THE PREPAREDNESS REVIEW

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From the Editor: Sometimes I feel like Galadriel from The Lord of the Rings Trilogy, "The world is changed. I feel it in the water. I feel it in the earth. I smell it in the air." A lot has happened since November, 2012 when TPR1 was released. People are waking up to the idea that preparedness makes sense. And although people are starting to see the ~~cracks~~ gaping holes in our society, economy, etc..., one thing that will be more and more important to everyone who moves towards a preparedness, self-reliant lifestyle is the skill to put the best plans in place. We know that it doesn't come down to the best gear, it comes down to knowing how to do "the stuff."

This edition focuses on skills. Not every article is a skill article, but you will find that the majority of articles are focused on skills that you can utilize in your preparedness lifestyle.

If you are new to The Preparedness Review, TPR is filled with articles from well known authors in the preparedness community. Some of these articles have been published before, hidden from sight, buried somewhere on the blogosphere. Others have been written just for this edition. My hope is that you will find these articles worthy to be downloaded, read, printed, archived and emailed (CLICK HERE). You might find links within the articles that have been published here. Every link is clickable and adds more value to your preparedness. You will also find ads interspersed within TPR. Ads are also clickable. And although they don't cover the time and effort put into publishing this review, I appreciate everyone who has sponsored TPR. Please visit their online establishments.

I have tried to make this eReview optimal for printing; to save ink and to look appealing on the page. Pics that are included are the work of the author. I did not add any pics myself. Also, you will find text boxes that emphasis a sentence or thought within some articles. This was done when it didn't push the text of the page to another page.

Thank you again for taking the time to read and download this review. Please feel free to share it with others. If you found this review helpful and beneficial, please consider dropping me a line on the site.

Peace,
Todd

The Ins and Outs of Food Storage

By Chris Ray

It's been a while since I have covered food storage. Because of that and a couple good forum threads, I thought I would bring the subject up again. One of the five basic human needs is food. It can be one of the more difficult to figure out when you're new to preparedness. I think the reason for that is because the sheer size of the problem can be overwhelming. Take a family of four, eating three meals a day, and two snacks a day, that is 84 meals and 56 snacks in a week, or 336 meals and 224 snacks in a month. Seeing as most people shop for what their needs will be in the next week or two, planning that far or further ahead can be a lot to wrap your brain around.

Guidelines

Food storage isn't one size fits all. You'll need to tweak things to fit your family's needs. That being said, here are some guidelines that can help you build your food storage and keep it rotated.

Shelf Stable

My definition of a shelf stable food is one that can last for six months or longer without freezing or refrigeration and won't spoil.

Eat What You Store, Store What You Eat

This is the food storage golden rule. It will make sure that you don't waste money on foods your family doesn't eat.

When building your pantry, I recommend getting a notebook and writing down all shelf stable food that your family consumes for a week or two. These are the "eat what you store, store what you eat" foods to concentrate on.

There are exceptions to every rule and this one is no different. We happen to eat foods that don't store well, so if we only stored foods that were shelf stable that we consumed regularly, our food storage wouldn't last for very long. What we have done is stored some shelf stable foods that we eat occasionally along with some that, because of their long shelf life, we have decided to leave as storage foods.

First In, First Out (FIFO)

When you grab a can of vegetables take it from the front of the line. When you replace it, put it in the back of the line. This is the best way to rotate your foods.

What Kinds of Foods Should You Store?

If you're like me, what can you do to supplement your food stores with foods other than the ones you eat frequently? There are many options available for foods that have a long shelf life, though some you will need to repackage.

Staples

A staple is a food that is used commonly. Think of sugar, flour, salt, rice, beans and so on. These staples, when repacked into Mylar bags with oxygen absorbers, can have a shelf life of 25+ years.

Dehydrated
There are commercially dehydrated foods sold that tout a 25+ year shelf life. This can be achieved because the oxygen in packaging is replaced with nitrogen. Most of the data I have seen on home dehydrated foods say 1-2 years. We've mostly dehydrated fruits, but you can make jerky, soup ingredients and so much more. Sadly the dehydrated foods never seem to last more than a couple weeks around me, so I'll never get to see if they could be edible after a few years. ☺

Freeze Dried
There are many brands of freeze dried foods on the market. I have tried a few and enjoyed most. Trudee and the kids did not like some. Some manufacturers have gotten smart and have the entrees available in a pouch and a #10 can. I highly recommend you try the pouch, as it's only a few bucks and will save you money if it turns out no one likes it.

Freeze dried foods also have a shelf life of 25+years, as long as the packaging isn't opened. Once you open the #10 can, you need to consume it within two weeks. I don't know if it is possible to freeze dry your own food.

Because of the shelf life, and some other factors, we decided to add some freeze dried food to our food stores. We purchased some entrée's as well as some baking ingredients like powdered egg, powdered milk, powdered cheese and powdered sour cream.

MRE's and Emergency Ration Bars
MRE's or Meals Ready to Eat are already cooked meals. They include a heating element that you add water to in order to activate. They often come with a desert and some condiments. Emergency Ration Bars often say something like "2400 calories". That is for the total bar. However, there are usually nine separate bars, each one containing 250+ calories.

These foods have their place in food storage. They make good additions to BOB's and car kits. Shelf life can vary from 5-8 years if stored in optimal conditions.

Home and Manufacturer Canned Foods
Whether you purchase commercially canned food or can it yourself, canned food is a great way to supplement your food storage. The most common question is: "how long does canned food last?" Food Reference.com and the FAQ at the Ball Jar Company state the same basic information. Properly canned food that is stored in temperatures above freezing and below 75 degrees will last at least two years. The food will often last a lot longer than that, but over time there may be changes in the color, texture etc. If the home-canned food looks edible from the outside, open it and see how it smells. If it is store purchased and not bulging, open it and see how it smells. If it smells fine it's probably safe to eat.

The Dangers of Food Storage: Heat, Light, Oxygen, Moisture & Pests

What are the Dangers to Food Storage?
The life of many foods can be extended greatly by avoiding the following dangers.

Heat
Temperatures between 40 degrees and 72 degree Fahrenheit are ideal for food storage. For every 18 degrees above 72, the food loses up to half its nutritional value. If the food is exposed to temperatures over 72 degrees for an extended amount of time it can lose its color, texture and taste.

Light
Keep things in a dark space if at all possible, light can affect the appearance and taste of food. Mylar bags and food grade buckets will also help here.

Oxygen
When fats oxidize they turn rancid. Keeping your food in an oxygen free environment will prevent this, as well as kill pests that may be in the food. You can remove oxygen with oxygen absorbers in an airtight bag. I'll cover deciding how many to use below.

Moisture
Moisture can take the form of humidity, condensation or even a water pipe breaking. To mitigate this, I keep much of my preps in Mylar bags and put the Mylar bags in food grade buckets. You can also add a desiccant to the inside of the Mylar for added moisture removal. I try not to have any food with cardboard packaging out in the open, as it is susceptible to accidents involving liquids, such as broken pickle jars, broken pipes or the "Not Me Ghost", you know, children.

When you're beginning your food storage it may be difficult to wrap your mind around storing an extra 90 days of food, or an extra year. Don't overwhelm yourself! Break it down into easier chunks, like a week, then two and just keep adding to it.

Pests
Pests range from larvae in bulk food to mice in your food storage area. There are a few ways to deal with each. For larvae, you can place a bag of rice, beans or whatever dry food you intend to store in your freezer for a couple days. This will kill any bugs, larvae or eggs. I used to do that, but it's time consuming, my freezer isn't that big and it's usually full. I found, on a forum, that the simple act of removing the oxygen would kill any pests in the food. This made sense and they were steps we were already taking. We have not had any problem with pests in any of the food we have stored this way. If you want to make sure, feel free to do both. I have also read that Bay Leaves will keep pests away and some people add them to the inside of the Mylar bag as well as the inside of the food grade bucket.

To summarize, keep your food storage in a dry, dark, cool area in oxygen free and pest resistant containers.

How Much Food Should I Store?
This is something everyone will have to decide on their own. That being said, I think everyone should have a minimum of three months food stored. I personally would eventually like to get to one year stored for my family. This will give us a large cushion if I should lose my job, or a number of other things take place. It would also give us room to help those in need in a short term situation.

When you're beginning your food storage it may be difficult to wrap your mind around storing an extra 90 days of food, or an extra year. Don't overwhelm yourself! Break it down into easier chunks, like a week, then two and just keep adding to it.

How Do I Know How Much Food I Have Stored?
There are a couple ways to approach knowing how many days' worth of food you have stored. The first is to determine the required caloric intake for your family, then count up the calories of all the food you have stored, divide calories needed into calories stored and you now know how many days of food you have put up.

The second way is to use a food storage calculator. Emergency Essentials has a very good one that is free. With it, you can add how many family members you have and some basic information about them. There are over 500 foods already populated to choose from and the ability to enter your own foods that might not be populated. Once you've entered in all of your food storage, simply hit "calculate" and it gives a tally of how many days food you have stored, along with the nutritional information. If you shop from Emergency Essentials, you also have the ability to add items that you want to purchase on your next order.

How Can I Afford Food Storage?
I recently wrote an article called "Frugal Preparedness". It has many tips and the comments have even more suggestions from readers. There are many easy things you can do to build your pantry.

If you just need to bring in more money, one option, if you qualify, is donating plasma. I checked into it a couple years ago and you can do it twice a week, receiving $25 each time. That's an extra $200 a month! Blood Banker is just one online resource. It may or may not list locations that buy plasma near you.

The "How To" of Storing Your Own Bulk Food.
This process seemed a little daunting when I began to research it. In truth it was a bit frustrating the first few times we put up some bulk food. The reason it was frustrating had to do with the process we were using. I had seen a video about using a household vacuum and a household iron to seal the bag. It worked but was an exercise in frustration. After the food and oxygen absorbers were added, the bag was heat sealed, saving a section about an inch long. One end of a tube was inserted into the remaining hole, while the other end was connected to the vacuum. My wife was at the ready with the iron. I would turn the vacuum on, removing the air. I would remove the tube and my wife would seal the remaining hole. It was effective, but as said, it got frustrating.

The process we use now is much better, we purchased a heat impulse sealer, this makes things easier, but it would still work with an iron. We got rid of the vacuum completely, by just placing in a big enough oxygen absorber, all of the oxygen is removed and there are no gymnastics with the vacuum.

You might be thinking why not use a vacuum sealer? The bags that come with vacuum sealers are clear. That makes the food susceptible to light. They are also not as heavy duty as Mylar and I also don't think that they are an oxygen barrier, whereas Mylar is. So why not use Mylar bags with a vacuum sealer? We tried, the vacuum sealer wouldn't work on Mylar. I could get the vacuum to engage but it couldn't form a seal to remove the oxygen. I did some research on-line and found that you can make a "sleeve" out of the clear plastic bag and slide it over the Mylar. Remember me saying that the first few times were frustrating? The vacuum sealers might be fantastic for use with the bags made for them, which are frequently used in freezing, but for long-term storage I highly recommend Mylar and the process I'll explain below.

Let me cover the needed components first:

Mylar Bags
Mylar is a clear material made from polyester resin. The balloons you see at grocery stores or party stores are made of Mylar. The Mylar bags used for food storage have a layer of foil on them. They come in varying levels of thickness. I have seen 3.5 mil – 7 mil. I have seen the recommendation to use thicker Mylar bags for things like pasta because the pasta can puncture the bag when the oxygen is absorbed and the bag tightens around it.

Oxygen Absorbers
Oxygen absorbers are made of iron oxide. When oxygen is present the iron oxide rusts as it absorbs the oxygen. When all of the oxygen has been absorbed the rusting stops. Every time I have purchased oxygen absorbers, they have come in a 50 pack, in sealed plastic packaging. I always have a canning jar on hand to put them in. I put the jar lid on as soon as I take them out of the packaging. I remove the lid as needed. This will keep the absorbers from absorbing too much oxygen. When I am done putting food up I can just leave the absorbers in the jar.

Sorbent Systems recommends that if you are filling a:

5 or 6-gallon bag, that you use 1500cc-2000cc oxygen absorber.
3-gallon bag should use 1000cc
1-gallon bag or #10 can should have 300cc.

You can mix sizes to get to the recommended amount of absorption. Use 1 1000cc or 4 300cc. It's a bit of overkill but it's better to go a little overboard than to not have enough.

Keep in mind that since we're not using a vacuum, the package will not be "solid" right away. Once the oxygen absorbers have had some time to work the effect is as good as using a vacuum and a lot less frustrating, it can take hours to remove all of the remaining oxygen, so I usually just check the next morning.

Heat Source
As I mentioned, we now use an impulse sealer, but you can do this with an iron as we have in the past.

Food Grade Buckets
Here is an article that explains what food grade plastic is. Most food grade buckets have a "2″ in the recycle symbol. You can purchase brand new food grade buckets on-line. The prices often range from $7-$10 (depending on size) with the lid included. However, you can often get them locally cheaper or even completely free.

I purchased the bulk of mine from a bakery for $2.00 (including the lid). I also got some free from the bakeries in the local grocery store, Sam's and Costco. I had to endure a few odd looks but for the $10 I saved, I'll deal with it. We washed these buckets thoroughly with hot water and dish soap.

Keep in mind that there is a chance that whatever was in the bucket may leave its scent on whatever you put in the bucket. If you get a bucket that smells like pickles, there isn't much you're going to be able to do to get the smell out. You may be able to purchase something to wash it with, but once you factor in the cost of that product and the time, you would probably save money by buying a new bucket.

Do you have to use food grade buckets, or will any 5 gallon bucket suffice? If you're storing the food in Mylar than the food will only come in contact with the Mylar bag, which is food grade, so you can store the filled Mylar bags in any container, we purchased some new 30 gallon metal garbage cans, they hold many more bags that buckets that would take the same footprint. If you're going to have the food loose in the bucket then yes, you should use a food grade bucket.

Gamma Seal Lids
As you'll soon discover, taking the lids off of these buckets can take a toll on your fingernails and knuckles. Gamma seal lids go on like a normal lid but they also have an inner lid that screws off, leaving the outer sections attached to the bucket. These are great if you're storing food loose in the bucket and go in it frequently. I didn't go the gamma seal route. Instead, I have a Bucket Wrench. I didn't use one at first but after I had a few fingernails bent back I ordered one.

To Make Your Own Food Buckets:

- **Mylar Bags**
- **Oxygen Absorbers**
- **Heat Source - Iron**
- **Food Grade Buckets**
- **Lids**

The process of storing food in Mylar:

Step One:
Get all of the needed items in one place:
-Item to be stored.
-Mylar bags.
-Oxygen absorbers.
-Heat Sealer.
-Permanent Marker or labels and pen.
-Scoop (in this case it was a large plastic cup.)
-Food Grade bucket.

Step Two:
Add food and an oxygen absorber.
Notice the headroom left at the top, you'll need to leave room so when you lay it flat, the contents don't spill.

Step Three: Seal the bag. The left picture is of an impulse seal. The right is of a household iron seal. The picture below them is a side-by-side comparison of the two. Leaving the iron on the bag for more than a second or two can cause the bag to melt on the seal line, leaving a hole.

Step Four: Label the Mylar bag with content and date stored. Writing on the bag is fine; the labels are just easier to read.

Step Five: Put the filled Mylar bag in the bucket. I usually leave the lid off so that I can check to make sure the oxygen has been removed from every bag.
We will occasionally get one that has to be repacked with a new bag and oxygen absorbers.

Here are before and after pictures, the left one is right after sealing, before the oxygen absorbers have done their work. The right one is 12 or so hours later, notice how the bag is dimpled, that is the easiest indication that the oxygen is removed.

Once you're sure the oxygen has been removed from all bags, you can put the lid on. I can get three, one gallon bags in the 3-4 gallon buckets.

One of the mistakes we made in the beginning was using Mylar bags that were large enough to fill the entire bucket. The problem with this is that once you open the large bag, all of the contents then have to be used, or you have to reseal them. We now use smaller one-gallon bags and put three in the bucket, or as mentioned put many Mylar bags in a 30 gallon metal garbage can.

Chris Ray is the owner of http://preparedchristian.net, a preparedness blog with a Christian worldview. He explores scripture to show that preparedness is biblical. He also covers a wide range of preparedness topics.

Four Ways to Understand the Value of Silver

by James Wesley Rawles

Editor's Note: *This article has been contributed by James Wesley Rawles of Survival Blog. This article is actually a portion of Chapter 18 of Rawles' book, Survivors: A Novel of the Coming Collapse.*

It was not until the next day that Lars had the opportunity to examine the can holding the rolls of silver quarters. When he emptied it out to count the rolls, he found a sealed envelope tucked in alongside the rolls. It was marked “Lars and Anders”, in his father’s handwriting. He opened it, and found a typewritten letter. It read:

My Dear Sons:

It was my intention to give you these coins when you’d both graduated from high school, but back then I had my doubts about your maturity, so I decided to hold on to them until after you earned your commissions.

I want you to appreciate these silver quarters for what they really are—-not just an investment, and not just a “family heirloom”. They represent REAL money. Pardon the lecture, but you need to judge their value four ways—in terms of wages, manufactured goods, services and real property.

First, let's look at wages. Back "in the old days"--say before World War I--the average wage for a working man was around one silver dollar a day. One day's wage right now for someone that works at a minimum wage job (at $7.25 per hour) is $58 for an eight hour work day. A more typical wage for a workman with experience is around $11 per hour ($88 per day.) One dollar (face value) in 90% silver pre-1965 coinage contains 22.5 grams of silver, or 0.7234 troy ounces per dollar face value. Today's spot price of silver is $17.55 per Troy ounce. So that makes a pre-inflation Dollar (a true DOLLAR in silver coin) worth $12.79. (Or just think of it as roughly 13 times $1 in face value-- "13 times face", whether it is silver dimes, quarters, or half dollars.) So, to put things in perspective, it takes $6.76 in Pre-'65 silver coinage to equal one typical day's wages ($88 in the current fiat paper money). Thus, in terms of wages silver **should** have a spot value about five or six times it current value. By this measure, silver in now grossly under-valued.

Next, manufactured goods. In 1964 (the last year that silver coins were in general circulation in the U.S.), a basic blued-steel Colt Model 1911 .45 automatic pistol cost around $65 retail. Today, a comparable Colt M1911 (a Series 80) costs around $775 retail. So if you were to sell $65 face value of this cache of silver coinage at your local coin shop, and they offered you 12 times "face"--that would net you $780 in the current funny money. You could then easily go buy a .45 at your local gun shop with the proceeds. The bottom line: it is not pistols that have gone UP in price. Rather, it is paper dollars that have gone DOWN in purchasing power.

How about services? In 1964, a haircut cost around 75 cents, or perhaps $1 in the big city. My last haircut cost $14. I suspect that other services are comparable, whether it is your local dentist or your local brothel. (I trust and pray that neither of you will ever use the latter service.)

Now let's look at the relative values of silver coinage and real property: In 1964, the median house price in the U.S. was around $18,000. Today, it is around $170,000. (A 9.4x increase.) If you had set aside $18,000 face value in silver coins in 1964 (18 bags of $1,000 face value each), and held them until the present day, they'd net you around $216,000 if you sold them to a bullion coin dealer. That is

enough for an *above average* house. So obviously silver coins have held their value far better than paper dollars. Anyone who sits on PAPER dollars for very long--at least dollars that aren't earning much interest--is a fool.

I hope and pray that you keep investing in silver. You should acquire much more than this little nestegg.

In my opinion, you can trust tangibles (like silver and guns), but you shouldn't put much trust in paper currency in the long term. To safeguard your net worth in the inflationary days to come, always remember: Don't leave your earnings in paper money for long. As quickly as possible, convert it into tangibles, to protect your savings from the ravages of inflation. Consumer price inflation is mild now, but that probably won't be the case in the near future. So adjust your way of thinking and doing business, accordingly.

Never forget: Inflation is a hidden form of taxation!

Divide these coins equally between you. Spend them wisely, and up until the day that the balloon goes up, spend them only as a last resort. And never forget their REAL worth.

Love, Dad

Jim Rawles is a former U.S. Army Intelligence officer. He is now a novelist and the editor of SurvivalBlog.com. His biography can be found at Wikipedia, and a collection of his quotes is available at WikiQuotes.

Become The Gray Man

by Ray Gano

A man who can blend in to any scene or situation without standing out , hiding his skills and qualities. Source - urbandictionary.com

Becoming the gray man, it will be an important skill; a skill you will need in the future days to come. You will need to learn how to blend into your environment, look like everyone else, and become the "average looking Joe."

But what makes you different is that you are alert to your surroundings, you suspect everyone that comes within your 20 foot perimeter and you are ready to react if need be. The real mission is to just be left alone while putting off that "sheepdog" disposition instead of being one of the sheep.

You are not some weekend warrior or paramilitary nut, you are just like everyone else except your every day carry gear probably includes keys, cell phone, wallet, wrist watch.... a folding lock blade knife, multi-tool, pepper spray, maybe even a flashlight and if you are C&C licensed, a handgun with an extra loaded magazine.

This is today and you have adapted to the "new normal" that we now call America.

Crime, looting, blocked roads due to riots, muggings, theft, rape and murder. These are more common place today than the days of yesteryear.

Luke 22:36 (KJV) Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

We live in a time where going to the mega-mart or the grocery store is an act of bravery, determination, logistics and security. No longer is it just running to get a gallon of milk and a dozen eggs.

Not that way in your area yet? Just wait.

How To Be The Gray Man

Look around, what are all the guys wearing? Now I am focusing on the guys because I am a guy. Ladies, this is for you also, take my examples and adapt them to what you would wear and so forth.

Here in the Texas Hill Country, the majority of men wear some sort of "cargo" shorts. They go to just above the knee and tend to be a little baggy. Beige, brownish red, or blue jeans tend to be the color of choice.

For a shirt, one will wear a common "T" shirt that is lose fitting sometimes with a pocket on the left breast. Or if they want to dress it up a little, a button up short sleeve. Usually some sort of cotton print.

When it gets close to hunting season, around the beginning of August, the "Real Tree" cammo "T" shirts become the norm. See here in Texas, hunting is a big deal and everyone gets in the mode. It also helps that the local Walmart sells these cammo "Beefy T's" for only $6.00 each.

On his feet, are ankle socks or rolled over tube socks under sneakers or some form of work boots.

Finally the common baseball cap on top of the head and sporting sunglasses.

This is what an "average Joe" looks like when he is in his casual dress out on the street.

This is how I dress, except I try not to wear loud logo based shirts, no jewelry except my wedding ring, nothing that makes me stand out.

If someone asked about you, could they describe you or would they be describing just about everyone else, the average Joe?

How you DON'T want to dress

Like I said You don't want to attract attention towards yourself. Don't wear bright colors or "haute de couture" fashion, nothing that makes you stand out.

Example: Here in Texas everyone thinks of the cowboy. We have a lot of cowboys walking around, but they are not dressed in the "A" typical cowboy dress.

The cowboys here are not wearing the long sleeved shirt with fringes dangling, no 10 gallon cowboy hat, nor fancy rhinestone pants. Everyone imagines the average cowboy looks like Roy Rogers or Hop-along Cassidy but they don't.

The average cowboy looks just like the person that I described above except that he probably wears some sort of work jeans. Come fall and winter here in Texas, we all look like the average "cowboy."

Once in a while you will see someone wearing a cowboy hat. Straw cowboy hats are acceptable for guys over fifty during the summer time. During the winter everyone switches from straw to a black felt hat.

Believe me, if you step out of this mold, you will get noticed and that is not what you want to do.

If you are a prepper, you do not want to be dressing in some sort of combat BDU pants, army boots, and definitely no shirts with paramilitary sayings like "death from above" or pictures that you see at all the gun shows. This is a dead give-away and shouts "HEY... Look at me, I am a weekend warrior."

Become The Gray Man

Become the average Joe, blend into your surroundings. But walk with a purpose and be alert to what is going on around you.

While you want to look like the average person, you want to project a demeanor about you that tells the wolves "to leave you alone, you are not one of the sheep, don't mess with me."

See, the sheep will not notice you, just like real sheep, they do not really notice the sheepdog. But the wolves will see you. Wolves are cowards and seek out the weak, frail and innocent. They do not want to have to work too hard, they want to be in and out and be done with the job.

So while you don't what to be wearing some neon sign blinking " GUN... GUN.... GUN … KNIFE … KNIFE … KNIFE … with an arrow pointing at you; you want to be acknowledged as someone who is alert, aware and not some soft target.

How you achieve this is by training yourself. Look like you are someone alive, not some drained zombie who stairs at the ground, shoulders slumped as if he has the weight of the world on his shoulders.

Make eye contact and smile at people, greet them and wish them a good day or just a simple nod of the head will do.

You don't want to seem like some bodyguard type either. You know the guys with the little curly tube sticking out of their ear, dark Ray-Ban glasses, constantly scanning, ready to pounce at a moment's notice. That is going overboard.

I bring up the Mega-stores because that is where America shops, it is also where the wolves hang out for some quick prey.

When walking in the parking lot, have a determination to your step, enter Mega-Store and look the greeter in the eye, nod your head say hello and smile. Then take a basket, eye the cashier and the customers checking out, assess if anyone is out of place then move on for that gallon of milk, dozen eggs and a few extra boxes of ammo.

BUT for example… if you enter the store, scan the area and notice someone wearing a trench coat and it is 90 degrees outside. This should raise your red flags. If this happens, step up the pace and move into the store, get out of the general area and do your shopping.

Every Day Carry - What I wear

I do not want to go into much detail in this article as to Every Day Carry (EDC), that is for another article, but for your E.D.C. kit carry what you want. The items above are what I carry and I don't look like I am wearing Batman's utility belt either. My clothes do not scream "Hey.. It's Mr. Tactical Guy here" either.

I wear Wrangler brand cargo shorts. These have cargo pockets on each side as well as a cell phone pocket that opens above the cargo flap. They have side pockets which the right pocket has a coin pocket inside the deep right. Finally there are left and right rear pockets.

As for a shirt, I wear a common black, blue, beige, Fruit of the Loom pocket "T" shirt or a short sleeve button up with a left breast pocket. If it is hunting season, which at the time of this writing it is. I also wear cammo "Real Tree Beefy T" shirts because just about every other guy is wearing them also.

An important item that I want to touch on is your belt. I wear a double thick "Justin Boots" black leather belt with a common cowboy belt buckle. Your belt needs to be sturdy enough to carry all your gear if you do not put the items in your pockets as well as hold up your pants. So you do not want some inexpensive belt from the big mega stores. Invest some money in this and you will not be sorry. You would be surprised how much a cell phone, buck knife, and a Multi-tool weighs when you are carrying it on your hip. With a heavy duty belt it will also help distribute the weight of these items more evenly and honestly once you get used to them, you forget they are even there. Another thing, my belt is also a last ditch defensive weapon. The buckle weighs a good 10-12 ounces and makes for a mean bludgeon and can help keep someone at arms distance if need be.

How I developed my EDC was that I slowly carried one item, then added another and another. It took time in getting used to carrying gear, finding the spot where it is easy to access and have it not be banging around on my leg or chest. You will find that some things work and some things don't. Carry what tools and gear you need but don't make it obvious that you are a prepper or you will look like some paramilitary tactical guy.

How I developed my EDC was that I slowly carried one item, then added another and another. It took time in getting used to carrying gear, finding the spot where it is easy to access and have it not be banging around on my leg or chest.

If you can get away with it, use a back pack or messenger bag. Look at what others are carrying in your area and adapt to the look. If everyone carries a back pack, carry a back pack. If they carry a messenger bag, well then messenger bag. With this you can also carry a water bottle, small first aid kit and any other gear that is important to you.

Just remember to keep it light, you do not want to turn yourself into some pack mule.

When I dress up, I usually wear black jeans, black cowboy boots, a black long sleeve shirt and a tie. If need be and I need to dress up more, I wear a beige twill sport coat and in all of this, I can still carry most of my gear. This is what the average guy wears here when they dress up, so I am still blending in and looking good too.

If someone would describe me, they would say he had on black shirt, pants and cowboy boots. In other words I look like every other Joe that walks into a nice restaurant or business meeting.

Becoming the gray man will be an important skill for you to develop, specially as crime starts to rise, which it will. You will need to be equipped to protect yourself and possibly others if needed. You will also want to blend in the background.

Above all, your goal is to get home safely that day. You are not some super hero nor are you there to protect the world. You are ready to defend yourself if you have to, but your goal is not having to resort to that.

Finally...

Tactical retreats, AKA running away is totally acceptable. The only one who didn't walk away was John Wayne and that was in the movies. You are not bullet proof nor knife proof, so run don't walk if you think you need to get out of the area fast. Your spouse will be glad you did and so will you.

And as a last resort, always remember it is better to face 12 than to be carried out by 6. So if you have to protect yourself, fight to win because you will be fighting for your life.

How to Make a Primitive Small Game Hunting Gig: It's All About the Smalls

Creek Stewart

I'd like to start this article with how I start many of my teaching programs and seminars – with *The 3 Survival Rules of 3*. In extreme circumstances, humans can survive:

- 3 hours without SHELTER
- 3 days without WATER, and
- 3 weeks without FOOD

I didn't invent these rules. Mother Nature did. This mantra has been around for many years. I'm a big fan of simple, easy to remember survival phrases like this. Sudden survival scenarios can feel overwhelming. The mind tends to go a bit crazy with panic and fear. Even simple tasks become complex. The emotions that come with being lost, stranded or in danger can become paralyzing, overwhelming and just flat out scary. Easy to remember phrases like *THE 3 SURVIVAL RULES OF 3* can help survivors regain balance and calm by helping to establish critical survival priorities. Often, it's the simple things that matter the most in a survival scenario – like getting your priorities mixed up and pursuing food before shelter or water.

With that said, if a survival ordeal lasts long enough, you will eventually need to put fuel (calories) on the human furnace. Gathering wild edibles is one of my favorite things to do. I absolutely love making a salad from fresh wild greens in the spring, foraging for berries in the summer and digging starchy wild tubers in the fall. I've had many years of practice and consider myself a fairly adequate wild plant forager. I even teach a seminar for restaurateurs who want to incorporate wild foraged plants into their uniquely local menus. Even with all of this practice and skill, I can state with 100% certainty that I could not live long term on wild gathered plants alone – especially in certain environments (desert) and seasons (winter). It is not possible for even the most experience forager or survivalist. At some point, a long term survivor will need the calories that only meat can provide.

Survival hunting is a delicate balance of risk versus reward. One must always try to calculate whether the energy expense of making hunting tools and the act of hunting will result in an ultimate calorie loss or gain. Making hunting tools requires energy. Hunting requires energy. Field dressing and cooking requires energy. The goal is to choose a hunting process that trades the best chances of calorie reward for the least amount of calorie risk.

I have a friend who sells items at fairs, festivals and flea-markets. He's a carny. He always says to me, "Creek, the money is in the ***smalls***." He tells how it's nice to sell a $50 or $100 item every now and then but if he depended on those products to make a living he'd be bankrupt. He tells me that he makes his living on the $1 and $2 items.

This is the best analogy I can think of when it comes to Survival Hunting. You will make your living on the smalls. Don't try to hunt the big ticket animals like elk, deer, boar or bison. These animals require too much effort. You run the risk of caloric bankruptcy if you focus on these big ticket items alone. Your chances of bagging one with primitive made weapons is slim to none anyway, regardless of what you see on TV. Primitive peoples hunted animals like these in hunting parties of up to thirty adult men and it sometimes took many days. Even then they often came back empty handed. In a sudden and unexpected survival scenario with limited resources, your best hunting chances are with the ***smalls***. These include wild game such as frogs, fish, rodents, snakes, birds and maybe (if you are really lucky) rabbit, squirrel, ground hog, musk-rat and possum.

One of the best primitive made multi-use small game hunting tools is what's known as a split-tip gig. Split tip gigs are still used in remote parts of the world to put food on the table every day. They are easy to make with limited tools and very effective at up close and short range distances. Below is exactly how to make one.

How to Make a Primitive Split Tip Small Game Gig

You want to start with a green sapling (small tree) that's about 1-1.5" in diameter and 6-8 feet long. Although, I've seen tribal gigs like this that are as long as 12 feet. Dead, dry wood won't work. You must cut down a fresh green sapling. Bamboo makes an exceptional split tip gig, but most of us don't have access to it. I like to use Willow. Willow is very common in places where you'll get the most use out of a gig like this – near water. You can use virtually any species of tree as long as it's nice and straight.

Next, you'll want to trim away all of the branches and chop off the top where it starts to taper smaller than 1 inch.

The business end of the gig is made from the bottom of the sapling (the fatter end). You'll start by holding your knife or sharp rock directly across the bottom of the sapling. It must be as perfectly aligned in the center as you can get. Drive your knife down the sapling about 10 inches or so using a stout stick or rock. I prefer a stick so as to not damage my knife. It's important to split the gig shaft directly in half. This is known as batoning.

Now, rotate the sapling 90 degrees and baton again. This will split the base of your gig into four equal quarters about 10 inches deep.

From the branches you trimmed off in the previous steps, cut two pieces of branch that are about the diameter of a pencil and two inches long.

One at a time, push these down into the splits you just made into the base.

This spreads the tines of your split tip gig. You can now see the gig starting to take shape. Your gig tines should have about a 4-6 inch diameter spread. The benefit of a gig like this versus just one sharp tip is that it increases surface area; improving your chances of a successful strike. The tines also form wedges that help to trap and pin potential prey.

Now it's time to sharpen your tine tips to a sharp point. You will have to work your knife inside and out of the gig tines. Willow is a very soft wood and is easy to carve. Other species such as walnut or maple are harder and will take more effort.

In spring and summer, the bark from Willow (and many other species including Mulberry and Basswood) can be peeled and used as crude cordage to lash the end of your gig so that it doesn't split out with continued use.

If you only plan on using the gig a few times, lashings aren't necessary. However, lashing the base of the splits makes the gig more durable and prevents it from splitting out. In the photo series below I detail a quick and effective lashing that works perfect with traditional cordage or primitive plant and bark fibers. I'm using paracord so that it's easy to see how the lashing works.

Lashing Photo Series

Loop one end of your cordage as shown.

Wrap the long end around the gig and over the short end.

Keep wraps tight.

Continue wrapping.

Feed the end through the loop you made in the beginning.

Firmly pull the bottom tail and the loop with grab the loose end of your cordage.

Pull the loop just under the first couple of wraps and trim the two ends.

Final Lashing Close-Up.

Completed Gig.

Tips for hunting with a gig

Survivors are opportunists. Split tip gigs are perfect weapons of opportunity. Whether happening upon a quail hidden is a tuft of grass or spotting a frog on the bank of a muddy swamp, a gig is easy to use and quick to deploy. Gigging can also be a waiting man's game. Oftentimes, waiting for a fish to pass within striking range or waiting for a rodent to peek its head out of a burrow can take a lot of patience. Either way, it's a tool that works well as one goes about daily survival chores or while actively hunting and gathering. They can also be used as a self defense weapon, hiking staff and cooking skewer.

Gigs are most effective for game in and around water. Fish and frogs are primary targets.

Gigs are most effective for game in and around water. Fish and frogs are primary targets. The American Bull Frog is nocturnal and comes out at night during the spring and summer months. Shining a light into the eyes will prevent them from seeing you approach. Frog legs are nutritious, hearty and an ideal survival food. Primitive tribes all over the world have used versions of the split tip gig for many thousands of years to put food on the table. From fresh water trout and salmon to sea urchins and coconut crabs, the split tip gig is one of the best marine hunting tools available.

Summary

If you've never used a gig, I would suggest trying it at least once simply for the experience. Metal commercial gigs are available at many hunting/fishing stores for just a few bucks. They easily mount to the end of long pole with a couple screws. Check with your local DNR office about Frog Gigging rules/regulations/season for your state. Most states don't allow the use of a primitive gig but using a commercial gig is good practice just in case you ever have to draw from your survival knowledge in a desperate situation.

If you enjoy learning primitive survival skills like this one, consider picking up a copy of my new book, **The Unofficial Hunger Games Wilderness Survival Guide**. It is a primitive skills manual themed after the popular book series **The Hunger Games**. It's a great read packed with practical lifesaving primitive survival skills in the areas of shelter, water, fire, food and rescue.

Remember, it's not IF but WHEN.

Creek Stewart *is the Owner and Lead Instructor at Willow Haven Outdoor - a leading Survival and Preparedness Training Facility located on 21-acres in Central Indiana. For more information on Survival Courses and Clinics offered at WHO, visit http://www.willowhavenoutdoor.com. You can contact Creek directly at creek@willowhavenoutdoor.com.*

Wound Care in the Wilderness

by: Joe Alton, M.D. AKA Dr. Bones

Although we focus on long term survival situations, many of our strategies will be useful on a long hike or camping trip. During a wilderness outing, it stands to reason that you won't have ready access to modern medical care. As such, it makes sense to have some idea of how to deal with the occasional wound that might occur. This is a skill set that few rugged outdoorsmen bother to learn; even though you might have extensive experience in bushcraft, it is essential to know basic first aid and have some medical supplies in your pack.

Although your basic goal is to stabilize your victim and transport to the nearest emergency facility, there might be circumstances where you will have to administer wound care for a period of time. In the past, we discussed methods of wound closure, and when a wound should be left open. Let's talk about the appropriate way to care for certain injuries when you are, temporarily, the end of the line with regards to your patient's well-being.

Millions of people present to U.S. emergency rooms with an acute injury every year. The typical patient in wilderness settings would be a healthy young adult male who sustains a laceration in either the arm, leg or head and neck. This is a fortunate statistic, in that this person has a strong immune system, no chronic ailments, and is well-nourished. Despite this, the best outcomes will occur with rapid action from an individual with some medical knowledge. Let's share some of that knowledge today.

Each wound is different and must be evaluated separately. If not present at the time the wound is incurred, begin by asking the simple question, "What happened?". A look around at the site of the accident will give you an idea of what type of debris you might find in the wound and the likelihood of infection (always assume a wound is dirty initially). Other questions to ask are whether the victim has chronic medical problems, like diabetes, and whether they are allergic to any medications. You might be surprised to find that (even close) friends may have not imparted this history to you in all the time that you've known them.

The physical examination of a wound requires the following assessment: Location on the body, length, depth, and the type of tissue involved. Circulation and Nerve involvement must also be evaluated. If an extremity, have the patient show you a full range of motion during your examination. This is especially important if the injury involves a joint. Don't forget the rest of the patient also: Are they breathing normally, are they mentally alert, and are there other injuries? Don't be surprised to find an elevated pulse rate right after an injury. This person is going to be agitated, and heart rates surpassing 100 beats per minute will be common right after the incident.

Typical Deep Laceration

A little knowledge of anatomy will help you understand the nature of the wound and what should be done to care for it. The skin is comprised of two layers: The (superficial) epidermis and the (deep) dermis. If the injury goes down to but doesn't breach the dermis, it is called an **abrasion**. If it breaches the dermis, we refer to it as a **laceration** and is more serious. In cases where a flap of tissue has been traumatically removed, it is known as an **avulsion**. In most areas of the body, below the dermis you will find a layer of subcutaneous fat; below that, muscle and connective tissue (also known as fascia) and, finally, bone.

Typical Avulsion

Your skin is, essentially, a suit of armor. Whenever the skin is entered, infection can easily follow. A wound that extends more deeply will require a close look to see what layers have been damaged. Subcutaneous fat will appear yellow, and muscle will appear a dark red (think steak). Connective tissue is usually grayish white.

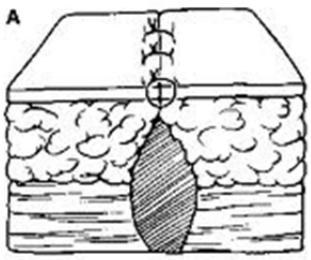
Once below the level of the skin, larger blood vessels and nerves may be involved. Assess circulation, sensation, and the ability to move the injured area. You will notice more problems with vessel and nerve damage in deep lacerations and crush injuries. For an extremity injury, evaluate what we call the **Capillary Refill Time** to test for circulation. To do this, press the nail bed or finger/toe pad; in a person with normal circulation, this area will turn white when you release pressure and then return to a normal color within 2 seconds. If it takes longer or the fingertips are blue, you may have a person who has damaged a blood vessel. If motor function or sensation is decreased (test by lightly pricking with a safety pin beyond the level of the wound), there may be nerve damage. These are signals that your patient will require acute care as soon as possible. Let's assume there isn't much bleeding for now.

In order to fully assess a wound and prevent infection, it is important to clean the wound area thoroughly. Inflammation, infection, or residual debris may delay (or even prevent) adequate healing. Antiseptic solutions such as betadine (povidone-iodine) solution may be helpful if very dilute, but studies have shown that drinkable (sterilized) water is just as good or better. When I say this, I am not referring to a water bottle you already drank from; that water has millions of your mouth bacteria in it.

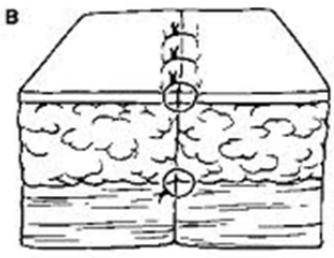
Hydrogen Peroxide has been put forth as an option, but is traumatic to deep tissues and may impede the healing process. This is especially true when cleaning a burn injury. Remember, if the irrigation solution is not sterilized, you can easily introduce bacteria, even into a clean wound. Remember that your hands can be a source of contamination, so have some nitrile gloves in your kit.

It is important to apply pressure to the water when cleaning the wound. This is referred to as "irrigation". Using a 60cc syringe to achieve this pressure will cause bacteria that is adherent to the tissues to dislodge. All wound surfaces should be irrigated; pull the wound edges open if necessary to reach the deepest layers. Repeat this procedure and re-examine for remaining debris until clean. If no syringe is available, apply a wet, clean compress using gauze or cloth. The soaking will help rehydrate the wound and improve healing. Many recommend a plastic bag with holes in it to irrigate a wound, but it is likely that you will not achieve an appropriate pressure (say, 12 PSI) using this method.

Debris is both a focal point for infection and may contain toxins that further damage the tissues. A contaminated injury that is not completely cleaned is dangerous to close. Take the example of the young woman in Georgia that was injured in a zipline accident: Her wound was closed with 22 staples and an infection developed in the deep tissues that eventually cost her a leg. This might have occurred due to poor wound cleaning or failing to close "dead space" in the wound. **Dead space** is a pocket of air or inflammatory fluid that accumulates in the wound. This area is laden with bacteria if not properly cleaned and closed prior to closing the skin.



Dead Space (image A)



Dead Space Closed (image B)

The time period from injury to wound evaluation is important if you have the skill to close a wound. 8 hours is considered appropriate for laceration repair (discussed in previous articles), a little longer for the face and scalp. However, lean towards keeping the wound open, especially if you can get your patient to a modern medical facility. Healing occurs in most cases of open wounds as long as the wound is kept moist and clean. This type of healing is known as **"granulation"** or "second intention".

Wound Healing by Granulation

Once you have cleaned and irrigated the wound, apply a moist, clean dressing to the tissues directly injured and cover with a dry dressing and tape. This is known as a **"wet-to-dry"** dressing. A moist healing environment will help prevent cell dehydration and death and promote the development of better circulation in the wound. Moisture also reduces pain and leads to a better cosmetic result. Compression dressings such as the **Israeli Battle Dressing** are useful for bleeding wounds, but unnecessary for wounds that are **hemostatic** (dry). Triple antibiotic may be useful on the skin edges and is thought by many to promote skin healing.

Dressing changes should be done at least daily until you are able to access professional care. Each time a dressing is changed, note the status of the tissues. Infection can often be seen on the skin edges in the form of redness, swelling, and heat. This is known as **"cellulitis"** and must be considered a risk for spread of infection to the entire body ("**sepsis**"). The presence of pus in the wound is another sign that trouble is ahead. Infections rates differ depending on the part of the body affected; scalp wounds get infected only 2% of the time, while thigh/leg injuries get into trouble in more than 20% of cases. Regardless, treat every wound as if you are dealing with a potential problem.

Many of these injuries may be candidates for antibiotic therapy. Based on how contaminated the wound is, the decision to use antibiotics should be made early, usually within 3-6 hours after the injury was incurred. The deeper the injury, the more you should lean towards starting therapy. Wounds that are most likely to be infected are animal bites or those lacerations contaminated with feces, saliva, or other bodily secretions. If you intend to be out in the wilderness for a period of time, make sure that you include some antibiotics in your medical supplies.
Speaking of medical supplies, what are some medical supplies that a wilderness traveler should carry?

Here are some suggestions for the minimum you should have:

- Dressings (roller gauze, sterile gauze, triangular bandages, Combine pads, eye pads, Israeli battle dressings)
- Non-adherent dressings (Telfa pads for burns, Moleskin for blisters)
- Antiseptic solution/wipes (alcohol, BZK, Betadine)
- Sterilizing tablets or other ways to sterilize water
- 60cc or 100cc irrigation syringe
- Nitrile gloves
- Triple antibiotic ointment
- Ibuprofen (Advil) or Acetaminophen (Tylenol) and other OTC meds
- EMT shears (bandage scissors) – to cut clothes away from the injured area
- Adhesive Bandages (Band-Aids or, alternatively, Second Skin)
- Sunblock
- Tape (Duct tape will do in a pinch)
- Solar blanket

- Light source
- Antibiotics
- Splint material (SAM and other splints come in a 36 inch roll you can cut to fit your needs

Being prepared to deal with injuries and other medical issues on your wilderness outing will make sure that they will be just a bump in the road and not the END of the road for the people in your party.

Joe Alton, M.D. and Amy Alton, A.R.N.P., are the authors of the "Doom and Bloom(tm) Survival Medicine Handbook", which has been ranked #1 on Amazon in the categories of Survival Skills and Safety/First Aid. They are also the owners of the highest ranked medical preparedness website on the Internet at http://www.doomandbloom.net ,and design their own line of unique survival medical kits. You can contact them at drbonespodcast [at] aol.com.

The Bug Out Bag Meal Plan

by Tess Pennington

Planning your emergency meals sets apart a manageable crisis from an outright disaster. Although many of us have our 72-hour bags packed and ready to go, take a second look at your pack to ensure that the food you plan on taking will realistically sustain you during that 3 day ordeal.

In a bug out situation, put thought into the situation you could find yourself in. You will be in a high stress environment where you may be on foot walking for long periods, or for that matter walking up and down hills. The foods we will carry will make all the difference in the world in terms of maintaining energy levels, and nutrition. Many preppers underestimate how much food they will need for their 72 hour bags. They believe that living off of survival bars for a main source of nutrition for 3 days will give you the optimum nutrition. This just isn't so.

As mentioned, you will be operating in a high stress and high energy environment, therefore your body needs to be running as efficiently as possible.

When you are preparing your bug out bag, you want your diet to give you ample calories, carbohydrates, protein, vitamins and some fats. Keep in mind that ages and genders will play a role in calorie consumption. As mentioned, you will be operating in a high stress and high energy environment, therefore your body needs to be running as efficiently as possible. With this in mind, you should plan to eat small meals every 2-3 hours.

Create a Menu

The best approach to ensuring you have enough food for 72-hours is to sit down and create an emergency menu based on your family's preferences and map out the nutrition needs that the chosen foods provide. This will help you stay organized for the disaster and will also help you create a shopping list for bug out supplies. Your menu should be realistic in the sense that it will provide your body with the necessary energy needs.

The Nutrition Breakdown

In your bug out bag, make sure that the foods you store for this short lived emergency will have the sustaining energy sources that will burn slowly. Finding foods that are high in complex carbs and dietary fiber are more efficient from a dietary standpoint and will keep you feeling "fuller" longer.
Some energy efficient food sources to consider are:

- **Fruits/Vegetables** – Obviously, having these dehydrated will lighten the load and give you something nutritious to snack on. Keep in mind that dehydrated foods can last for 12 months or longer, provided they have been stored properly. Pack fruits and vegetables that are the most calorie dense. Look for small boxes of dried fruits for easy meal assembly.

- **Whole vs. White** – We all know that whole grains are better for you. But did you know that they keep you fuller longer. Also, whole grain breads with seeds and nuts can provide added nutrition. Look for whole grain pancake mixes, crackers, pastas and bread to get good sources of whole grains.
- **Nuts** – This food source is one of the most nutrient dense foods and is also full of fiber to help you stay full longer. Due to the high protein count of these lightweight nutrition powerhouses, can be an efficient meat replacement. Look for non-salted nut varieties to keep you hydrated longer.
- **Meat Source** – Protein sources are imperative during an emergency and can also cut down on stress. The amino acid in meat, specifically Tryptophan, binds to protein and becomes a precursor for the neurotransmitter serotonin. Increased levels of serotonin may help you cope with stress. Freeze dried meats or TVP (textured vegetable protein), dehydrated meats or canned meats of beef, chicken or tuna would be good choices to add to your pack.

According to the FDA, for a normal adult's 2,000 calorie meal plan, 45 to 65 percent of your daily calories should come from carbohydrates, 20 to 35 percent of your calories should come from fats, and 10 to 35 percent of your daily calories should come from proteins. This chart can help in researching caloric needs based on gender and ages. Keep this in mind and adjust your dietary intake accordingly to maintain proper energy requirements.

Below is a list of suggested meals a person could carry in their bug out bag. This is not meant to be comprehensive but a guide to show what types of foods you should consider for your diet. These foods are light weight, easy to prepare and will provide essential calories and energy.

Day 1
Breakfast – 2 cups oatmeal with raisins and 1 cup reconstituted dry milk powder
*(calories: **568**, fat: 8 **g**, carbs: **108 g**, protein: **28 g**)*
Snack: 2 bars Datrex 3600 survival bar
*(calories: 4**00**, fat:, **17.4 g**, carbs: **49.4 g**, protein: **5.6 g**)*
Lunch – Chicken flavored Ramen noodles with dehydrated vegetables
*(calories: 2**46.7**, fat: **4.7 g**, carbs: **27.3 g**, protein: **9.3 g**)*
Snack – 1 package of whole grain crackers and peanut butter with dried apples
*(calories: **310**, fat: **9 g**, carbs: **23 g**, protein: **5 g**)*
Dinner – 2.5 cups chicken and rice a roni casserole, rehydrated
*(calories: **545.8**, fat: **9.2 g**, carbs: **75 g**, protein: **40.8 g**)*

Total Daily Nutrition of Day 1:
calories: 2,070.5, fat: 48.3 g, carbs: 282.7 g, protein: 88.7 g

Day 2
Breakfast – 1 cup dry raisin bran cereal with reconstituted dry milk powderand 1 ounce of walnuts
*(calories: **390**, fat: **11 g**, carbs: **66 g**, protein: **14 g**)*
Snack – 8 graham crackers with 4 tbsp peanut butter and 1 box of raisins
*(calories: **646**, fat: **35.2 g**, carbs: **69.6 g**, protein: **19 g**)*
Lunch – 1 pouch of StarKist Chunk Light Sandwich Ready Tuna Salad, 15 Kashi wheat crackers
*(calories: **230**, fat: **6 g**, carbs: **26 g**, protein: **16 g**)*
Snack – Luna fiber bar and Carnation Instant Breakfast drink
*(calories: **440,** fat: **10 g,** carbs: **67 g,** protein: **23 g**)*
Dinner – Dehydrated bean chili and cornbread , reconstituted and and 2soft oatmeal cookies
*(calories: **605**, fat: **64 g**, carbs: **106.8 g**, protein: **15 g**)*

Total nutrition of Day 2:

calories: 2311, fat: 126.2 g, carbs: 335.4 g, protein: 87 g

Day 3
Breakfast – "Just add water" whole wheat pancakes, 1/4 cup of dried blueberries, 2 maple syrup packets, hot chocolate with reconstituted dry milk powder
(calories: 506**.7**, fat: **3.7 g**, carbs: **113.2 g**, protein: 11**.7g)**
Snack – 1 ounce walnuts, dried apples and 8 graham crackers
*(calories: **400**, fat: **13 g**, carbs: **36 g**, protein: **4 g)***
Lunch – 1 pouch of StarKist Chunk Light Sandwich Ready Tuna Salad, 15 Kashi wheat crackers
*(calories: **230**, fat: **6 g**, carbs: **26 g**, protein: **16 g**)*
Snack: 2 soft oatmeal cookies and Carnation Instant Breakfast drink
(calories: **560**, fat: **10 g**, carbs: **66 g**, protein: **16 g**
Dinner – Canned Stew and 14 Kashi crackers
(calories: **370,** fat: **14.5 g**, carbs: **44 g**, protein: **18 g**)

Total nutrition of Day 3:
calories: 2,470, fat: 47.2 g, carbs: 285.2 g, protein: 65.7 g

Don't Forget These Considerations
Bear in mind that beverages are not listed and adding powdered drink mixes or vitamin powders to water, will increase your calories and some daily nutritional content. Above all, you must have water and/or a means to filter it as many of the meals will require some sort of water for preparation.

Another point to consider is to make sure the meals you pack are realistic and can carry you through 72 hour period. Practice or run a 72 hour drill to see how long you can last on your bug out rations.

Did you know that a staggering thirteen vitamins are considered necessary to perform crucial functions in the body? Ensure your body is getting an adequate amount of vitamins through your food source or play it safe and pack a few multivitamins in your pack.

Another point to consider is to make sure the meals you pack are realistic and can carry you through 72 hour period. Practice or run a 72 hour drill to see how long you can last on your bug out rations. After all, you want to feel confident in the preps you have.

Although your main priority is to keep the weight of your 72 hour bag down, you want to have a way to prepare meals. This can be as simple as having a folding stove, a camping stove or if you plan on cooking over a fire, a way to light the fire.

To conclude, the best way to prepare for a disaster is to plan for it. Research the nutritional aspects of the foods you want to pack and get a list together of what items you need. Once you do this, make a point to put them in or near by your bug out bag. The only way you will feel confident in a bug out situation is to know that you have all you need to survive.

Since 2007, Tess Pennington, founder for www.ReadyNutrition.com, has focused on educating the public on topics including disaster preparedness, homesteading, emergency food pantries, food storage and ultimately self-reliance. Through her multiple radio and television appearances, as well as her popular web series 52 Weeks to Preparedness, she has helped thousands begin their journey to self-sufficiency or extend their existing plans.

Pennignton is author of ***The Prepper's Cookbook:*** *300 Recipes to Turn Your Emergency Food into Nutritious, Delicious, Life-Saving Meals. This essential resource combines information on stocking, organizing and maintaining a proper emergency food supply with 300 recipes that utilize shelf stable ingredients.*

Are You Knot Ready?

By David Safewater

I used to hate knots. I mean, really. As a teen, I worked for a few summers at what used to be known as the "Lake Arrowhead Scout Reservation" but is now called "Forest Lawn Scout Reservation" in the mountains of San Bernardino, CA. When given the choice to work in the various programs, I chose only the shooting sports: Archery & Rifle. Pioneering (rope skills) was never even a back-up option for me!

Fast forward a few years and I found myself becoming an adult volunteer leader of a Boy Scout Troop in Long Beach, California, Troop 72. I had to teach the scouts in my troop how to splice & fuse ends of rope, learn lashings, and of course, become efficient with knots. At the time, I had enough practical experience with tying rope onto trucks but my knots were anything but clean & neat…& I hadn't the faintest clue as to the Frankenstein-ish characteristics of what I fashioned to secure the cargo!

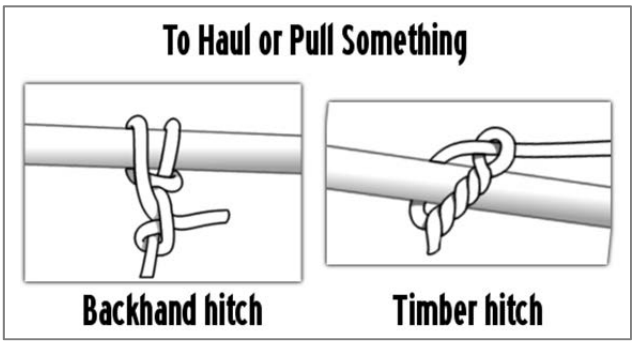
Now, I don't care if you call yourself a "prepper" or not, everybody who believes in becoming as Self-Reliant as possible should learn & become proficient in the basic uses of rope. To put it simply, rope is a tool that becomes an extension of one's arm (length) & a substitute for a person holding something in place, or moving something around (grip). Rope's most basic uses are to:

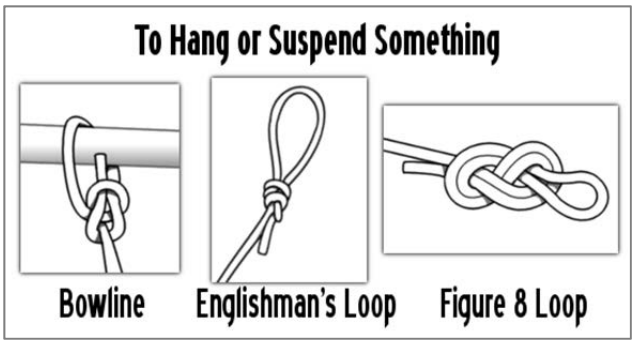
- Pull something (hauling or moving)
- Hang Something (affix or suspend)
- Hold Something (secure or fasten)

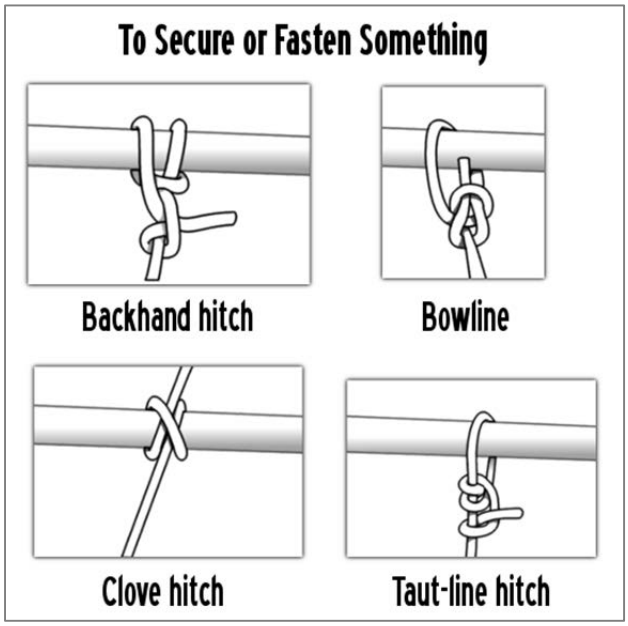
If you've ever been intimidated by complexity, then I have GREAT news…your days of frustration are over! Animated tutorials make tying ropes easy now. I highly recommend you click on the links listed at the end of this article. There are even apps for phones & tablets. Basic rope skills are a tremendous asset to call upon & people will be impressed when they see you whip-out something as simple as a timber hitch to drag a log!

Heck, think of acquiring basic rope skills like learning a few party tricks or ice-breaking one-liners. I promise, once you get started you'll never regret this skill!

Seven Basic Knots to Master







Connect Two Ropes

Carrick bend

Use when thick ropes which need joining but are too thick to manipulate into knots

Prusik hitch

Use as a friction hitch to wrap cordage around a rope. This hitch has specific use in recreation and although simple to tie, should be used after consulting with expert advice for appropriate application situations.

Sheet bend

Use to join two ropes of different diameters.

Square knot

Quick & easy knot to tie two rope ends together

Create Loops to Anchor

Figure 8

Creates a simple & sturdy loop which can be anchored in a variety of ways

Englishman's loop

Creates a clean & simple loop

Temporarily Shorten Rope without Cutting It

Sheepshank

Use it when rope will experience a constant workload but it needs to be shortened without cutting it.

Some Basic Rope Considerations

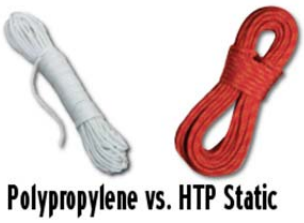
As with the use of every tool, you need to be conscious of your rope's limitations and how to properly care for it.

Tensile Strength & Working Load

Simply stated, the tensile strength of a rope is its ability to withstand force until it breaks. Tensile strength is tested in a controlled setting, such as a laboratory. Each newly manufactured rope has a rated working load limit. A rope's working load is the maximum load the rope can safely handle in the real world, outside of the lab. For maximum safety, never exceed that limit.

Here's a great reference point:

The ratio between the working load and the rope's tensile strength is termed the safety margin. If a rope is rated at 5000 lbs tensile and we wanted to maintain a 10:1 safety margin, the maximum working load would be 500 lbs.



Generally, cavers, mountaineers, and other outdoor activity groups accept a safety factor of 10:1, but the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) recommends a 15:1 safety factor, as does the National Association of Tower Erectors. - whitewatersolutions.net

As you learn more about the different types of rope for specific application, you'll also discover that bends, knots, & load stresses can dramatically weaken a rope's strength. When trying to decide what particular type of rope will work well for your application, anticipate the conditions under which the rope with both be used AND stored.

Example: The rope you would employ to make a clothesline for hanging clothes out to dry should be waterproof, resist the sun's UV rays, & of a relatively low workload. Contrast that with rope that you would keep as emergency rescue line in a wilderness go-bag. Clearly, the rescue rope would need to have a much higher workload capacity as well as excellent resistance to wear & tear.

General Rope Care

Keep your rope clean & free from unnecessary contact with abrasive elements, chemicals, dirt, sediment, water, etc., and don't let your rope freeze. If you must clean or wash your rope, follow the manufacturer's instructions & allow to fully dry. If you've lost those, go online & contact a credible company or organization who uses the rope you've got. Many manufacturers have service lines you can call to speak directly with their customer service representatives or sales staff.

I recommend that EVERY adult, teenager, & even child master the seven basic knots that I recommended above for two reasons:

1. They are routinely useful & easy to execute;
2. Mastering the basics will provide a lifetime of confidence & security when the need arises.

Resources:

Animated Tutorials

- Animated Knots by Grog (Basics & Excellent Reference Site)
- Animated Knots' YouTube Channel

Care & Maintenance

- Animated Knots by Grog (Rope Care)
- General Rope Care by Crystal Cordage

How Rope is Made Videos

- 2 Videos from Bevis Rope
- How to Make Natural Fiber Rope by TIAT (Key Survival Skill)
- Cool Video on Making Rope by Archanth

Reference Sites

- Northwest Wire Rope (Proper Use of Rope)
- United States Search & Rescue Task Force
- WhiteWaterSolutions.net (Breaking Strength)

David Safewater is an entrepreneur, freelance artist & writer, and small business strategy consultant, with significant experience in the Self-Reliance marketplace & its subcategories. His newest project AudioHopper.com (now a Podcast on iTunes) produces audio articles of the internet's best Self-Reliance & Educational content "keeping you productive, on the hop!" To contact: David[at]DavidSafewater.com.

The Perfect Prepper Optic

By: Joe Nobody

Internet debates have raged for years concerning the controversy over the best “survival firearm.” Urban preppers have thoughts of civil unrest, rioting and defending their families against gangs of ruthless looters. On the other hand, rural preppers are typically more focused on hunting and longer range defensive capabilities. Regardless of your location, it makes sense to have a long gun that can be used for defense and to put food on the table. This translates into a tool that can be affective at both long and short ranges.

While I have my own opinions about the best firearm, making that choice is only part of the solution in surviving a serious threat. After selecting a weapon, you’ll most likely find the need for an optic, or aiming system, to go along with the new blaster.

The title of this paper is a little misleading. Truly, there is no perfect optic, just as there is no perfect weapon. Like pizza, cars or who controls the television remote, everything’s a compromise, and there is no one single solution to fit every need. The choice boils down to covering as many scenarios as possible with a single selection.

A New Solution

Recently, a new wave of optics has arrived that I believe provides the absolute best option for preppers. I refer to this category of aiming devices as “1-bys” in that they offer magnification ranges of 1x6 or 1x8 or even higher.

Figure 1 New type of scope. This example is a 1x6.

While they may appear similar to a traditional hunting scope, there are many specific features that separate this new generation of optics from their more common cousins. For example:

- Much larger eye box than a typical riflescope
- Greater eye relief than most scopes
- Illuminated reticles or aiming dots
- Very thin reticle framing
- Extremely robust, compact designs
- First focal plane reticles
- Compatibility with night vision devices

Why are these features important as a solution for preppers? Read on…

Requirements and Application

Before buying an optic, you need to anticipate what functionality may be required after an event. As with the selection of a firearm, the operational range should be one of the first questions asked.

Many riflemen overlook short-range needs. By short, I'll use a distance of less than 100 meters (110 yards) as a general definition. Traditional hunting (or sniper) riflescopes are inferior during close-in engagements because it takes longer to acquire a target. When multiple threats are considered, this handicap can be a serious issue.

A few years ago, infantrymen all over the world began procuring holographic weapons sights (red dots) at an astounding pace. There's a reason why these optics were all the rage – they save lives. When compared to iron sights, the target acquisition time for close-in threats is considerably faster. The advantages of keeping both eyes open, diminished parallax and improved accuracy have been demonstrated on battlefields all over the planet.

Longer ranges (150-600 meters) are well served by riflescopes, but can be a problem for holographic or iron sights. You need to ignore internet bravado when thinking of 600 meter shots and be honest with yourself. Yes, I can hit a man-sized target with iron sights at 600 meters with an AR15. I need to "walk" the rounds into the target on a clear day, in good light, without any wind. I've watched the US Army Marksmanship Unit accomplish this feat in a more proficient manner, but those guys and girls are elite shooters whose everyday job is putting lead on target. In a situation where conditions aren't perfect…you are scared, angry or desperate…600 meters with iron sights or a holo isn't realistic for most folks. Magnification and bullet drop compensation can help with longer range shooting, but holo-dot sights aren't equipped with such features.

So everyone had a problem. There wasn't any available solution that addressed both long and short- range shots. Any optic was a compromise on what situation the operator "thought" was most likely to be encountered. If something unexpected came up…well…you didn't have the right tool for the job.

Magnification serves another important role beyond accuracy. It helps with target identification (is that person carrying a shovel or a rifle?), scouting (did I just see something move in that treeline?) and distance estimation. In fact, the benefit of magnification and the extent it enhances the rifleman's

capabilities are both so significant, the US military recently invested millions of dollars in ACOG (Advanced Combat Optical Gunsight) for our troops as a tactical advantage.

Figure 2 ACOG with Red Dot mounted on top

The ACOG is a wonderful tool and until recently presented the best compromise of long vs. short-range target acquisition tools. This "aiming system" is a fixed 4-power magnification unit with long eye relief and an illuminated reticle, normally a dot. The 4x zoom was middle-ground in that you could still acquire a close-in target while having the advantage of longer range capabilities. The ACOG was better in so many ways than anything else up until that time. Civilians purchased them by the millions as well.

But the ACOG wasn't perfect. In close-quarters battle situations, like clearing a building or street fighting, that 4x still slowed down acquisition times. On the other hand, 4x isn't so great on longer distance shots, say outside 250 meters. For older eyes, 4x often isn't enough zoom.

Professional shooters began to address these shortcomings with hybrid solutions. Red dots began to appear on top of ACOGs (*see figure 2 above*) or mounted offset on riflescopes. Other shooters went with magnifiers mounted in front of their holo sights. All of these hybrids created their own set of problems. I used an ACOG with a dot mounted on top for years. The drawback was that my cheek weld (shooting position) was altered by the height of the dot, and I was still limited to a 4x magnification. That little device residing on top of the scope's body always seemed to be in such a precarious position as well.

I also utilized a red dot with a magnifier mounted in front, but this was an untenable fix. The extra device never centered properly, was a pain in the butt to carry, and still provided very limited magnification.

On my long-range rifles equipped with huge scopes, I mounted offset red dots. Again, the little devices were constantly getting hung up on gear, impacted my shooting position, and I broke more than one of the expensive units.

While the hybrid solutions reduced the amount of compromise, many shortcomings still existed. Range wasn't the only consideration then, nor should it be now. The list below contains requirements most preppers need to address:

- Optic must work with Night Vision Devices
- Must function with backup iron sights
- Weight must be reasonable
- Battery life/usage is an important consideration for preppers
- Must be able to withstand abuse in the field

1-Bys to the Rescue

Scopes with a 1 x n magnification have been around for years and served a variety of purposes. There have been a few recent enhancements to this category of gun sight that has greatly improved their functionality as an overall solution for a survival weapon.

First and foremost is what I call the "reticle framing." This is the black ring (edge of tube) that is seen while looking through the device with both eyes open.

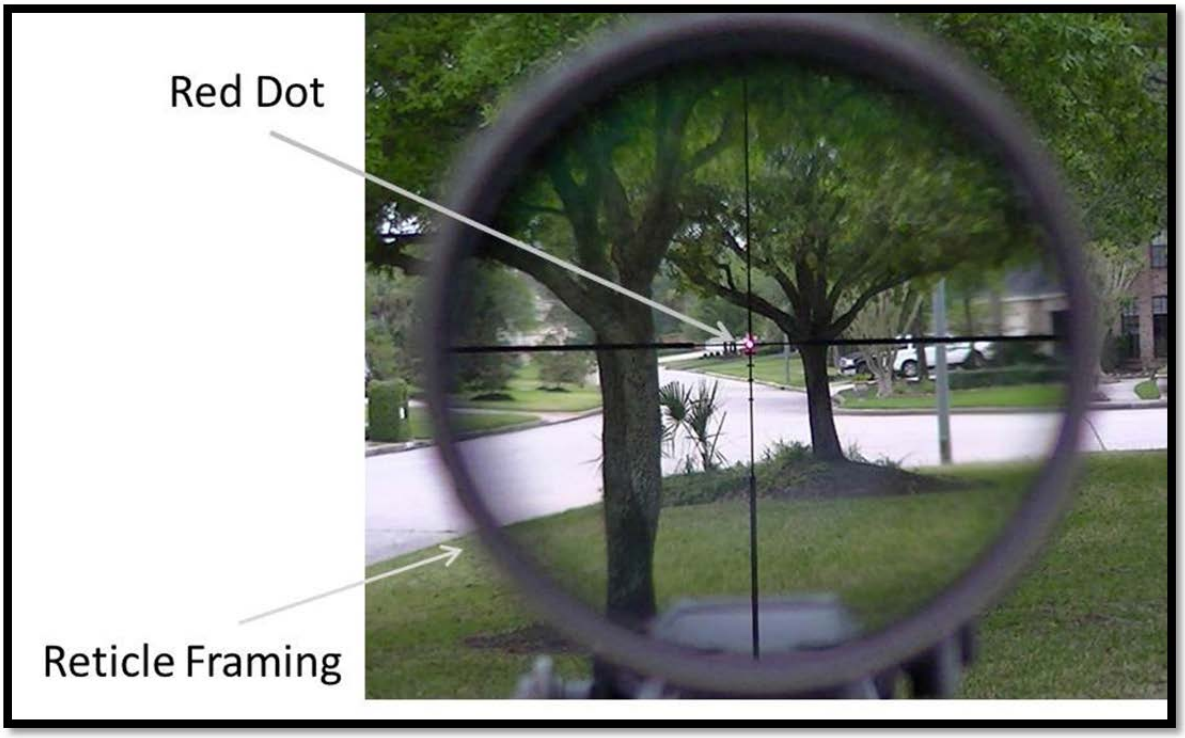


Figure 3 Example 1-by with illuminated reticle

The newer generation of 1-bys has a very thin frame that avoids distraction as your eyes (both open) scan for threats.

Secondly, the illumination of the reticle (a red dot is shown in the example above) has improved to the level where these scopes are now on par with the best holographic red dots. This means that target acquisition times are greatly reduced on short-range shots.

For longer range activities, you simply increase the magnification by twisting a ring, much like a typical hunting scope.

In summary, you can now have a red dot and a long-range scope all in one unit without clutter, breakable appendages or weld-distorting shooting positions. You can have less compromise for the same amount of money.

Comparison

To understand why this Joe Nobody is so excited over 1-bys and the advantages they offer, it helps to compare solutions. The following table represents my personal ratings, with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest.

Task/Requirement	ACOG	ACOG with Dot	Red Dot (Holo)	Red Dot + Magnifier	Rifle Scope	1-by
Close quarters battle (0-100)	3	8	8	8	1	8
Mid-Range (100-250)	8	8	7	7	8	8
Long Range (250-600)	5	5	2	4	9	8
Extreme Long Range (600+)	3	3	1	3	9	6
Cost	4	3	5	4	6	7
Both Eyes open Target Acquisition	7	8	8	7	2	8
Parallax	8	8	8	8	5	8
Using with NVD	7	7	8	3	3	7
Co-witness with Irons	2	2	7	7	1	5
Ruggedness	8	6	8	5	8	8
Average Rating	5.5	5.8	6.2	5.6	5.2	7.3

As with any side-by-side comparison, some caveats must be noted:

1. Because I'm writing this for preppers, I am assuming a wide range of eyesight capability. Not all of us are in are our prime with 20/20 vision, so the enlarged eye box and reticle framing carry more weight.
2. The cost category is relative to the value received for the money spent. Low to high cost models exist for all four categories of optics. It isn't fair to compare a $1,800 ACOG to a $49 Red Dot. The same logic applies to the scopes.
3. Parallax and ruggedness are also factors of the cost ratio. You can purchase very high-end scopes that have little parallax and are very rugged (Schmidt and Bender for example). You can also purchase sub-$100 units that are prone to blackout and distortion.

In summary, 1-bys provide the average prepper with a new and exciting option. They aren't perfect for every situation, but technology keeps us moving closer to that goal. After field testing one of the devices, I'm convinced they are worth the investment and will gradually be switching all of my rifles to this new system.

Joe Nobody is the author of numerous instructional books on the subject of preparations and self-reliance, including the fictional series Holding Their Own. You can read more about his work in helping others become prepared at www.holdingyourground.com.

11 Important Skills For Preppers

by Gaye Levy

There comes a time when every prepper will say *enough* with all of the food and *enough* with all of the gear. I do not know how to adequately articulate what I mean but after a year of seeking out the best stuff at the best price you just might want to stop – at least for a while – and focus on something else.

When you get to that point – and hopefully a whole lot sooner – you will want to start working on the important skills that will carry your through when faced with hard times. Today I would like to share my own list of important skills for preppers.

11 IMPORTANT SKILLS FOR PREPPERS

1. Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are sometimes referred to as people skills, social skills or communication skills. But regardless of what you call it, interpersonal skills will dictate your ability to work with others in a positive and productive manner. By getting along with others, you will be able to build good community relationships and will become known as a responsible and honest person who can be trusted.

Having strong interpersonal or social skills will be invaluable when it comes to bartering for goods or services or for controlling a potentially deadly situation with reason instead of force.

2. Problem Solving

The ability to think on your feet is going to be critical following a disaster or collapse. In practical terms, this means that you will need to very quickly evaluate a situation and come up with the best possible coping strategy for surviving under dire if not incomprehensible circumstances. You will need the ability to assess the risks you face and to act accordingly.

3. Home Arts

Having the ability to cook from scratch, preserve your home-grown food, sew or mend your own clothing and maintain a clean and sanitary living environment will be critical to your health and well-being.

In modern times, we have become reliant on others to tend to our basic needs, whether from the supermarket, the mall or even the local power and water company. Learning to get by on your own without modern conveniences will allow you to live more comfortably and to focus on the more important matter of staying safe.

4. Perseverance

Perseverance is often described as having the steadfastness to do something despite any difficulty in achieving success. Hard times or not, this is the skill that will give you the will to keep on going no matter what. It will allow you to focus on the future – and hopefully better times – rather than staying stuck in the moment when all may not be perfect.

Perseverance is a choice and a habit that will allow you to set small goals that are attainable which will lead to optimism and ultimately a sense of accomplishment.

5. Frugality

Being careful in the use of resources makes good sense. This applies not only to consumables but also to the use of time. Avoiding waste and eliminating costly habits will result in a simpler life, yes, but a life that is more likely to be filled with spiritual abundance.

6. First Aid

It goes without saying that knowing how to administer first aid can save lives. Basic wound care, suturing skills and even a knowledge of herbal home remedies can make a difference in whether your loved ones will make it through a crisis.

7. Gardening

Whether you grow a simple plot of greens or maintain a mini-farm on an acre or two, knowing how to grow your own food will allow you to supplement any food supplies that you have in your pantry. Learn to work and develop whatever land you have so that you can grow vegetables and fruits that will feed your family and possibly provide edible currency for barter in a SHTF situation.

8. Basic Fix-It Skills

Knowing how to pound a nail and operate a hand saw are just two of the many fix-it skills that will help you make repairs once you begin the recovery process. Plumbing, welding, electrical and general carpentry skills will always be in demand and will give you a marketable skill that will make you valuable to the community. (The book Brushfire Plague described this well.)

9. Defense

Whether you choose a stun gun, pepper spray, a knife or a firearm, get to know your defensive weapon well so that you can defend what is yours in a safe and sane manner.

10. Compassion for Others

Caring for others when they cannot fend for themselves is the human thing to do. Following a disaster or collapse, there are going to be people that are vulnerable. They may be children, they may be elderly or they may simply be lost or separated from their loved ones.

Having the heart and compassion to deal with those that are physically or emotionally hurt is the right thing to do as long as you can do so without compromising your own safety. Be prepared to deal with the frightened and to assist them in finding their way to safety.

11. Know Yourself

Acknowledge your strengths and your weaknesses as well as your passions and your fears. Be strong in your faith and in your willingness to fail as well you willingness and desire to succeed.

THE FINAL WORD

Focusing on skills can provide a welcome break from the sometimes frantic and often times obsessive need to acquire food, gear and supplies. Taking the time to think through the personal qualities that will guarantee survival is something that we all need to do from time to time. Doing so will make you realize how much you have that is non-tangible but of great value none-the-less.

Keep in mind, though, that with any list, this is only a start. With a modicum of thought, many more skills can be added to this list. How about you – what skills would you add to this list?

Enjoy your next adventure through common sense and thoughtful preparation!

*About Gaye: Gaye Levy, the **Survival Woman**, grew up and attended school in the Greater Seattle area. After spending many years as an executive in the software industry, she started a specialized accounting practice offering contract CFO work to emerging high tech and service industries. She has now abandoned city life and moved to a serenely beautiful rural area on an island in NW Washington State. She lives and teaches the principles of a sustainable, self-reliant and stylish lifestyle through emergency preparation and disaster planning through her website at **BackdoorSurvival.com**. The Survival Woman speaks her mind and delivers her message with optimism and grace, regardless of mayhem swirling around us.*

You can also find Gaye on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/thesurvivalwoman and on Twitter at https://twitter.com/Survival_Woman.

Pressure Canning: How To

by: Daisy Luther

Pressure canning is one of the most useful skills I've ever learned with regard to prepping. Once you have the equipment and ability to pressure can, the sky is the limit for food preservation. You can preserve ANYTHING – meats, low acid veggies, even entire meals right there in a jar! The satisfaction of pulling a jar off the shelf and warming the contents on top of your woodstove during a power outage, then feeding your family a delicious, comforting, and healthy meal, is simply unparalleled.

Pressure canning can be intimidating though. Many people are daunted by the potential of injury, the noises, and the supervision it requires. Once you get past the old wives tales and horror stories and just do it, you'll see how safe and simple it is.

First of all, **you are NOT going to blow yourself up.** Let's put this thought to rest right now! My first attempt at pressure canning took place after I'd sent the girls off to school one day, just in case things began exploding. I had anxious visions of geysers of boiling water, a hole in the ceiling where the lid of the canner had flown off, and third degree burns. Seriously: I was a nervous wreck!

It was sort of a non-event, to be quite honest. There are some loud noises to get used to, it's a bit alarming to put a stopper on the steam coming out of the little vent on top, and you have to patiently wait for the pressure to reduce at the end.

There are only a few ways that you are likely to hurt yourself or blow up your kitchen (and even then, it's really really unlikely, particularly with the new canners and all their requisite safety measures).

1. You use equipment that is old and faulty.
2. You can something when the vent is blocked (peek through and check it each time - takes 2 seconds!)
3. You allow the pressure to exceed 17 PSI and you leave it like that for an extended period of time.
4. You allow the canner to boil dry.
5. You try to remove the lid before the pressure has dispersed.

If you don't do any of those things, you will be perfectly safe - I promise! Always read your manufacturer's instructions, and if those instructions differ from mine, FOLLOW THEIRS!!! They are the experts on their own equipment.

Once you trump your anxiety over pressure canning (if this relates to you) then you will take your food storage to a completely different level.

*****

When Should You Pressure Can?

Pressure canning exceeds the temperature of water bath canning, getting your product into the safety zone. The temperature must reach 240 degrees Fahrenheit, which can only be achieved through steam under pressure.

Low-acid foods have to be preserved at a higher temperature than high-acid foods. The low-acid environment welcomes the growth of bacteria like botulism, a form of food poisoning that can cause permanent nerve damage or even death.

All vegetables (except for tomatoes which are botanically a fruit), meats, seafood and poultry, ***must*** be preserved in a pressure canner. You will hear people say, "My grandmother water bath canned the vegetables from her garden her whole life and no one ever died eating it" or "I just process my venison stew in a water bath canner for 4 hours and it's just fine."

I'm telling you, unequivocally **– it is NOT worth the risk**. Kids used to sit on the armrest of the car when travelling and most of them survived to adulthood. That doesn't mean that we should allow our kids to do so now, when we have high quality car seats to transport them safely. We know the risks now, and we have the equipment to lessen those risks. How terribly would you feel if you KILLED a family member with something you had canned unsafely, despite the warnings to process it differently?

Aside from this, follow all the basic kitchen safety rules: keep things clean and sanitary, keep your work area clear of anything that might cause you to trip (including pets and kids), put your hair back, and don't wear long flowy clothing that might get caught in something or touch a hot burner, thus igniting and refuting my claims of pressure canning safety!

Sermon complete. Let's can something!

For pressure canning you need:
Pressure canner with valves, seals and gauges
Rack (if you don't have a rack you can use a folded towel in the bottom of the pot)
Jar lifter
Jar funnel



You can get all sorts of other gadgets if you want too, but these are the essentials.

Step-by-Step
One thing you will notice about pressure canning is that nearly all of the steps are identical to the method for water bath canning. Differences (in italics) are really only related to the equipment. So, once you have learned to use your pressure canner correctly, you will find it every bit as easy as water bath canning.

Sanitize your jars, lids and rings. If you have a dishwasher, you can wash them in the dishwasher – the heat from it is enough to sterilize everything. Otherwise, you need to boil them for at least 10 minutes, lifting them carefully in and out with the jar lifter. Leave the items in the dishwasher or the hot water until ready to use.

Prepare your canner. *Place your rack or folded towel in the bottom of your canner. Add about 3 inches of water to the canner. Most p-canners have a line to which you fill the water. In pressure canning it is not necessary for the water to cover the lids. (Always check the instructions on your individual canner – if there is a discrepancy, go with the instructions that came with your product.) At this point, you can turn the burner on low to begin warming the water, but don't bring it to a boil yet.*

Fill your jars. Line up your jars on the counter near the stove. If the surface is not heat proof, place a towel on the counter first because the filled jars will be very hot. Using the funnel, ladle the prepared product into the jars, leaving the headspace recommended in your recipe.

Put on your lids. With a dry clean dishtowel, carefully wipe the lip of the filled jars, making sure to get any residue of food off. (A cloth dampened with white vinegar will easily clean off any fat residue if you're canning meat.) Place the flats on each jar, then finger tighten the rings – you don't have to really torque on them.

Place your jars in the canner. *Place the closed jars into the canner. Be careful not to let the jars touch because not only could they break when they bump together in the boiling water, but in p-canning the steam must be able to completely circulate around the jars.*

Build steam in the canner. *Before putting the lid on the canner, check the vent pipe every single time to be sure it is clear. Place the lid firmly on the canner, latching it as per the specifics of your canner, and increase the heat to bring the water to a boil. At this point steam should be coming out of the vent pipe. Reduce the heat until a moderate amount of steam is coming steadily out of the pipe for 10 minutes. The purpose of this is to release the air and build up the steam inside the canner. If you don't give it the whole 10 minutes, your canner will not build pressure. (As patience is not my strong point, I learned this from experience.)*

Close the vent. *After exhausting the steam for 10 minutes, depending on your canner, either close the petcock or place the weighted regulator on the vent pipe. When I place the regulator on, I always put a dishtowel around my hand, because, yeah, steam is HOT. It sometimes makes a loud high-pitched noise when you are putting the regulator on - I startled myself the first time! Don't be alarmed by the various rattling, whistling and bubbling noises. P-canning is loud business.*

Pressurize the canner. *Turn up the heat on the burner and wait until the gauge has reached the desired pressure. (Pressure will differ based on altitudes and recipes). This usually takes 3-5 minutes. Note: if you lose pressure during processing you must re-start the processing time. Adjust the heat to maintain the pressure – this takes practice. Monitor your canner throughout the processing time to be sure the pressure is maintained. I have found that approximately #4 on the dial on my electric stove keeps my pressure between 10-12 pounds quite steadily.*

Release the pressure. *When your processing time is over it is time to release the pressure. It couldn't be easier. Turn off the burner. Take the canner off the burner and put it on a heat-proof surface. Walk away. Allow the canner to return to room temperature and release pressure naturally. Don't try to do anything to cool it down faster - that is how people get hurt p-canning. The pressure is completely reduced when the air vent/cover lock and overpressure plug have dropped and no steam escapes when the pressure regulator is tilted. The gauge, if your canner has one, should be completely at zero. This can take 45 minutes to an hour and cannot be rushed!*

Open the vent. *When pressure is gone, open the petcock or remove the weighted regulator. If the regulator doesn't want to come off - there is likely still some pressure in the canner. Don't force it - walk away for another 15 minutes. Once the vent is open, leave the canner for another 2-5 minutes.*

Remove the jars from the canner. *Use potholders to protect your hands while you unlatch the lid of your p-canner. Very carefully remove the lid to the canner, facing it away from you so that you are not burned by the steam that will rush out.* Using your jar lifter, carefully remove the jars from the canner, one by one. Then place the jar on your towel or heat-proof surface.

Allow 12-24 hours for the jars to cool and seal. Let the jars stand in a draft-free place without being moved or bumped, usually overnight. Jars that are sealed properly will bubble away on the counter for quite some time after they are removed from the p-canner. You will hear a musical "pop" as the jars seal in the cool air – that is the lid getting sucked down and forming a seal on the lip of the jar. When you are ready to store the jars, you can remove the rings and then test the seal by pushing down with your finger. If it pops back and forth it is not sealed. Put it in the refrigerator and use the unsealed product right away. Store your sealed jars in a cool, dark place.

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How to Make Acorn Flour

By: Erich

This post is a follow-up to the The Fantastic Four – 4 Essential Wild Edible Plants that May Just Save Your Life article. In this post, I demonstrate how to process and eat one of the core four essential plants: Acorns.

Turning those bitter tasting nuts that are found all over the place during the fall into something that is not only palatable but rather good tasting is not as difficult as one would think. In this post I'll be demonstrating how to turn acorns into an awesome food source.

Step 1: Gather the Acorns

The first step is rather self-explanatory. But for the sake of being thorough I'll go through it.

While you can collect them directly from the tree, the best place to gather acorns is right under the tree when they fall. Of course, the earlier you can grab these in the fall the better since you'll be competing with all the other nut-loving creatures (squirrels, chipmunks, deer, acorn weevils, and other survivors besides you).

Step 2: Shell the Acorns

Similar to other nuts, you'll need to remove the shell of the acorns before you can consume them. There are different ways to do this: Nutcracker, pounding it with a hammer and removing the nut meat, or my favorite way is a two-step process: first cut them all in half with a large kitchen knife and then work at popping out the nut meat using the sharp point of a smaller knife.

Step 3: Pulverize the Nut Meat

Now that you have all the nut meat out of the shells, you'll want to grind these down as fine as possible. The old way is to use a big flat rock as your surface (acts as a mortar) and a smaller round rock used to crush and grind the nut (the pestle) into a fine consistency. Since I like to train in the old way but still use technology when possible, I like using my Greenstar juicer or a food processor. The nuts are softer than peanuts and will not damage these appliances.

Step 4: Leech the Tannins out of the Acorns

All the acorns that I've processed (yes, even white oak) required that I leeched the bitter tannins out of them before gobbling them down. To do this, bring a pot of water to a boil and pour the acorn meal in it. Let it boil for 5+ minutes making sure to stir the pot so that some of the acorn meal doesn't stick and burn at the bottom.

As an FYI, you could have skipped step 3 and just continued with this step, however I find that it takes way too long to process and wastes too much fuel. By using the ground up meal, it provides a greater surface area and leeches out the tannins much faster.

Step 5: Filter out the Acorn Flour from the Water

After your initial boil, filter out the acorn flour with a cheesecloth or an old t-shirt (even a sock will do in a pinch). I like to place a colander in my sink and then place the t-shirt or cheesecloth over the colander making a bowl-like depression with it.

After pouring the liquid into the cloth depression, be careful with the hot water. It's best to pour cold water into the slurry until it cools off and you can then pick up the cloth filter to help strain the remaining water out.

After filtering, you'll want to do a taste test. Is it still bitter? If so, repeat steps 4 and 5 until the bitterness is out.

Final Steps

At this point you're left with essentially a ball of acorn-flour dough. If you want you can use this right away or if you want to save it for later, you can dry it out.

To dry it out, simply spread it out flat onto a cookie sheet and place it in the oven at the lowest temperature until it is completely dry, or do the same thing but instead place it outside (this takes longer). Placing it in a food dehydrator also works great.

After it has dried out you'll probably notice that it has caked together (this is due to the high fat content). You can store it as is or further process it by crushing it into a powder (by hand or food processor). This acorn flour can then be used to make pancakes, bread, or added to cereals or soup.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 ounce (28g)

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 142	Calories from Fat 74
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 9g	14%
Saturated Fat 1g	6%
Trans Fat	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 15g	5%
Dietary Fiber	0%
Sugars	
Protein 2g	

Vitamin A	0%	• Vitamin C	0%
Calcium	2%	• Iron	2%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

NutritionData.com

Acorn Nutrition Information

Acorns are surprisingly nutritious and sustaining. Here's the general nutrition info for 1 oz of dried acorn meal:

For more details into the protein quality and nutrient balance of acorns see the following link: http://www.nutritiondata.com/facts/nut-and-seed-products/3083/2

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Supplement: Top 10 Things

By: Gary Griffin

Given the recent influx of Prepper Link Members that are new to Prepping, we wanted to create a supplemental guide to our Top 10 Things to Accomplish article. When you are new to prepping, everything becomes a little too overwhelming. I wish I could tell you the "lost" feeling changes over time, but it doesn't. The truth is; while you expand your "prepper" knowledge, your interests in new subjects can spiral out of control. And, when you think you have figured something out, you may realize that you have solved only a small piece of the puzzle.

My Initial Rant

Regardless of why you are prepping (your purpose), all prepping mindsets have the same end state; initial survival, followed by sustainable living or waiting out the storm. Regardless if you are preparing for an EMP, hurricane, zombies, or financial collapse, your daily minimal requirements are centered around regulating your body temperature, eating nutritious foods, and consuming water; if you desire to stay alive. And, you will need to accomplish those primary tasks day after day.

I often laugh while watching episodes of Doomsday Preppers. Each segment starts with a person saying, "I am preparing for: blah, blah, blah," which could include financial collapse, the New Madrid earthquake, eruption of Yellow Stone's super volcanoes, or insert your fear here. In reality, we are preparing to regulate our body temperature so that hypothermia or hyperthermia does not kill us, ensuring we have access to clean water for drinking and hygiene purposes, having enough food to last however long we deem necessary, and having ways to protect your family; maybe with a faraday cage or bunker on the side.

Doomsday Preppers, and others profiteering from the Preparedness movement, often expose the radical side of preparedness, and while some Preppers are perhaps radical, they do not depict the entire movement.

Doomsday Preppers, and others profiteering from the Preparedness movement, often expose the radical side of preparedness, and while some Preppers are perhaps radical, they do not depict the entire movement. Most non-Preppers, to include the media, believe we are a bunch of gun-toting, ammo hoarding, anti-government, paranoid, societal rejects. However, if we take a step back from the negative connotations of preparedness, primarily the terms Prepper, survivalist, or anything involving doomsday, and we approach preparedness from a humanistic viewpoint, we arrive at the point where everyday people - are doing the things necessary - so that they can live their lives - if the system were to collapse. Collapse could range from a power outage that lasts a few days, to the end of the world as we know it.

Our preparedness lifestyle makes sense; regardless it is not socially acceptable. The US government encourages us to have 3 days worth of food and supplies for emergency preparedness. We, as Preppers, just exaggerate the time period. Forming a Prepper Group is no different than being on a school board or forming neighborhood watch. Most Preppers are even focused on giving back to the community, whether now by volunteering within the community as an advocate of preparedness, or post disaster by developing plans to assist in the rebuilding process.

Precursor

Before we get into what I see as priorities, let me first discuss a few things that I constantly see on forums and preparedness websites.

1. Prepping Purpose: The reason why Doomsday Preppers opens with, "I am preparing for…" is because that is how most of us think. As adults, we need something to motivate us so that we remain engaged in whatever we are doing. This is what we call our Prepping Purpose; a motivating factor that we decide to prepare for. Once our purpose is defined, we invest time, money, and effort into achieving that goal. If you wanted to become an architect, you wouldn't attend medical school (waste of time, money, and effort). I also believe that the primary reason why we prepare is due to fear; the fear of not having the things necessary to provide for our family, and fears of natural or manmade disasters or societal collapse altering the world as we know it. I would never fault someone's beliefs, regardless if I agree with them or not, and I do not understand why others try to fault people they do not agree with.
2. The Government is out to get you: I personally do not believe this, unless you are openly breaking the law. However, I do not rule out the possibility.
3. People will see me as being crazy: Possibly. I think Preppers are viewed this way due to the media, but more importantly due to non-Preppers' beliefs that a collapse or major disaster will never happen. It is a defense mechanism; they cannot accept that our society is fragile. In their defense, nothing happened during Y2K, we recovered from 9/11, and the Mayan calendar was wrong. However, people's lives were altered in the Gulf Coast (Hurricane Katrina), Joplin, MO (tornadoes), Japan (Tsunami / nuclear meltdown), and more recently on the East Coast (Hurricane Sandy). While these disasters did not lead to societal collapse, having basic preparations would have gone a long way; while others were struggling waiting for handouts, it may have been a minor inconvenience for the Prepper.
4. It can never happen to me: Read the above paragraph.

1. Information Overload

As you start Prepping, you will be influenced by many different viewpoints, whether from a friend, group member, TV show, YouTube video, blog, forum, or by us at Prepper Link. Your first step is to understand that every source of information, is just that; a source of information. You will have to determine right from wrong, or find a great source that is fairly accurate. Bad information and contradictions add several more layers of confusion. Also, please understand that another person's priorities may not be your own; although someone may be a great speaker or can shout the loudest, has cool videos, or a well laid out website, doesn't necessarily mean the information they are passing is correct. Your best ally is to read product reviews and read comments to forum posts, articles, videos.

2. Prepping on a Budget

Prepping can be achieved on any budget. While having deep pockets makes the prepping lifestyle a lot easier, prepping goals can be accomplished by any one. That bunker may not be attainable, but having enough food for your family is within reach. The budget conscious Prepper has to find items which accomplish multiple tasks, or repurpose things that can be used for a task that it was not designed for.

Your budget will drive the types of purchases you will make, and will identify how long it will take to achieve your goals. Therefore, set realistic purchase goals before you jump into purchasing items. A practical example of a new Prepper's priorities involves building a Bug Out Bag (BOB), right? Almost every prepping resource recommends having a BOB, there are countless BOB videos on YouTube, and websites push BOB products all the time. However, your BOB will do you no good, if you do not know how to live off of the land. Instead, purchase a month's worth of food, or more, and have a water filtration device, or multiple devices, before you get into the gear side of prepping. And, invest in outdoors skills and survival knowledge. If you have all of these accomplished, then look at purchasing a BOB.

Most websites, and many YouTube posters, follow trends on what is popular. BOBs, for example, are always popular due to everyone needing, or at least wanting one. We [content creators] recommend products that can fill a place in your BOB, so that you will click the ad link. If you purchase, sometimes even if you do not, the website may make a few cents to a several dollars from your click or purchase. This is advertising, and is how Google makes its billions, and how websites like Prepper Link generate revenue. Now, there is nothing wrong with the process. However, do not let media and advertising trends influence your priorities, especially if you are on a budget.

When dealing with storing food on a budget, do not feel pressured to purchase freeze dried meals. While freeze dried meals have a long shelf life and take the effort out of meal preparation, they are expensive. Instead look to stock up on the basics; grains, rice, pasta, flour, beans, sugar, salt, and canned meat and vegetable products (read our Top 10 Food Staples article). After you have stockpiled a month or more, then look to purchase a dehydrator or canning equipment, or start buying freeze dried meals. We will address food again later.

Another trend is having items for barter. If you are on a budget, forget about it. Bartering is one of those things that most preppers believe is a priority. However, if you do not have several months of food, a water storage plan and filtration devices, a way to protect yourself, and medical supplies; then do not even consider purchasing random items specifically intended for bartering. In the worst case scenario, you could use some of your basic, although necessary, items for bartering. However, if we revert to a barter based society, you should strive to be in a position where you do not have to barter; meaning you already have the necessities in your stockpile. Bartering should be last resort, or because you have an abundance of perishable goods.

3. Your Water Plan and Access to Clean Water

In the Law of 3's (3 minutes with oxygen, 3 hours without shelter, 3 days without water, 3 weeks without food), water is just as important as anything else. Whenever new Preppers ask me where to start, I always recommend water. Why? Water is going to ensure you stay hydrated, but just as important; it is going to

allow you to conduct personal hygiene. Being a member of the US Army during the 2003 Iraq invasion, I know firsthand how the lack of clean water can impact a group of people. Besides the obvious issue of not having water (dehydration), a lack of water clean water for personal hygiene can lead to diarrhea and Dysentery (extreme diarrhea). No water, you cannot wash your hands or clothes or flush your toilet, if you cannot do those, well, you get Dysentery. And, once you get Dysentery, you are ineffective; you will be limited in the amount of daily tasks you can accomplish.

Your water plan should include a minimum of one gallon of water, per person, per day. It would be hard to store a year's worth of water, so instead start with a month's worth of water. Realistically, you should plan on have three gallons of water, per person, per day so that you can conduct proper personal hygiene. On three gallons a day, you would be hard pressed to have a shower each day, but you could ration your water by taking bird-baths, and maybe a shower each week. For more information, please read our Water Filtration and Purification Guide.

4. Food Storage and a Sustainable Food Plan

Having a solid food storage plan should be a major priority. Get your food squared away before you worry about purchasing firearms for personal defense (if you do not already have firearms), although hunting firearms should be a priority. Building your food reserves can be a very overwhelming. However, I think some people put too much confidence in their food storage plan. Don't get me wrong; having stored food is important. But, having a plan to replenish your reserves, i.e. hunting, fishing, and growing your food is just as important.

For stored foods, purchase items that you currently eat and ensure that you have a variety of foods. Personally, I have gone the dehydrated food route, where I dehydrate the majority of my stored fruits and vegetables. Some individuals can their own foods. Some purchase freeze dried and dehydrated foods, and some buy canned goods. There isn't a wrong way of doing it; regardless what you may read on different blogs. However, you need to be cautious of shelf life and you must ensure that you rotate your food storage.

Having the knowledge to hunt or catch your own fish are both important traits to have. If you think you are going to run into the wild, BOB strapped to your back, take down a deer with a slingshot bow or a snare, and have a feast of venison with your group members, well… You should be practicing this right now. Even if you are lucky enough to kill a deer, or any animal for that matter, you will also need to know how to properly butcher the animal. In addition, you will need to know how to preserve the meat.

Catching a fish is not always that easy either. I am constantly teaching people basic fishing techniques, even ones that have been "fishing their entire lives". And, catching enough fish to supplement your families, or group's, diet is an extremely difficult task. To be successful at catching fish, you need to understand seasonal patterns; meaning fish act differently depending on the time of year, and this changes depending on where you live and the types of waters you are fishing. Sometimes they are shallow, sometimes they are deep, sometimes they are in large schools, and sometimes they are scattered. In the fishing world, we call these patterns, and if you are unable to establish a pattern, you will not catch enough fish to survive. I also recommend learning how to use a cast net and gill net, and stockpiling an abundance of fishing supplies.

In addition to your food storage reserves, hunting, and fishing, you should also learn how to grow your own foods.

In addition to your food storage reserves, hunting, and fishing, you should also learn how to grow your own foods. This is a no brainer right? Well, it can be more difficult than you think, and if you do not have this experience you need to plant a garden. The excuse I often hear is, "I do not have enough land to grow a garden." While this may be true for conventional gardens, most people can grow container gardens, or convert deck space to garden space. The key to gardening is to experience different methods, so that you can find which method is most compatible with you and your land. Available space, and cost, will determine which method you chose.

Having a solid seed bank is also important, however you need to find seeds that are compatible with you region. I do not get too lost in the heirloom vs. hybrid debate, and I recommend having a variety of both, please read our Seed Stocking: Heirloom vs. Hybrid article. In addition to seeds, you will also need fertilizers, insecticides, and the tools necessary to till your garden and/or build grow boxes.

Lastly, you should understand which wild edibles are available in your area. While I believe this is a necessary skill to have, there are some drawbacks to eating wild edibles. Eat the wrong ones you can get sick and die. Eat too many of the right ones, and you can upset your stomach. Our diets are not built around eating wild edibles, so chances are you will upset your stomach. If you are not comfortable selecting and preparing wild edibles, I highly recommend finding a guide in your local area and to start learning from them.

5. Tools, Tools, and More Tools

In our modern society, if something breaks we call the repair man, or go purchase a replacement part or device. However, if the grid collapses, this may not be that easy. In a grid down society, we will be our own repair man/woman and we will fabricate our own thingamajigs. Therefore, we will need our own tools, and tools are one of the hardest things to replace in a grid down situation (it is difficult to make them). I recommend, at a minimum, having general household tools, to include: a hammer, multiple screwdrivers, powered drills, drill bits, and a socket set. Additionally, you should have several shovels, axes, hoes, rakes, and other gardening tools.

In addition to your tools, you need to have an abundance of nails, screws, nuts and bolts, and electrical tools. Remember, there may not be a resupply. Even if you do not know how to use your tools, or plan on using these supplies, you should store them. Hopefully, someone in your network will know how to use them.

Conclusion

While there are countless guides and resources out there, they are not always applicable to your situation. As Preppers we need to determine which courses of action we need to take at an individual level. While modeling your system around a series of YouTube videos is a great starting point, more than likely you will need to adjust the system to fit your needs. Do not get too lost in the marketing campaigns, or what you watch on TV. Instead, get out there and live the life, learn from your own experiences, and adapt from there.

Gary Griffin is a five year veteran of the U.S. Army, and has over 15 years experience in the Intelligence Community (IC). Gary Griffin is the co-founder of www.prepperlink.com, and is an active member of the preparedness community.

Survival from Zero

By: John Beck

You wake up. You are in a forest, you have no idea what time it is, you don't know where you are, you don't know how you got there and you have no idea what happened.

You are dressed, but have no backpack or gear. This is bad.

What now?

This might seem like a pretty outlandish scenario, but I wanted us all to be thinking about survival with no preparation and with no supplies.

This might seem overwhelming to you. I agree. It is very overwhelming to me too. Luckily you always have one tool with you, anywhere you go, your mind.

Let's get back to our scenario.

Let us utilize our main survival multi-tool, our minds and assess our immediate needs. When I am unprepared and unsure of my situation, I feel it's best to start with the *Law of Three*.

The *Law of Three* helps us keep our priorities straight and in the right order during the first hectic, panic filled moments of a new, unfamiliar and potentially life threatening situation.

The Law of Three states that:

- Survival is only possible for **three minutes** without air.
- Survival is only possible for **three hours** without warmth.
- Survival is only possible for only **three days** without replenishing water in your body.
- Survival is only possible for **three weeks** without food.

The *Law of Three* has given us a road map to immediate and not so immediate needs. Let's work from the top.

Survival is only possible for three minutes without air

I am assuming that you have air. If you don't have air, this needs to be rectified right now. Stop reading this and swim to the surface or leave the smoke filled house you are in. Get to some air NOW.

That was easy enough, glad I was here to help you keep breathing.

Once I am sure that I have the ability to breath, I like to pause a moment and empty out my pockets to see if I have anything, that will make a difference, I also turn around in place a few times to see if I notice ANYTHING around me that I can use. This includes sticks, rocks and litter. A nice big stick can give you a feeling of security, a quick measure of protection and help you while walking.

Once I've done a quick inventory I move on.

Survival is only possible for three hours without warmth
First stop and think about this. How can I keep dry? How can I keep warm? How can I generate heat?

This one takes a bit of thought. What season is it? What is the temperature now, what will the temperature be after nightfall or once the sun comes up?

It's a good practice to wear clothes made of wool or non-cotton synthetics. Wet-cotton will provide no warmth and will suck the heat from your body, hence it being called the death cloth. Wet wool still provides warmth. I've never seen a sheep shivering in the rain...have you?

If you start getting cold you can add layers of paper, newspaper or leaves and vegetation under your clothes. You could stuff enough leaves in your clothing to insulate your body, but you may be mistaken for a sumo wrestler.

Summer
If it's summer and you are in a temperate environment, you might only have to worry about staying dry, or keeping warm at night.

Staying dry - Staying dry seems easy enough. You can hide out under a tree, unless there's lightening. If it's a thunderstorm, do NOT hide under a tree. Lay flat in the rain if you must. Wet is better than dead. You can keep your eyes open for discarded litter to use for an improvised umbrella or shelter. Trash bags make great raincoats or can be cut along the seams to fashion a rudimentary tarp for shelter. You can break off tree limbs with lots of leaves and weave or overlap them into a shelter of sorts.

You can get by simply if you can stay dry and get out of the wind in summer.

Winter
Winter is a tough season. It's cold.

How are you dressed? Are you wearing winter outerwear? If you have coat, gloves, boot and wool stocking cap, you have a great start.

If you don't have winter clothes on then you need shelter now! Even if you do have winter clothes a shelter is a prudent idea.

If you can dig, with a stick, shovel or piece of repurposed litter, then dig a snow fort, or create a pup tent/lean to hybrid (debris shelter) with a skeleton of sticks from a central pole (sapling or large branch) running the length of you shelter, then covered with a thick layer of snow. The thicker the layer of snow the better. I'm talking about 2 or 3 feet of snow.

Once you get a shelter built or snow fort dug, you need to lay as many fur tree boughs and branches on the floor to provide you with insulation from the ground, to reflect warmth and cushion you. make sure to get enough that you can burrow into the pile and have some above you like a blanket if you can.

Once you have a shelter or alternate methods of providing warmth and dryness, you can then move on the next steps

Fire
We need fire for warmth in the winter and to clean any water we locate. How can we make fire?

I am not fond of twirling a stick into another stick or rubbing sticks together for friction heat to make fire. I am a 21st century human, not a caveman, plus my hands are very soft.

Before you start trying to make fire, gather some tinder, for you tinder bundle, small bits of burnable mass and firewood.

What I will do is try to find a soda can. It doesn't matter where you are, someone has dropped a soda can or some glass that I can use to focus the sun on some dry tinder or paper.

Soda can? Yes, a soda can. I take a soda can and find some fine dirt, dust, stone powder or fine sand. I spit on the bottom end of the can and make a paste with the dirt or dust. Then I use a piece of my shirt, clothing or piece of paper to polish the bottom of that soda can until I can polish it no more. Hopefully I can get a mirror like shine on it and use it as a reflector to focus the sun's rays into a pinpoint of fire making light.

Ice can be melted and polished with your hands into a "lens" and clear bottles of clear water can be used as a lense.

I have also had luck with using broken bottles and jars like you would a magnifying glass. I have also smacked random rocks against each other to see if they make sparks. All viable methods, all pretty much are not easy.

I guess the moral of my firemaking story is, always have a cigarette lighter in your pocket. If you carry a backpack or bag for work, just toss a couple lighters and an alternate fire starting method in there and forget about it.

Survival is only possible for only three days without replenishing water in your body
First stop and think. Where can I find water? Is there water near me?

Yes you do have 3 days before you'll die without water, but after a day without water your body and mind are really going to suffer.

I'd prefer to find water as soon as I can after ensuring that I have my warmth, shelter and a method of fire making.

Water can be located by looking for and following game trails and watching the direction of birds in the morning or at dusk. In most regions of the world you can find water by just exploring in your area and listening.

If you can't find a body of water, then be prepared to walk around in the dewy vegetation and wring the water from your socks into your mouth. You could also wrap your feet with other items of clothing and do the same thing.

While searching for water, keep your eyes open for anything that can be used to boil water in, once you find it. Things like empty soda cans, jars, even plastic bottles can be used with fire to purify your water.

Survival is only possible for three weeks without food

Again stop and think, "where can I find food" or "what is edible near me"?

Food is the last priority in the Law of the Three, but once you have the other items squared away it is important to keep your strength up.

There are a million ways to find food. You can forage for wild edibles, but unless you know exactly what you are eating, this isn't a great idea.

You can safely eat dandelions though. We all know what those look like. They are bitter and gross, but they are edible and will give you some nutrients.

Insects are a great form of nutrition and are much easier to catch than animals. Big juicy earthworms are really meaty. I know it's gross. Survival is always dirty and gross to some degree. Historically survival has always been hard and nearly impossible, modern man is a pansy compared to our ancestors.

Primitive hunting tools

Chances are you can find a stick and grind it to a point on some rocks. This sharp stick could act as a long spear for hunting and stabbing game. This spear might be better used down by the water on frogs, fish and turtles but anything you can spear is fair game.

Broken glass is awesome for a blade. You can use it as a spearhead or arrow head. You can skin game and remove the guts with a shard of glass.

Some people will talk about deadfall traps and fashioning rudimentary snares out of rope, made of plants. I plan on walking in a straight line right out of this situation, not waiting around and checking traps. A spear and a handful of rocks, to throw at animals, is how I plan to get food, while I am making my way back to civilization.

Getting back to civilization

Pick a direction and keep walking in it. In the morning walk towards the sun, in the evening keep it at your back. You can change direction only if you come to a road, stream or river. Obviously you should follow one of those. Follow a river downstream until you come to a road or civilization. If you find a road, just follow it until you are safe.

Always give yourself enough daylight to build your next shelter and fire! Always refill your water supply at every opportunity.

I'd never wish survival from zero, or survival with zero, on anyone. We all need to be prepared. That doesn't mean we have to lug our Bug-out bags around with us everywhere we go, but we should always have a few essentials.

From the time I get out of bed until I go to bed, I always have my pocket knife, a cigarette lighter (don't smoke) and a flashlight. While I'm in bed, those items are near so that they are the first thing grab when dressing in the morning, or can be grabbed if I have to get up and run from my house with no warning.

In addition to your mind, you should always have:

1. Pocket Knife
2. Cigarette Lighter
3. Flashlight
4. Cash money

I hope this article encourages you to think. To use your mind as your primary tool and utilize anything you can find in your environment. I hope that it also encourages you to plan to have a few key survival essentials with you every day, wherever you are.

John Beck, The Geek Prepper, is a regular guy, a computer geek, freelance writer and blogger. He grew up in rural Ohio and headed out into the untamed woods and forests along the St Marys river. John lives the Boy Scout motto "Be Prepared" every day in his preparedness lifestyle. His blog www.geek-prepper.com ranges from budget prepping to bushcraft to prepping best practices. His posts have been syndicated and can also be seen on the Before It's News website, in the survival section. Have you prepped today?

Don't Waste Your Time…There's Prepping To Do!

Jeff "The Berkey Guy" Gleason

The nature of my business, not unlike many of us here, keeps me talking to preparedness-minded individuals every single day. I really do enjoy it, especially when people who are just starting off on their journeys sincerely want to know more about becoming better prepared. It's exhilarating to hear someone make a connection, when they've just realized how dependent they've been on things way beyond their control…like water. One thing that is within our control, however, is how we manage our time.

I'm convinced that time management skills are what separate the "successful" from the "unsuccessful", especially when it comes to prepping. The recurring character-trait that I see with preparedness-conscious people is their willingness to get things done, even if it is only in small increments. Huge successes are usually the results of many, many small successes. The ability to stay on task, especially if there are several projects competing for your time, is what will help you to further your skills & become more prepared today, than you were yesterday. So, make the most of your time.

I've been able to observe a few people who say they are preparedness conscious, but they really are nothing more than collectors of supplies & tools. They are eager to use the products, but not interested in mastering the principles behind their use! Such folks are wasting precious time that should be devoted to the key ingredient of prepping: skill development!

Last May, I received a phone call from a lady who had just discovered some of her vulnerabilities; food storage was her main reason for calling me. As usual, she began asking questions & I answered them by guiding her to fill me in on her situation. After spending considerable time & sharing references for her to continue educating herself, I let her know that I had to get back to helping other customers. I had recommended so many valuable resources such as our Blog, Jack Spirko's TheSurvivalPodcast.com, SurvivalBlog.com, SurvivalistBoards.com, BackdoorSurvival.com, TheSurvivalMom.com, & many more.

As much as I would have loved to continue educating her, I have learned that learning is most valuable when it is individually earned. There are many people who are willing to ask you a million questions…in one sitting. I have found that those who ask tons of questions in one sitting neither respect their own time, nor yours. Practical folks know that it's best to eat a meal one bite at a time, before scooping up more from the plate.

That, my fellow prepper friends, is my point with this article. It's rather simple, but simplicity is what life is all about. There are many good things we can do with our time, but I'm not satisfied with the "good" things. My schedule runs by what is **best** for my time, my family, my professional commitments, and the communities with which I'm involved, like The Preparedness Review!

Jeff "The Berkey Guy" can be found at GoBerkey.com, which offers a wide array of Products which promote DIY, Homesteading, Preparedness, Self-Reliance, & Survival. Jeff has been an Authorized Dealer of the Berkey® Water Systems for almost 7 years & is regularly adding new products to his site. GoBerkey.com is owned by LPC Survival, Ltd. Connect with Jeff on Facebook via LPC's Fan page.

Concealed Carry Training & Practice

by: Brandon

Firearms Training and Practice

If you own firearms, this article is for you. Whether you are a concealed carry permit holder, or simply own firearms for home protection, getting credible training and practicing with your firearms are both extremely important, and could someday save your life or the life of someone you love.

Training vs. Practice

First let's get on the same page with our terminology. Training is the act of teaching or learning a particular skill or behavior, while practice is the application of that learned skill or behavior. So in the context of firearms, training would be going to a training course with a qualified instructor, and practicing would be your trips to the range, dry fire practicing in your home, etc.

Why Get Training?

So why should you spend your hard earned money on training? I hear this question a lot actually, and the answer is pretty simple: because you need it (and so do I). A lot of folks I talk to that ask this question have been shooting for a long time, some much longer than me, and they feel that because they have a lot of experience punching holes in paper with their pistol, or putting down game with their rifle or shotgun, that they don't need training.

Typically, the disconnect is that the word "training" can mean a lot of different things, from learning basic safety and marksmanship (or markspersonship for those of you who are politically correct) to various fighting skills, team tactics, and everything in between. While you may be very skilled at punching holes in paper, do you know how to fight with your weapons?

Hopefully you will never need to use your weapon to defend or take a life, but you might have to. To help illustrate the need and benefit of training, let's examine training in the context of concealed carry.

Concealed Carry

When discussing firearms for concealed carry, we are obviously discussing handguns. For the sake of brevity, the remainder of this article will focus on using a pistol for concealed carry and not a revolver, both because I consider a pistol to be a superior fighting tool, and because the pistol is far more popular than a revolver. Your mileage may vary.

What are some of the skills needed to be able to fight with your concealed carry pistol? Here are a few of the highlights (not an exhaustive list).

Marksmanship

Marksmanship is essentially learning to put rounds on target. Stance, grip, trigger control, sight picture, sight alignment, recoil management, etc are all important skills to learn and practice.

Presentation
Once you learn to properly and accurately shoot your pistol, the next skill to learn is presentation, or safely drawing your pistol from concealment and presenting it towards the threat.

Reloading
Having the ability and knowledge to quickly and efficiently reload your weapon is also an important skill, because in the real world guns run out of ammunition. How you carry a spare magazine, and how you draw this spare magazine will affect how quickly you can perform a reload.

Clearing Malfunctions
All pistols, all firearms for that matter, can have malfunctions. Period. Some more than others, sure, but they can all malfunction and they can all break. How you react to a malfunction can be the difference between life and death. Knowing how to clear malfunctions is an extremely important skill to learn and practice.

Movement
You'll often hear it said that if you're standing still in a gun fight, you're dead. I'll leave the validity of such a statement to those with experience in actual gun fights, but being able to safely move with your pistol is an important skill, and not just when you are engaging a threat.

For example, you might be in a mall when multiple lunatics come in and start shooting people. Let's say one threat is eliminated, but you need to navigate around running and screaming people to engage a second threat or to take cover.

One Hand Manipulation
Many of us practice primarily using both hands. After all, God gave us two, right? Well yes He did, but that doesn't mean we will have the use of both during a gunfight. What happens if you are shot? What happens if you are carrying or shielding a child with one arm? What if you are fending off an attack with one hand, and you need to draw your pistol with the other?

Knowing how to effectively fight with your pistol using only one arm is another important skill that you should have.

Range Practice
Once you've gotten some training, it's important to practice your newly acquired skills at the range. This is hard for a lot of people, because most public ranges have rather strict safety rules, but get creative. For example, most ranges don't allow you to draw from concealment, but they do allow you to reload your pistol, right? So here's a drill you can do that will allow you to practice several skills and (usually) not violate any range rules.

Malfunction Mayhem
Malfunction mayhem is a drill I use quite a lot to practice clearing malfunctions. Here's the way I do it, which is a slight variation from the way it was taught to me. I load up several magazines with a mixture of

live rounds, dummy rounds, and empty brass, at random. I usually go with somewhere between three and seven rounds per magazine. I then run through the magazines as quickly as possible, while still being safe and putting rounds on target. Obviously during the course of fire, the gun is not going to go bang many different times and for various reasons. This allows me to work on quite a few different things in just one drill: clearing malfunctions (type I, II and III), marksmanship, reloads, etc.

Dry Fire Practice

Dry fire practice is simply practicing with your firearms without ammunition. There are many different drills you can do without ammunition, from working on sight alignment, sight picture and trigger control to working on presentation (drawing from concealment), clearing malfunctions, reloads, movement, and much more.

Wrapping Up

This article is only meant to be an introduction to some of the skills I feel are important for concealed carry and home defense and some ways to practice those skills. It is by no means intended to be a comprehensive list. Getting training is extremely important, and could someday save your life or the life of someone you love.

Brandon is the Editor-in-Chief of Monderno.com, a website dedicated to guns, gear, knives and survival. At Monderno, we showcase gear that works, as well as discuss a variety of topics including personal preparedness, concealed carry and personal security. You can connect with Monderno on Facebook and Twitter.

Making Bacon Off-Grid

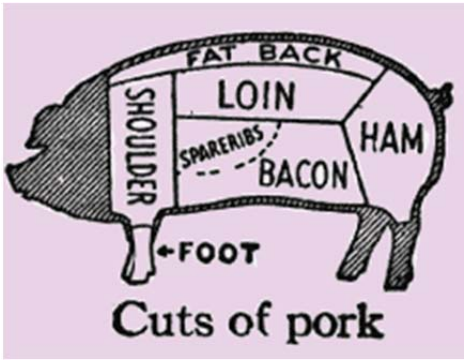
by: Michael Bunker

If you're like me, you love to read about the "old-timey" ways of doing things, and you study preserving foods in a more traditional, pre-Industrial way. However, I'm forever frustrated that almost every cookbook, website, etc. that deals with food preservation immediately turns to refrigeration or freezing throughout the process, as if those methods were always available in the days before the ubiquitous use of electricity. The very fact that we are here and breathing air on earth bears witness to the fact that our forefathers were able to produce, preserve, and store food without electricity. Even canning is now considered a "must" in homestead food preservation, when in fact canning is a very new phenomenon, and it is (in the long run) an unsustainable practice. For the Off Off-Grid homesteader, we need to know how to do things in the ways that they were done for millennia before the onslaught of industrialism and readily available (and soul-deadening, and mind crippling) electricity. So here is a way to make bacon like your ancestors likely did.

Bacon cure (per 5 lbs. of bacon):

4 oz. sea salt
4 tsp. of pink salt
1 tsp. of Saltpetre (we buy it at a local drug store but it can be made at home... with urine)
4 tbs black pepper
2 tsp nutmeg
1/2 cup sucanat or brown sugar (regular sugar or honey will work too)
20 sprigs of thyme

Start with some fresh pork belly. When you butcher, this is the part that basically covers up the belly. There are plenty of resources online that tell you how to cut up a pig, but here is a primer:



I'm no expert butcher, but I can get parts and make them into bacon. And in fact, the method shown here is good for turning ANY part of the pig into bacon. You can take big chunks of the loin, ham, or shoulder and make "Canadian Bacon" out of them, using this same process.

This isn't pretty butchering, but it is gorgeous meat.

A close up of the deliciousness.

If you are going to try to keep your bacon without refrigeration, go ahead and add the 1 tsp of Saltpetre at the beginning. Put all of this into a deep pan and coat your bacon liberally with it. Get it in all of the nooks and crannies.

This is the "cure", and that is what you call it.

Coat every surface liberally. Get it into every nook and cranny.

You can see here that I've tried to use every bit of the cure.

Cover and Store it in a cool place for 1 week. The cooler the better. But don't panic, like modern books try to make you do. If you can keep it fairly cool (root cellar temps) for a week, then you'll be fine. After the week, rinse it off thoroughly with cool water and let it soak in cool water for 24 hours. Then dry it off well and let it sit in a cool place for another 24 hours. This is the equalization period, when the cure is equalized throughout the meat. The next step is to cold smoke it for 7 days or longer depending on how dry and smoked you want it. I recommend up to two weeks if you want to store it really long term. If you want to ship it from England to America, smoke/dry it for a month or more before packing it in salt.

Beautiful meat smoking in our beautiful smokehouse.

The finished product will be beautiful and pink and very tempting.

If you want this bacon for long term preservation without refrigeration, pack the finished bacon in salt. When you are ready to use it, pull it from the salt, rinse it off, slice it, soak it for 24 hours in cool water to get rid of some of the saltiness, and then fry it up!

It's really a pretty simple process, and this bacon will store for a very long time if it is checked regularly and maintained. There are other ways to preserve it for long-term storage. If you have a generator, you can shrink wrap it, put it in a sealed container and store it in your root cellar. You can also "lard" it, by putting each slab one-at-a-time into a crock and then covering it with melted and rendered lard. When it is time to cook your bacon, you pull it out of the lard, scrape off the excess and wipe it down, then slice it and cook it. Always remember, if you store your bacon in salt, you will need to soak it for a good long time to reduce the saltiness before you slice it and eat it.

Slice it to the thickness you desire and you are ready to go!

I look forward to hearing your comments and do let us know when you make your own.

Michael Bunker can be found at http://michaelbunker.com. He is a bestselling author, off-grid farmer, author, historian, philosopher, iconoclast, husband, and father of four living children. Michael's thriller smash fiction series W1CK was launched in late December and was on the top 20 charts on Amazon.com in its categories within a month. Time-travel / sci-fi thriller FUTURITY has now been released to rave reviews, and zombie/comedy/satire piece #NaNoWri War Z is also in the top 20 in its categories. Michael interacts with his readers at http://facebook.com/michaelbunker, and on Twitter as @mbunker

Prepper Propane 101

"Integrating propane into your prepping strategy."

by Chris Newman

This article covers the basics of propane as an important prepping energy resource. The subjects include safe propane handling, storage, assembling a stockpile of bulk tanks for long term storage at the lowest possible cost and refilling the smaller one pound canisters that are commonly used with portable camping gear, for about 1/5 the cost of new. We'll also examine a variety of entry-level propane appliances and their suitability in a survival scenario.

Why Propane?

<Hank Hill mode On> For convenience, value, air quality and long term storage stability, nothing beats propane. <Hank Hill mode Off>

Firewood is cheaper, if you have access to it and you don't count the value of your time. But, when you're burning all day and every day, it isn't all that convenient if you have to go out and cut/gather it yourself. The stuff is heavy, especially if you're hauling it a long distance. And, how are you at swinging an ax for hours at a time?

If you're short on survival labor, which is a fair probability, having the option to cook with propane for an extended time, at least until things settle out, will let you channel that considerable fuelwood time and energy into other important tasks, such as hunting and growing food, or warding off predators. Also, the ease of using propane allows the delegation of cooking etc. to a lesser-able member of your party, allowing all to contribute to the general welfare.

A Hedge Against Inflation

From an investment standpoint, the prices of both propane and the hardware/appliances that use it are directly tied to monetary price inflation - the "hidden tax" that steadily gnaws away at the purchasing power of your hard-won savings. Inflation is currently being deliberately manipulated to keep it low for now, but some price categories, like food, are still skyrocketing, with wages not keeping up. And, the economic stage is strongly set for hyper-inflation in the not-too-distant future.

So, one of the best investments in pre-inflationary and inflationary times (aka hedges against inflation - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inflation_hedge) is hard goods and consumables, like food, that you'll be using anyway and that will surely cost even more in the future. In other words, to combat inflation, the best place to store your surplus wealth is in tangible stuff, not pieces of paper, or electrons. For sure, no matter how the future shakes out, the retail prices for propane and propane hardware won't be getting any cheaper, and they probably will go up by a lot.

Properly stored, both fuel and hardware will last indefinitely without degrading, ready to use on a moment's notice. For all intents and purposes, unlike food, there's no limit to its shelf life.

So, you'll save money in the long run, anyway, by stockpiling consumables. But, if the grid goes down, there won't be any more propane available to buy at all and the value of your investment will go way up. So, the larger your stockpile and the smaller the appliances that use it, which use less fuel, the longer it will last you.

If you play your cards right, you can stockpile at least a year's worth of cooking and minimal lighting fuel for an average family (10 full five gallon bulk tanks that are equal to 200 small green canisters) for about $200, and do so $20 at a time.

Safety First!
If not handled with respect, Propane is DANGEROUS! As in dynamite dangerous and AK-47 dangerous. As in blowing up your whole house into kindling dangerous. This isn't vegetable oil. So, treat it with prudent caution and always, always, always read, understand and follow the safety directions that come with every propane product.

Never store tanks of propane indoors or in any other sealed environment. Especially, if you see, smell or hear a gas leak, shut off the source immediately and then fix the problem before you continue. If you can't shut it off, move away, warn others and cross your fingers. Otherwise, you'll very likely go up in a cloud of smoke and all your hard-won prepping will have been for naught.

On the plus side, propane has been used as a consumer product for nearly 100 years and stringent government regulations require hardware designs that are fairly, if not perfectly, fool-proof. So, it's not like you're handling nitroglycerin. But, unless you really know what you're doing, don't try to modify or override the hardware safety features.

Unlike gasoline vapors, pure propane is nontoxic, though it's certainly not healthy to breathe it and you should avoid it as you would with wood smoke. However, as with all combustion, there's a real risk of oxygen depletion in a sealed room and proper ventilation should be an ongoing consideration. If you find yourself starting to gasp for air, triggered by a buildup of carbon dioxide, that's an early warning sign that the oxygen is running low and it's time for some fresh air, no matter how cold it might be.

Unlike natural gas, propane is heavier than air (1.5 times as dense). In its unburned state, propane vapor sinks and pools at the floor level. So, simply opening a couple of high windows to vent a leak may not be enough: You need to open a door or something else at ground level to let the heavy unburned vapors "drain" outside to disperse.

Liquid propane, say from a broken hose or leaking tank valve, will flash to a vapor at atmospheric pressure and the vapor appears white due to moisture condensing from the air. A big cloud of propane in the open air will blow up with the slightest spark, even static. So, you want to avoid coming even close to these.

Those basic risks described, however, if you treat propane with respect and understanding, there is no better fuel to stockpile for long term storage and multiple uses in survival situations, at least where you are not on the run, and while it lasts. Especially, when you use propane for just vital things like cooking and night lighting, the use rate is surprisingly low and a little propane will go a long ways.

What is Propane?

Propane is a gaseous byproduct in the refining of both oil and natural gas. It can be compressed into a liquid at relatively low pressures and will readily convert back into a burnable vapor under any conditions which humans can tolerate. First synthesized in 1910, it has been in commercial production since the 1920's and the technology of using it at the consumer level is very well refined.

90% of all propane used in the US is from US sources, with 70% of the remaining amount coming from Canada. So, using propane fuel doesn't fund jihad by our enemies and the money remains within the US economy, which are two of the reasons why I like it, beside the many practical prepping utilities.

Propane combustion is much cleaner than gasoline and other liquid hydrocarbons, though not quite as clean as natural gas combustion. Environmentally, it's usually greener to cook with propane than with electricity. With a perfect burn, attainable only in theory, the only by-products are heat, carbon dioxide and water vapor. So, it can be used for indoor heating applications, but use a stove that provides a very high combustion efficiency and, especially, a low-oxygen sensor that will shut it down if the O2 gets low.

Convenience and Labor Savings

Another way to look at propane is as a serious labor saving device. In a self-subsistence scenario, your greatest critical shortages are going to be labor and the energy to power it. With propane in your resource inventory, the large amount of work that would normally have to be expended gathering and processing fuel for a cooking fire can then redirected into other critical tasks, such as growing food etc.

When cooking is less labor-intensive, it can also be assigned to the lessor-able in the party, such as older folks with more enthusiasm than physical stamina, while they simultaneously babysit and teach the young ones how to cook, freeing up the parents to work elsewhere.

The easiest way to implement propane into your prepping strategy and to start climbing the learning curve is to start looking for ways to incorporate it into your day-to-day life. It doesn't much matter where you start, but probably the best place is cooking. So, if you don't already have one, start shopping for a camping cook stove. Amazon has a good assortment and you can often find propane stuff at very attractive prices at yard sales etc. Generally speaking, you want appliances that use those green 1 pound propane canisters that cost so much new, but that can also be easily refilled at a huge savings.

To develop your proficiency in advance, fire up the camping stove and cook at least a few meals with it, perhaps practicing your prepper cooking recipes at the same time. Maybe hold a "grid-down weekend" drill, where you live off nothing but assembled assets, in order to test your resources and quickly determine what's missing. You'll be killing at least three prepping proficiency birds with one stone: Propane, using your portable stove and subsistence-style cooking from stored food.

Propane on the Run

An empty bulk tanks weighs 19 pounds and, when full, will weigh 39 pounds. So, they're not exactly ideal to bring along when running for your life on foot. However, if mobility is mandatory until you reach your safe haven (you do have one lined up, don't you?), simple single-burner stoves can be quite small and compact.

When combined with wok cooking, which includes stir-fry, steaming and soups/stews etc., you can feed a feed a lot of people with very little fuel. Asian folks, where fuel is always in critical shortage, have been using woks to cook for countless years as the most fuel-efficient way to prepare food over a tiny flame.

For truly minimalist propane use, such as in your bugout bag, a good choice is the Coleman PefectFlow 1-Burner Stove that screws directly onto the top of the canister.

Between the stove and fuel canister, you'll add about two pounds to your load. But, you'll also be able to boil a lot of questionable water for drinking, instant soups, coffee etc. which will also help cut the chill, and heat some quick meals whenever you can stop running for a few minutes.

Adding a small Cantonese style hammered steel lightweight wok and a couple of utensils won't add much more weight, and will give you even more subsistence options. The tiny stove and a canister will pack, mostly, inside the wok. Don't forget to pre-season your new wok, as you would with cast iron.

Costs

All things considered, propane as a backup energy supply is dirt cheap. There's a huge amount of high cost technology involved in the production of the gas and storage containers that you won't be able to replace on a DIY level. But, since propane is a byproduct of other processes, the market price doesn't reflect its true cost to create it, as with, say, solar panels.

As for cost per heat unit, propane is cheaper (and a lot safer to use) than any of the liquid fuels, though not quite as cheap as piped-in natural gas, none of which will be available in a grid-down situation.

The market price range will generally fluctuate along with the rest of the hydrocarbon market, so stock up shortly after gasoline prices go down, after the propane dealer has had a chance to catch up to lower their prices, which they are frequently not in a hurry to do, unless prices are going up.

For the first couple of bulk tanks in the stockpile, at least, I wouldn't stress too much about waiting for prices to drop to rock bottom. Even a 50 cents/gallon price difference is still only $2.50 for a bulk tank and I'd hate to get caught in the dark and cold because I delayed and tried to save a little pocket change. Once you're basically prepared with a couple of bulk tanks, you can then start extending the time that you acquire the balance of your stockpile on a timely and cost-effective basis. Even one bulk tank, with sparing use, should keep you going comfortably for a month of grid-down.

Just to make things confusing, propane is sold in two different measurements: In pre-filled container form, it is sold by the pound of fuel. But it's sold by the liquid gallon in bulk form. One gallon of liquid propane weighs just over four pounds, or will fill four green one pound canisters.

Since refilling, either by the dealer or the prepper, is never 100% to a container's capacity, your results will likely vary a little from the measured theory, but this is close enough for long term planning,

A brand new empty 20 pound (aka five gallon) bulk tank, the kind that your outdoor barbecue uses, will cost you about $25-$30. It must then be filled with 5 gallons of propane (currently $2.59/gallon at the farm co-op near my home in the Seattle area), which will cost another $12.95. So, the total cost for a brand new full bulk tank will run about $40.00.

If you obtain your propane by trading in your tank for a pre-"filled" tank at the local store, it's going to cost you about $18-$25. The higher price in the above recent photo at the local Walmart is if you don't have a trade-in tank. The lower price is if you do: A difference of about $26, or about the price for a brand new tank. Some propane kiosks will also charge a higher price if your trade-in tank is "non-OPD," which we'll cover a little later. You want to avoid these like the plague.

But, the tank that you receive in trade won't be full, because the suppliers deliberately do not fill it to capacity. To me, this is on a par with watering the booze. The shortage can vary from 2 pounds (10%) up to 5 pounds (25%) so, in order to figure out how badly you're being ripped off, check the new tank's label for the net weight in pounds and subtract that from 20. Around here, trade-in tanks are often 3 pounds (15%) light, so I'll use that figure.

Trading in is a very costly way to buy propane, at least if that's your only intent. On a trade-in basis, assuming a $20 trade-in price for the tank, each gallon of propane is going to cost you $ 4.71/gallon, which is a lot more than $2.59 in bulk, especially when you're talking about five gallons per tank and multiple tanks in the stockpile. If the shortage is greater than 3 pounds, you're paying an even higher price for the fuel.

Propane prices, whether bulk or trade-in and besides market fluctuations, will also often vary by a great deal within the same region. It all depends on where you buy it. I have found that the cheapest place to buy bulk propane is at the local farm co-op. The most expensive is at gas stations near freeway interchanges that see a lot of RV traffic, where the price can be double the co-op's price. For trade-ins, Walmart has always been about 10% cheaper than other outlets, and that's one reason to trade in your tanks there. So, shop around and find the best bulk prices in your area.

Another reason to not buy brand new tanks, if you're going to be trading them in, is that you will lose that shiny new tank, getting a used one back. On a practical level, this doesn't really matter. But, the idea of trading new for used still grates on me.

One Pound Canisters

A brand new 1 pound small green propane canister will run anywhere from about $2.50 to $7.50. $3.00 is about average locally, so I'll use that figure. A gallon of propane in one pound canisters is going to cost you about $12.00. So, while this is certainly convenient, it's also very expensive. Fortunately, these small canisters can be refilled many times for about 65 cents each and we'll detail how to go about refilling later in this article.

Hardware

Something worth mentioning is to not confuse one pound propane cylinders and hardware with butane-powered ultra-light gear, which are primarily designed for backpacking. A tiny 4 ounce tank and stove might be great in your bugout bag, but this is not a good ongoing fuel source: The tiny tanks won't last long, bulk butane is difficult to find in the best of times and there is no easy way to refill the tanks. The way that the tanks connect to the hardware is different than propane, too, so there's no chance of mixing up the two.

One other caveat is that bulk propane tanks require a pressure-reducing regulator before you hook them up to most appliances. You can find these on gas barbecues and RV's and they generally are very durable. On the other hand, the small one pound canisters do not require regulators and can be directly connected.

Yet another warning is to avoid tanks with serious rust in the metal, if at all possible. This rust weakens the strength of the tank wall and, if it gets bad enough, it will blow out from internal pressure, releasing all the gas in an explosive cloud, with no way to shut it off. For this reason, a brand new tank is supposed to be inspected and recertified 12 years after it was manufactured. After that, the tank is supposed to be recertified ever five years. As a practical matter, I have never had a bulk dealer check the certification date on any tank that I was having filled.

A few small scratches with a little rust is common and no big deal. But, if there's serious rust, such as on the tanks in the above photo of my trade-in stockpile, you need to trade them in, whether they have the new style valve or not. The trade-in companies will clean, repaint and re-certify them, if possible.

But, if you're keeping your tanks and plan to refill them with bulk gas, try to avoid scratching and dinging the paint as much as possible. If you really want to preserve them, add a can of white Rustoleum paint to your supplies, which is designed to go directly over rust, and touch up any scratches to protect the exposed steel from rusting further. If you store them outdoors in the weather, the tanks will eventually look like those in the above photo. So, the best place to store them is dry and out of the weather, but with plenty of ventilation. (Don't just cover them up with a plastic tarp, which will concentrate condensation and be even worse than normal weathering.)

Finally, keep in mind that the threads into which you connect things to a bulk propane tank are *left handed." That means that they need to be screwed in in the *opposite direction* as normal, counter-clockwise, instead of clockwise. In this case, "Lefty tighty, righty loosey." This is especially important to remember when you're disconnecting something from the tank valve: If you crank down hard in what would be the normal loosening direction, all you're doing is making it tighter. If you're strong enough, you'll actually strip out the brass valve threads and that will destroy the tank for any further use, except trading it in, if the stores are even still open.

Big Changes: OPD

Thanks to a change some years back, bulk propane tank valves have been upgraded to what is known as OPD (Overfill Protection Device). This valve prevents over-filling the bulk and it also prevents gas from leaving the tank if the valve is opened, but nothing is hooked up to it.

You can easily see the difference between old-style valves and new-style in the above photo: The old-style, with a star-shaped knob, is on the left. The new-style OPD, with a triangular knob, is on the right. Replacing an old-style valve with a new-style valve on an old tank is not something that amateurs should do, except in an emergency.

By law, bulk propane dealers cannot refill tanks with old-style valves. But, they will happily refill trade-in tanks, even with the labels still on, which will save you $10.60 per five gallons over the trade-in cost. If you have 10 bulk tanks in your stockpile, refilling your own tanks creates a savings of $106, so it's well worth the extra trouble.

In theory, your bulk propane dealer can top off the partially-filled trade-in tanks, but it would be a real imposition to ask them to go to the trouble for a gallon or so. If it's a friend who would do you a favor anyway, that's another thing, however. I wouldn't feel too badly asking for a top-off of one recently acquired trade-in tank, if I was also having two empty tanks filled at the same time.

Obtaining New-Style Tanks for Old

One of the really cool things about change, as much as most people hate it, is that this is where you find the best opportunities to save/make money. In this case, there is the opportunity to save a lot of money by obtaining empty old-style bulk propane tanks free or cheap and trading them in for "full" new-style tanks. For each old-style tank that you trade in, you're going to save about $20, even factoring in the higher price of gas and the less-than-full condition. When you're first setting up a stockpile of 10 tanks, that will reduce your total cost by $200, or about half the price of brand new, which will buy a lot of other prepping gear.

The reasons to go to Walmart for your exchanges are 1. They'll probably be the least expensive and, 2. The employees aren't going to care what you're trading in.

While the changeover happened more than 10 years ago, there are still lots of old-style tanks kicking around, of the countless millions that were produced. Since they can't be refilled, they're too light (18.5 lbs.) to be worth a trip to the local metal recycler and too heavy/bulky to throw in a garbage can, they tend to stick around, taking up space. A great place to find them is on the front of old RV trailers that haven't moved in years.

In my experience, most people who are stuck with old-style tanks have been delighted to give them to me for free. So, look around and see what you can spot at friends and neighbors. I obtained many of my stockpile of tanks in the days when I was buying and selling vintage RV trailers. The unit may have had old-style tanks when it came in, but it didn't when it sold.

Another good place to check for old-style tanks is local RV dealers who deal in a lot of trade-ins. They may just have a stockpile out back and be happy for you to haul them off. I've scored multiples for free at auto wrecking yards and some even still had gas in them. So, keep your eyes peeled.

If I really wanted to score a lot of trade-able tanks, I'd run an ad on CraigsList and offer to pay $5 each, delivered to my home. There are lots of amateur metal salvagers scrounging around, who work cheap, that the metal recycler would pay them less than $1 per tank. So, they would love to find a $5 buyer and you'll probably have offers for more trade-in tanks than you need. Even paying $5 each, and not counting all the time and trouble you'd have to go through to obtain them for "free," as well as the missing fuel in trade-in tanks, you'll still be saving $14 per tank, over buying them brand new.

(At the same time, in the CL ad, I'd also be looking for 1 pound propane canisters and offer to pay up to $1 each for them. When you refill them the first time, your total cost will be $1.60, about half the price of new. Since the valves in these canisters are designed for a one-time use, though they will usually support many refills, they will eventually wear out. So, you want plenty of spares in your stockpile. I have about a dozen canisters at the moment and want a couple of dozen more.)

Yet another place to look for old propane tanks is at your local metal recycler, who often sorts out re-sellable items from the general scrap and keeps them off to one side for customer purchase. The scrap yard near my house has a pile of about 50 used propane tanks and will be happy to sell them to me for 20 cents a pound, or about $3.80 each, which is still a huge savings over a new one for $25.

This ends Part One of "Prepper Propane 101," which mostly covered the what's, the why's and how to stretch your budget until it squeaks. In Part Two, we'll get into the how's, especially learning how to refill small green one pound canisters from bulk tanks, for a tiny fraction of the cost of new. This refilling can get a little complicated when you're trying for a full fill, but it needn't be if you understand what you're doing. We'll also go over some of the basic propane appliances that you should add to your resources.

Part Two will appear soon on Gaye Levy's website at Backdoor Survival.

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