

EVERY NEEDFUL THING

The Resource for
Emergency Preparedness
and Food Storage
Specialists, and their
family, friends
and neighbors

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Ask Billie

We are introducing a Question and Answer column each month, covering topics of interest to our readers.

Bob N. from Pensacola, FL asks, "I work all day and am not able to turn my Sun Oven® to keep up with the sun. How can I fix my meal so it will get ready in the evening?"

Billie says: Pre-position your oven in a secure location like on a table in your backyard. Put your meal in before you leave. Set your oven so that it will point toward the sun during the brightest part of the day, usually 10-2. Your food will cook and still be warm when you return home in the evening.

Billie Nicholson

Send your questions to

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Victory Garden Revisited: "What's Old is New Again"

As a child growing up on a farm in southern Virginia, we grew nearly all the food we needed. My Dad was a product of the hungry days of the Depression where his family had to move to Canada for a few years to live with relatives. He told of traveling during the winter in an old Model T Ford. A kerosene heater and lap blankets provided comfort to bare feet.

Those miserable times had a powerful influence upon his determination to never be in that position again. He often spoke about the World War II Victory Gardens encouraged by President

Roosevelt. For the remainder of his 80 years, he planted a garden.

As we looked at the increases in fuel costs with the subsequent increase in the cost for vegetables and fruit, we began thinking that we should revisit the Victory Garden idea. Our property in Pensacola is mostly sand, so we decided to use what we have recently learned about the "Square Foot Gardening" concept. (www.SquareFootGardening.com)

The brainchild of Mel Bartholomew, this program is designed to encourage



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the conservation of the earth through the practice of composting and gardening to live a more nutritional and healthy life. It highlights simplicity and use of natural materials and solves the problem of wasteful single row gardening. More details can be found in his best selling book “**Square Foot Gardening.**”

This type of gardening is based on putting down a water permeable ground cloth, which stops noxious weeds and using ground boxes designed for easy access. The boxes measure only four feet wide so that you can reach in from both sides and never step on the growing medium. The medium consists of a mixture of one-third peat moss, one-third coarse vermiculite and one-third blended composts. The compost blend is made of three components: aged chicken manure, aged cow manure and mushroom compost. The beauty of this mix is that there are no weed seeds of any kind in it. This differs greatly from selecting an area of ground contaminated by weed seeds, poor nutritional make-up, rocks, roots, possible fungi and insect larvae.

We filled our first ground box with a variety of starter plants that we purchased at our local nursery. We had some broccoli and tomato plants left over. We planted them in the sandy soil outside the box. We were shocked to see the difference between our regular soil harvest and our square foot garden harvest Those square foot garden plants produced like they were on steroids!

One of the great pleasures in self-sufficiency is being able to go to the garden, harvest what you need and then prepare it the same day. How fresh is that! And how carbon free! No fuel used to deliver that produce and no trees cut to prepare the paper bag! Take a basket, clippers and yourself! Remember to breathe in the fresh air and take time to absorb the sunlight while you’re out.



Use Your **SUN OVEN**® To Efficiently Rehydrate Food Storage

If you have cooked oatmeal, rice or dried beans, you have “rehydrated” food. There are also a variety of freeze-dried food items that can be ready to use by simply adding water and waiting for it to be absorbed. Measure out the amount of dried food you plan to use. Most instructions for rehydrating call for two to three times as much water as the amount of dried ingredients. You can use cold water, but adding heat speeds things up. This is a use of the **SUN OVEN**® you might have overlooked.

A **SUN OVEN**® is the most fuel-efficient way to rehydrate freeze-dried and dehydrated foods. The instructions on many freeze-dried foods suggest that water be boiled to reconstitute the food. Boiling enough water to reconstitute a single meal for a family will consume one-third to one half of a butane canister, which depletes fuel storage quickly. In your **SUN OVEN**® use a shallow pan, spread out the dried food, and add water to cover. While you prepare the remaining components for your meal, the **SUN OVEN**® will do its part. Remember to only add salt or seasonings after rehydrating is complete. water does not need to be boiled to reconstitute food in a **SUN OVEN**®. You can use one third less cold water than the instructions call for when you rehydrate in a covered pot in a **SUN OVEN**®. In addition, due to the even, non-burning heat of a **SUN OVEN**®, pots and pans are easier to clean. Since water storage is an essential aspect of all preparedness plans, you will save water, time and energy.



SPRING INVENTORY

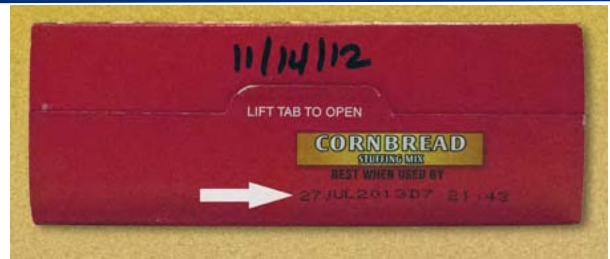
Soon it will be time to open our homes and let in the spring air, shake out the snuggly blankets that kept us comfortable during the cold, and go to our storage cabinets and review what food remains. Eating is a comfort when we're stuck inside due to bad weather; but come spring, we all want to be out and about. But before you go shopping, take an inventory of your food supply to determine what you really need to purchase.

Every family has favorite foods. Not all of them are purchased at drive-thru restaurants. These are the items we keep on the shelf, in case we take a notion to make something, or in case of an emergency. Let's call this Emergency Food Storage.

Before the modern conveniences of large-scale grocery stores and fast food joints, families farmed to raise their own food and often stored the extras in root cellars to have food during the winter months, when it was not readily available in their garden. Most of us don't use root cellars today because we can make a quick trip to the grocery store anytime.

We purchase fire or flood insurance to help us pull through when something bad happens. Why not look at acquiring extra food as "hunger" insurance? What great peace of mind this can offer, knowing that should we need it, we'll have it.

As part of the spring-cleaning ritual, empty each cabinet where food is stored and make a list of the items you have. Check canned goods for any bloating as this is an indication of spoiled food. Note any date stamped on the package or container. These are Use-by, Best Before, Sell-By or Expiration dates. These are not necessarily discard dates.



Use By or Best By dates are generally found on shelf-stable products like condiments. These dates, provided by the manufacturer, estimates how long the product will be at its best quality when unopened. They are not a safety date, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's [Food Safety and Inspection Service](#). After these dates pass you may notice some changes in the item's color, texture or flavor. As long as you have stored it properly, you can use it beyond this date. Items like crackers, whole-wheat flour, and nuts, which contain oils may smell rancid, if kept too long.

Sell-by dates are found on perishable items like meat, seafood, poultry or milk. These dates help stores know how long they can display these products. You should take note of these dates when purchasing perishable items. You can still store them at home for a time beyond that date as long as you follow safe storage guidelines.

Expires On dates are found on infant formula or baby food, as these are the only food products the federal government regulates with regard to dating. Do not use these products after the expiration date.

Packing codes are also a series of numbers and letters that indicate the date of manufacture. They help grocers rotate their stock and quickly find lot production numbers. They are not an indicator of either food safety or quality.

Once you have sorted the items you are storing by age, replace them in a cabinet with the newest items in the back and the oldest ones in front. Put all the pickles, jam, or tomato sauce together. When you purchase new items, put a purchase date on them using a marker or a small label, and put them in the back. This will help you rotate more efficiently.

Food Storage Tips:

1. Purchase food that lasts at least three months
2. Store items that don't require energy to prepare
3. Have a manual can opener
4. Buy in bulk when practical
5. Store food you like to eat!

If your cupboard is empty, you can set a goal for the New Year to build food storage. How do you do that? One extra can at a time. On a tight budget, look for sales or coupons and if you need one can of a particular item, buy two instead. Pretty soon you will have a stock of "hunger" insurance food in your pantry.

Solar Stew from the [Solar Oven Chef](#)

This stew can be served over cooked noodles or with a nice crusty bread. Like most stews, it's even better the next day.



Sun Oven Mediterranean Pork Stew

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 pound boneless pork loin roast, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2 cup dry red wine
- 1 small onion, sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 red bell pepper, sliced
- 1 yellow bell pepper, sliced
- 2 cans (15-ounce) diced tomatoes
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1/4 cup orange marmalade
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon fennel seed
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons cold water

Preparation

Set Sun Oven out to preheat.

Heat the oil in a Dutch oven over medium high heat. Working in batches add the pork and brown on all sides, transfer browned meat to a plate. Pour in the wine and stir, scraping up the browned bits. Add the onion and the peppers and cook, stirring often, until just beginning to soften, about 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic. Return the pork to the Dutch oven.

In a medium bowl, combine the tomatoes, broth, marmalade, oregano, fennel seed, pepper, and red pepper flakes. Pour the tomato mixture over the pork and vegetables. Cover and transfer to the Sun Oven. Cook until the meat is tender, 1 1/2 to 2 hours.

In a small bowl, whisk together the cornstarch and water until smooth, slowly stir it into the stew. Replace the cover and continue cooking until the stew thickens, about 30 minutes. This step can be done in the Sun Oven or later in the day on the stovetop

Makes 8 servings