

Food Storage Factors



**FOOD
STORAGE
FACTORS**

LIVE WELL UTAH

Make sure your food storage is safe and ready to use so you can utilize it in any situation-even in an emergency!

Food for Thought

Storing food is a traditional domestic skill that has been used for thousands of years in times of plenty to prepare for times of famine or when food is in short supply. Wheat found stored in vessels in the tombs of Egypt was still edible after 4,000 years. Food is preserved and stored to be eaten from harvest to harvest as families strive to be self-sustainable. Maintaining a food supply often ensures savings of time and money and provides safety and security in time of need. Storing food has several main purposes:

- Preserves harvested and processed foods for later use
- Provides a balanced diet throughout the year
- Helps prepare for disasters, emergencies, and periods of food scarcity or famine
- Religious reasons
- Peace of mind
- Self-sustainability

Factors that affect food storage:

Temperature: The temperature at which food is stored is very critical to shelf life. The best range for food storage is a constant temperature between 40-60 degrees. Avoid freezing temperatures.

Moisture: It is recommended to remove moisture when storing foods. For long-term storage, foods should have a 10 percent or less moisture content.

Oxygen: Foods store best when oxygen free.

Light: Light transfers energy to the food products causing

them to degrade in nutrition and appearance. Store food in dark areas.

Container: Store foods in food-grade plastic, metal or glass containers indicating that the container does not contain chemicals that could be transferred to food and be harmful to your health.

For best storage life, use containers with a hermetic (air tight) seal. Containers with air-tight seals are:

- #10 cans
- Sealable food storage buckets
- Sealable food quality metal (lined) or plastic drums
- Foil pouches
- PETE bottles (for dry products such as wheat, corn, and beans)

Infestation: Insects can damage your food storage. Prevent these with cold treatments and proper storage conditions.

Shelf date is the “best if used by” date. The “life sustaining shelf life” date means the length of time that food is still edible. “Sell by” means the store should sell the product by the printed date. “Best if used by” means the consumer should use the product by the date listed for best quality and flavor (not for safety reasons).

Utah State University Extension:
<http://extension.usu.edu/foodstorage/htm/storage-conditions>

This article was written by Carolyn Washburn, Extension Agent, Washington County