruits like **berries** and **mango**. Frozen **fish**, particularly **shrimp**, can be extremely handy if you have the room for it.
- Also great to have in an emergency supply if you have space: **pasta**, **dried beans**, **grains** (such as barley, oats, quinoa, rice, wheat berries, farro, etc.), **nuts**, **hot cereal**, **coffee**, and **tea**. Hydrating drinks such as **sports drinks** (Gatorade) and Pedialyte can also be useful if somebody in your family becomes sick.
- The CDC also recommends keeping a **30-day supply of medicines/prescriptions** if your insurance allows for it. And since hand-washing is the first defense against germs, a supply of **hand soap** is good to have (may as well throw **dish soap** in there, too).

3. So I should just go to the store and fill my cart with as much random food as I can afford?

- Not if you can help it. Ideally, you want to shop for your emergency stash with a strategy in mind.

4. What about the food already in my fridge?

- Eat that food first.
- When you have an emergency reserve of shelf-stable food, the goal is to *not* use it. Really only use your emergency reserves in an emergency.
- In other words, don't pull a box of spaghetti out of your emergency stash just because you don't want to run to the store. Keep your stash intact until you truly need it, such as during a quarantine.
- Even after an emergency hits, you want to eat from your fridge first. Cook and eat anything perishable: fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and fish, dairy (yogurt, milk, cheese), and bread should all either be eaten or preserved.