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A Survival Checklist,
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THE ESSENTIAL PREPPER'S SURVIVAL GUIDE

**SURVIVE A WORST CASE SCENARIO
ON ANY BUDGET**

9 in 1



EDWIN HOSE

THE ESSENTIAL PREPPERS SURVIVAL
GUIDE

SURVIVE A WORST CASE
SCENARIO ON ANY BUDGET

EDWIN HOSE

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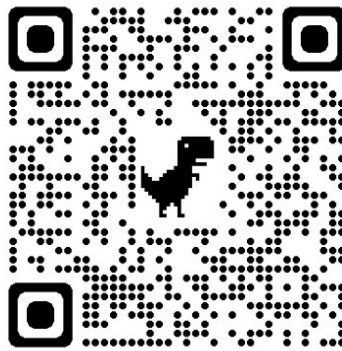
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INTRODUCTION



In the darkest hours of human history, it's often the simple act of preparedness that sets apart those who survive from those who don't.

Many of us watched the conflict between Ukraine and Russia in 2022 in disbelief. Thousands of people had to leave their homes and had no access to necessities like food, water, and medical care, according to the news. In addition, a sizable portion of residents were cut off in besieged cities without access to basic supplies. I find it inconceivable that they had to experience what they did and that so many others still do so. This is similar to the UN World Food Programme's assessment that 8 million Ukrainians today endure food insecurity. However, by using the supplies they had saved, such as food, water, and a strong mindset (of course, you

need a lot of grit to survive during times like this), some people were able to remain alive throughout this period.

If there's one thing I detest, it's being unprepared and taken by surprise, especially by a negative surprise. Do you recall when the COVID-19 lockdown began? I remember that it began on a Thursday. Imagine being one of those who had planned to go grocery shopping on the following Friday or Saturday and were hit by the announcement of a lockdown. And later on, when people were fighting in supermarkets over supplies, preppers were home, enjoying theirs. Well, if you were one of those people, I'm sure you'd never want to go through that again.

For those of you who want to be in charge of your own destiny, live independently, and face an uncertain future with unwavering confidence, this book beckons as a light of preparedness. You don't want to be a victim of circumstances anymore? Me neither. You will set off on a path to independence in the pages that follow, picking up priceless knowledge that will equip you to weather any storm, even on a tight budget.

Let's imagine together a pantry filled with nourishing food, a secure water source, alternative energy sources, and your home—a fortress. Now imagine achieving all these without breaking the bank; does that seem far-fetched? But that's what you will learn in this book: budget-conscious storing, canning, embracing off-grid living, increasing home defense, and much more.

Many preppers before us have made mistakes due to the abundance of misleading information out there, eagerness, and fear. I would even prefer to call some people panic buyers instead of preppers because, let's face it, there's a system for stockpiling and it doesn't involve paranoia. While you might be scared of the uncertain future or even be excited about starting this new phase in your life, I'll guide you through, ensuring you don't make the same mistakes. I understand entirely your concern for the future, but I've found that the greatest way to calm my anxiety is to be ready. After reading this book, you won't just be anxiety-free; you'll also be knowledgeable and eager to begin developing your survival strategies.

By reading these pages, you will learn how to overcome disaster preparedness challenges. You'll discover how to get your family's food supply ready in case of disaster. By developing your canning skills, you can preserve food's nutritional value and guarantee that you always have

enough to eat. You'll find details on home defense as well as suggestions and methods for an affordable off-the-grid lifestyle, including where to find clean water to drink and how to use green energy.

Do I have what it takes to help you become a survival prepper? Yes, I have expertise and knowledge. I'm a skilled survivalist in addition to being a writer. I've been where you're going, and I've gained knowledge from both my accomplishments and disappointments.

I don't simply preach readiness; I live it every day because I want you and me to thrive, not just survive. So, let's all start down a path of flexibility, resiliency, and independence. Let me assist you in taking charge of your fate.

PART I

PREPPING FOUNDATIONS

Prepping is not all that it seems. The news and social media have shared an unreal image of what survival prepping is. But we're more than crazies and we're not all doomsday preachers. We're strong, we're resilient, we're prepared. That's just who we are.

GETTING STARTED

When it comes to survival prepping, there's no such thing as being too prepared. Even people who used to call preppers crazy have now joined the movement, and the *New York Times* had to declare that "We are all Preppers Now" during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a way, it was the wake-up call many of us needed to know that the world could just go wham! at any point in time, and only the prepared will thrive.

Before, when the term "survival preppers" was mentioned, what came to mind were the American militias, philosophers, conspiracy theorists, religious apocalypse preppers, and baby boomers. These days, you'll see ecologists, your school teacher (or Ava Coleman in "Abbott's Elementary"), or even a couple growing their organic food to be less dependent on the corporate food supply chain. Billionaires are included too, building apocalypse bunkers, turning holiday homes into safe houses, using science to provide a constant supply of food, and the like. Well, looking at things now, I can see why some called us crazy, but when a scenario occurs, you'll be struggling not to tell these people that "I told you so."

Want to know something cool? Being a prepper is like being in a secret society, so let me be the first to welcome you on board.

UNDERSTANDING THE HYPE

So, "survival prepping" is a buzzword that seems to be thrown around a lot recently, unlike when I started survival prepping in 2013. And as I

already mentioned, COVID-19, and the shortage of food in Ukraine due to Russia's invasion, has made the preppers movement go more mainstream. That, and the fact that a lot of people have been playing a popular video game, *The Last of Us*, which depicts a post-apocalyptic world where resources are scarce and danger lurks in every corner. This is causing a lot of people to ask the question, "What if?"

We are now in the world of preparedness, and the everyday American is turning into a savvy survivor, ready to confidently face the unknown. To be honest, this idea of prepping is not a newly found concept but one deeply rooted in American history. Our ancestors were ready for any form of disaster because to survive in the wilderness, they had to be resourceful; being self-sufficient wasn't an option but a way of life. And no one was ready to bank on the government saving them when disaster struck, unlike in our current times. So, what's driving this current resurgence in the art of prepping? There are now drills and stockpiles in schools, homes, and even offices. And while our ancestors prepared for harsh winters or unexpected setbacks, we are preparing for a wide range of scenarios, natural disasters, economic downturns, and unforeseen global events, not zombie attacks.

As I said, there's a mental picture that comes to mind when people hear about prepping, but now many people have come to understand that it means preparing both for the known and unknown. It is a way of anticipating and preparing for possible doom by preparing a place to survive in. True, the stereotypes still exist, but everyone is now a prepper (whether partially or fully). Even *National Geographic* highlighted this change, noting that more and more Americans are realizing the advantages of self-sufficiency and the peace it brings (Layne 2006).

Nobody wants a repeat of the epidemic's bullwhip impact, which led to excessive demand throughout the whole supply chain, leading to shortages and eventually waste. In addition, there is a shift in mindset today as more people realize that being ready is not irrational but rather practical, much like maintaining a spare tire in the car or a fire extinguisher in the kitchen.

The culture of preparedness has swept through all walks of life; not only the poor are worried that they won't be given priority when a disaster strikes, but so are the wealthy, who worry that everyone will be too busy saving their own asses to remember others. You are a part of a large and

growing community that shares your interest in preparing, so you are not alone in doing so.

Survival prepping is not about fear but empowerment, and even the industry has grown from a niche market to a thriving industry. The wealth of resources and products you'll find at your disposal is a testament that you're part of a growing community. So, embrace the hype as a driving force behind your journey toward preparedness instead of as a source of fear.

If you live in Louisiana, why not be ready for the next Hurricane Katrina?



THE PREPPER MINDSET

Being a prepper, however, is not about excessive buying or building bunkers and converting homes. Well, in my opinion, being a prepper is as diverse as being an instrumentalist. Preppers vary from hoarders to suburban preppers, the woman putting up jars of pureed tomatoes from her garden to the doomsday prepper. With all these misconceptions and the vast varieties of preppers we have, we need to understand something very important: the prepper mindset.

Having this mindset guarantees your success as a survival prepper; it clears the path for self-reliance and sets you apart from the unprepared. We preppers are seen as crazies, people suffering from paranoia and living in constant fear of doomsday. But this is a lie (though there are people who take prepping to the extreme, and we've all been lumped together). Instead of dwelling on these worst-case scenarios, we as preppers prepare for them, so they don't become our worst nightmares.

This mindset is about thinking clearly and recognizing that although the world is pretty unpredictable and that disasters can and do happen, you can prepare yourself for survival—by approaching life with a heightened sense of awareness. Just as you wouldn't dare drive blindfolded, a prepper's mindset is like driving with your eyes wide open, acknowledging the risks around you and preparing against them in advance. Rather than a pessimistic way of life, prepping is often viewed as proactive and pragmatic. It involves adopting a "prevention is better than cure" and a "better safe than sorry" mentality, a form of insurance against life's uncertainties.

I mentioned that our ancestors were not waiting for the government to save them in times of disaster. Well, with the prepper's mindset, you're both self-reliant and resilient. You recognize your ability to take care of yourself and loved ones, without having to depend on a system that might falter at any time. In a scenario where your usual source of food, water, or energy becomes unavailable, a prepper doesn't panic but adapts. In a constantly changing world, the prepper can adapt to new circumstances and make the most out of available resources.

A prepper might end up foraging for wild edibles, harvesting rainwater, or using renewable energy sources. It's a mindset that says "I'm not helpless—I'm resourceful." This mindset is a wellspring of solutions, not

problems, and makes us both creative and innovative in the face of challenges. It empowers you to learn practical survival skills and to take charge of your destiny instead of being a victim of circumstance. This fosters a liberating yet reassuring sense of self-sufficiency.

The prepper mindset is your most valuable tool in survival. It helps you build a survival mindset, cultivating mental resilience, a skill that helps you stay calm and composed under pressure (Ayres 2022).

By developing this survival mindset, you'll be able to handle situations better and make wise decisions regardless of the circumstances. You will provide the needed calm in the chaos for you and your loved ones. You won't just get by in tough situations with this outlook; you'll thrive in them. So, embrace and develop this mindset because, without it, you won't be able to put into practice anything you learn in the remaining pages of this book.



ASSESSING YOUR PREPAREDNESS LEVEL

Okay folks, now you'll have to be a little bit more honest with yourselves. Let's check your GPS before taking this road trip and know where you stand currently. Before you can become a self-reliant and resilient individual, we need to check whether you've got what it takes. Around the time I began survival prepping, I was one of the few to take that bold step. I started this journey because of a phenomenon that could have led to a civilizational collapse, and my wife and I started the journey.

I'll tell you one thing for sure: we were amateurs, we followed some online instructions, read a few books, and turned our backyard into a

garden, with rows of herbs lining the walls as we started growing our food. Boy oh boy, I don't think we were ready for the things we faced in the preceding years. Survival prepping is more than just the physical preparations you'll learn about in this book. You also need a prepared mindset and mental fortitude that will help you weather the challenges that might come your way.

Are you ready for the skeptics? When I started, I got the raised eyebrows—the “old man Edwin has joined the doomsday preppers.” “Edwin, can I bunk with you when the zombies come in?” Friends, family members, colleagues, and naysayers will crack jokes about your newfound interest. This will hurt, and sometimes the fact that you've evaluated your essential supplies and filled in the gaps with non-perishable food and clean water won't even be comforting. Will you be able to stand your ground and remain firm in your decision?

Well, there's the physical preparedness, evaluating your essential supplies to ensure you have enough non-perishable food and clean water to sustain you and your family in an emergency. You also have to check out your energy source and utilities. Will you still be able to cook, heat, or cool the house in case of a power outage, or do you need to have your backup options ready? Security is an important part of your preparedness plan, so how are your home defense strategies? Do you have a plan in place to protect yourself, your family, and your properties?

Preppers, like other people, need skills and knowledge as well. If you're going to thrive, you need skills in first aid, navigation, and self-defense. You need to learn how to grow your food and purify water. Without these skills, you can't be self-sufficient. Becoming self-sufficient is a continuous learning process. You'll face certain challenges that will require skills and knowledge. Will you be able to embrace this learning curve with the same enthusiasm you started with and seek out information, ask questions, and adapt to new situations?

Then, communication is key. Do you have a reliable means of communication? Community is also important. You might not know it, but a community of like-minded people is very important for success, not only on your journey as a survival prepper but in every single area of your life.

There will also be budgeting struggles, but that doesn't mean you need to break the bank. You have to be resourceful and efficient with your

budget, making calculated investments and financial decisions that will prioritize your self-sufficiency goals at the expense of short-term comforts. How ready are you for that?

You'll have to make a lifestyle shift and let go of habits that do not align with your preparedness goals. You'll have to embrace a lifestyle that prioritizes independent living and set benchmarks and goals for improvement.

Looking at all these areas I've mentioned. Which aspects of preparedness do you think you need to prioritize? Create a timeline to help you achieve your objectives. Then measure your progress. Even businesses use key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess their success, which goes to show the importance of doing this (Velimirović, Velimirović, and Stanković 2011). You can measure the number of days' worth of food and water you have in storage, how good your survival skills are, or how efficient your alternative energy source options are.

However, assessing your preparedness levels is not only about empowering yourself to handle the challenges that will come your way. Are you also ready for the rewards? Are you ready to enjoy the invaluable skills, self-confidence, and peace of mind that comes with knowing you're fully prepared to weather life's storms? Are you ready to savor the satisfaction that comes from being in charge of your life?

Being prepared for all of these things will be your greatest asset, and the good news about that? It is something you can work on.

SETTING REALISTIC GOALS

Now that you've assessed your preparedness level and you know where you need to up your game, how do you go about becoming better prepared in those areas and guide your progress? Realistic goals will keep you on course and help you navigate the complexities involved.

You've assessed your preparedness levels, but you need to identify your individual needs and vulnerabilities as well. Do you live in an area that's prone to natural disasters, or does an economic downturn or food shortage seem imminent? Do you or any of your family have specific health considerations? All these must be reflected in the goals you set, as

your self-sufficiency should not only align with your life situation, but must also address your most pressing issues.

After you've sorted out your needs, vulnerabilities, and preparedness levels, it is time to set a range of goals tailored to different timeframes. You'll set short-term goals, medium-term goals, and long-term goals. These goals should be based on what you can attain within a certain period. Be realistic; there's no need to place yourself on a high pedestal. Short-term goals are usually quick wins, and could be something as simple as building a 72-hour emergency kit or learning basic first aid skills. Medium-term goals can progress from over a month to a year, and can involve expanding your food storage, preserving food by employing different preservation techniques, or even improving your home defense strategies. And then there are long-term goals that can last years. You can learn advanced survival skills or become energy-independent during this period.

To remain motivated and be able to track your progress, your goals must be SMART.

Specific: Do not settle for vague aspirations like “be more prepared” as that's a huge mistake you don't want to make. Your goal should be as specific as “acquire enough storage of non-perishable food.” Then identify the steps you need to take to achieve this goal.

Measurable: You need to quantify your goals. You can turn the goal statement into “acquire three months' worth of non-perishable food.” This way, you'll be able to track your goal and know when it is completed.

Achievable: As I've said, there's no need to place yourself on a high pedestal. Can you achieve the goal, and how long will it take to achieve it? For instance, “acquire two weeks' worth of non-perishable food per month.” Getting two weeks' worth of food supply per month is more realistic than getting three months' food supply in a month.

Relevant: This is the whole basis that forms your goals. They need to align with your needs, vulnerabilities, and preparedness levels, as I mentioned earlier.

Time-Based: To properly measure success, your goals must have a start and end date so you can stay on track within this designated timeframe. Since you'll be getting three months' supply of food in six months, your

goal can be to “acquire three months' worth of non-perishable food in the second half of the year.”

Now, one thing you should do when setting goals is allow flexibility. Life throws curveballs, and you might initially focus on food storage only to later realize that water purification is a more immediate concern. When there's a need to adjust, don't hesitate, as flexibility is a trait all successful preppers must have.

You must also stay committed and consistent in your goals. Commitment and consistency are crucial skills in every area of one's life. You can break down large goals into more manageable smaller goals to regularly assess your progress. Besides, achieving each small goal will bring a feeling of fulfillment and help you stay motivated. Just remember to stay committed to your vision of a more self-reliant future.

CREATING A BUDGET-FRIENDLY (AND FAMILY-FRIENDLY) PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Unless you're a panic buyer like some self-acclaimed preppers, becoming self-sufficient shouldn't be a financial burden. And with careful planning and budgeting, you can achieve a high level of readiness within your means.

To create a budget-friendly preparedness plan that's both practical and family-friendly, you need first and foremost to prioritize the essentials. Instead of panic buying things you think might come in handy, identify the essential items and skills that are vital for your survival. Food, water, shelter, and security are the basics you should focus on. From there, you can move to other important things like medical supplies. Creating a list of the essentials you need will help you allocate your budget accordingly.

After you're done writing the list of essentials, determine how much you can afford to allocate per month or per pay period to your survival prepping. Ensure that it is realistic and sustainable so that you can consistently set aside this money toward your goals every month without experiencing financial strain. To do this, you need to first calculate your monthly inflow minus tax. Then calculate and list all bills and monthly expenses (including emergencies and fun), subtract expenses from income, and from the remaining money determine how much to allocate

to your survival preparedness plan and how much to save. After determining this amount, spread it across your list, allocating money toward each item that will help you meet your goals.

When it's time to start shopping, shop smart. Coupons, sales, discounts, and bulk-purchasing options should be your new friends. Consider in-season produce and take advantage of clearance sales, or even visit dollar stores—it's not compulsory to get brand items if you can't afford them. Trust me, folks, these little savings will add up over time. Also, whenever you can, embrace the do-it-yourself mentality. Many of the items you need for survival can be crafted yourself, and there are a lot of videos on YouTube ready to take you through the process of crafting your candles and soaps, making DIY garden beds, and even water purification systems. Doing it yourself is not only cost-effective, but when you engage the family in these projects, you can all bond and learn essential skills together.

Instead of spending a huge bulk of your money on gear, focus on skills. First aid, fire-making, gardening, and self-defense are some of the skills that will come in handy and save costs when needed. You should also adopt a frugal mindset, reduce unnecessary expenses, and cut down on waste. That's more money saved that could go toward your preparedness plan. You can also encourage other members of the family to participate in frugal practices.

Then, if you don't organize your supplies, you can make the mistake of buying duplicates. To avoid that, I usually organize my supplies in shelves, bins, and storage containers and place them in easily accessible positions. I also arrange them based on how perishable they are and their expiration dates so that I can rotate and use my supplies before they expire. There's also something I do that you can probably adopt. Some of my friends who made fun of me when I started prepping are now preppers themselves. So, we usually pool resources (and we especially did during the pandemic). There are some bulk purchases we've made together, and we know the survival skills that some are better at than others. In case of emergencies, we know that we can support each other.

Making a budget-friendly preparedness plan is not only achievable as an individual but also as a family.

ESSENTIAL PREPPER GEAR FOR BEGINNERS

As a beginner, you must start with the right gear and supplies to confidently navigate various scenarios. I'll discuss them briefly here and then in depth in the remaining parts of the book.

Water Filtration and Storage

It's hard to live without water. Trust me, you'll miss it if an emergency occurs and you don't have enough, as water is going to keep you alive. After all, you'll drink, bathe, and wash from your water supply. So, invest in portable water filters, purification tablets like chlorine or iodine-style treatment, or a gravity-fed filtration system. And don't forget to stock up on durable water storage containers.

Fire

You can't cook or stay warm without fire. Sometimes, in extreme situations, you might need to boil your water to purify it, so there goes fire again. Fire-making tools are another essential gear to have when SHTF (Stuff Hits the Fan). So, load up on waterproof matches, lighters, or even fire-starting equipment like ferrocium rods in your gear. And you'll need a fuel source, something to get the fire going, like cotton balls dipped in Vaseline.

Knife

One important thing to have in any survival kit is a high-quality fixed-blade knife, so you might want to invest a little more to get a knife of very good quality. A survival knife is useful for a lot of tasks like building a shelter or preparing food, and it can even be your first go-to for self-defense. Make sure you get one that has a nice grip and suits your needs.

Communication

You have to have some comms of sorts that will help you stay in the loop of things and receive crucial information before it gets too late. You can get a battery-operated or hand-cranked emergency radio. My friends and I also have two-way radios that we can use to update each other when disaster strikes.

First Aid

Now, you shouldn't skimp out on a first aid kit, because it might come in handy, and you're going to need it at the worst moment possible. When you or a loved one is injured and nothing can be done about it, well, not to be grim, but it affects survival. Ensure your first aid kit has bandages, antiseptics, pain relievers, tweezers, a tourniquet, even bug spray, and essential medications. Also, don't forget to familiarize yourself with basic first-aid procedures and techniques.

Food and Cooking

You need to build a well-rounded food stockpile of non-perishables with a long shelf-life, like canned foods, ramen, some energy bars, freeze-dried meals, grains, and dry staples. Rotate them to avoid waste and expiration. You can also invest in a propane stove because it is super easy to use both indoors and outdoors.

Shelter and Warmth

God forbid that you need to evacuate or shelter in a place, especially during the cold weather. But if you have to, have essential items like a durable tent, sleeping bags, blankets, and extra clothing to stay warm and dry. You should also invest in quality cordage.

Hygiene and Sanitation

When SHTF, hygiene might be the last thing on your mind, but how long can you go unclean? Have soap, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, travel toothpaste and toothbrush, and sanitation supplies handy. Also, dental floss is very important, and quite versatile if you ask me. While it is good for oral hygiene, it can also be used to tie things together, and you can even fish with it if need be.

Personal Protective Gears

You and your family are going to need gloves, goggles, and masks, especially during pandemics or if you're living in an area with the possibility of an environmental disaster.

Self-Defense Tools

This is a personal choice. If you're not a fan of lethal options, you can go for pepper spray or personal alarms. And if you would rather include firearms, make sure to be properly trained on usage and also follow legal requirements.

Navigation Tools

In a scenario where you'll need to bug out, a compass or topographic might come in handy if you need to navigate unfamiliar terrain.

Cash and Important Documents

Keep copies of essential documents such as identification, passports, insurance policies, and medical records in a waterproof and fireproof container. You should also have a stash of cash, which might come in handy.

Backpack or Bug-Out Bag

Next, arrange all your gear in a sturdy yet comfortable bag for easy mobility in case of evacuation.

You can start with these essentials and gradually expand your gear and skills as you gain experience. The right prepper gear will better equip you to handle unexpected challenges.

STAYING INFORMED AND AWARE

Communication is an essential that you dare not skimp on. You have to always be kept in the loop of what is going on. In your survival prepping journey, knowledge is the most powerful tool at your disposal. You can make decisions regarding the safety and security of your loved ones by staying informed and aware of potential threats.

The CDC and Red Cross are two organizations that you should consult for information because they have the most recent data on disasters, emergencies, and preparedness requirements (Bachmann *et al.*, 2015). Other credible sources to consult include respected news outlets, government agencies, and reliable news sites. To keep aware and prepared, you can visit their websites, where there is frequently updated information. To be ready for weather-related events and hazards, stay informed on the local weather conditions and environmental factors that may affect your area. Keep in touch with your friends, family, and neighbors to create a support system that will enable you to communicate and help one another in an emergency. Sign up for local emergency alerts and notifications.

Create and regularly update your family's preparedness plan, ensuring that each member of the family knows what to do in different situations. You can even practice drills to help reinforce your plan and make necessary adjustments. Also maintain well-stocked emergency kits for different situations—be it evacuation, sheltering in place, or medical emergencies. Regularly check and replenish supplies to prevent waste and ensure they're still effective.

Continue learning, and attend workshops, seminars, or meetings related to preparedness and resilience. Also, invest in training and educational materials related to survival prepping. These skills and knowledge will make a significant difference in your ability to respond effectively.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPAREDNESS AND STRESS MANAGEMENT

Being physically prepared is not enough; you need to be psychologically prepared and understand stress management as well. Based on experience, every single time my family and I have had to go into survival mode, it put us under a lot of duress.

The first thing you need to do is develop a more positive outlook on life. Understand that challenges are a part of life; it's your ability to overcome them that matters. You have to view preparedness as an empowering process and understand that being prepared to face any challenge is a confidence booster and can help reduce anxiety.

Truthfully, my family and I are usually under a lot of stress when we have to go into survival mode (for example, when the pandemic happened). However, being in daily contact with each other usually turns out to be a powerful stress reliever. I'm not saying there won't be conflict—we're family, and there is bound to be, but we're also there to pull each other up. Also, get involved in community efforts. Collaborating with neighbors and friends will help you feel more secure.

You also need to be able to recognize when you're feeling stressed or anxious. These are normal feelings in cases of emergencies, but recognizing them early is the first step to addressing them. During these kinds of scenarios, you can engage in self-care activities. Everybody

needs a little self-loving now and then. Exercise, meditate, and engage in your hobbies to improve your emotional health.

While it is important to stay informed, overconsumption of distressing news is not good at all. I used to do that a lot and then pour out my emotions on the rest of the family. Phew! My family and I are sure glad I've stopped doing that. Set designated times to check on updates, and only from reliable sources. You'd be amazed at all the doomsday information out there. You should also regularly conduct emergency drills with your family, as familiarity with these drills will ease your anxiety during actual emergencies.

You can choose to go for resilience training programs as they teach strategies for coping with adversity. Be flexible in your approach; it's okay if you already made plans and need to adapt to changing circumstances.

Proactively addressing stress and maintaining a positive mindset will help you be more resilient in your approach to effectively navigating emergencies. After all, your mental health plays an important role in your overall preparedness.

WORKBOOK ONE

1. Set realistic goals.

Scenario you're prepping for:

Your needs based on this scenario:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Vulnerabilities:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Preparedness level (on a scale of 1–10)

Resilience against challenges and skeptics:

Non-perishable food supply available (based on how long it can last):

Alternative energy source:

Security:

First-aid kit and skills:

Navigation tools and skills:

Self-defense tools and skills:

Water purification tools:

Shelter and clothing essentials:

Hygiene and sanitation:

Fire skills and tools:

Total preparedness level:

Short-term goals based on needs, vulnerabilities, and preparedness levels

Goal 1: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____
Relevant: _____
Time-based: _____

Goal 2: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____
Relevant: _____
Time-based: _____

Goal 3: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____
Relevant: _____
Time-based: _____

Goal 4: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____
Relevant: _____
Time-based: _____

Goal 5: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____
Relevant: _____
Time-based: _____

Medium-term goals based on needs, vulnerabilities, and preparedness levels

Goal 1: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____
Relevant: _____
Time-based: _____

Goal 2: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____
Relevant: _____
Time-based: _____

Goal 3: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____
Relevant: _____
Time-based: _____

Goal 4: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____
Relevant: _____
Time-based: _____

Goal 5: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____
Relevant: _____
Time-based: _____

Long-term goals based on needs, vulnerabilities, and preparedness levels

Goal 1: _____
Smart: _____
Measurable: _____
Achievable: _____

Relevant: _____

Time-based: _____

Little Steps:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

Big Steps:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

Goal 2: _____

Smart: _____

Measurable: _____

Achievable: _____

Relevant: _____

Time-based: _____

Little Steps:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

Big Steps:

a. _____

b. _____

- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Goal 3: _____

Smart: _____

Measurable: _____

Achievable: _____

Relevant: _____

Time-based: _____

Little Steps:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Big Steps:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Goal 4: _____

Smart: _____

Measurable: _____

Achievable: _____

Relevant: _____

Time-based: _____

Little Steps:

- a. _____
- b. _____

- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Big Steps:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Goal 5: _____

Smart: _____

Measurable: _____

Achievable: _____

Relevant: _____

Time-based: _____

Little Steps:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

Big Steps:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

2. Let's create your budget.

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| | Income/month (minus taxes) | |
| Expenses | | |
| | Rent | |
| | Water | |
| | Cell phone | |
| | Car payment | |
| | Insurance | |
| | Childcare | |
| | Food | |
| | Fun | |
| | Miscellaneous | |
| Total Expenses | | |
| Total Left | Income – Expenses | |
| | Amount to allocate to savings | |
| | Amount to allocate to prepping | |

In the table above, you'll write out the amount you'll allocate to each of those expenses. Calculate the total amount of expenses and subtract it from your income. Then you'll divide the total amount into two: one part for savings and the other part for your prepping goals.

Amount to Allocate to Prepping

In this table, you'll write out the prepping essentials you want to stockpile. If there are 10 for now, divide the money allocated to your prepping goals into 10—each of the 10 parts for each prepping essential. For instance, if \$750 is going to prepping essentials, \$750 divided by 10 equals \$75 each—which means you'll be allocating \$75 to each prepping essential.

| Prepping Essentials | Amount Allocated per Month |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

TAKEAWAY ONE

Have you got what it takes to be a prepper? Well, as you've learned, being a prepper means having a more positive outlook on life, being proactive instead of scared, and being resilient and self-reliant. You've seen what it takes to be a prepper, and I believe you're ready for the challenges and rewards.

STOCKPILING ESSENTIALS

A lot of beginner preppers, myself included, make mistakes when it comes to stockpiling. Sometimes, we buy too much of what we don't need, don't buy enough of what we need, or even forget to buy what we need. A lot of mistakes have been made over the years, like buying things I had no use for and forgetting others I needed. However, after taking stock of things I and other preppers forgot, I learned how to build a well-rounded stockpile, and you're about to as well.

Say no to panic buying, and let's learn how to manage and rotate our stockpile effectively, shall we?

FOOD STORAGE STRATEGIES

Food is life and is a very important stockpiling essential. You already know that you should get non-perishable foods, canned foods, ramen, energy bars, etc.

So, I am going to tell you what I do about food storage and how I do it, so you can apply these strategies. Let's get into grains first. The four essential grains you should get are corn, rice, wheat, and beans. While all four of them are approximately 1,600 calories per pound, they contain different macronutrients. You'll get your high protein content from beans and wheat, your fats from corn, and your carbohydrates from rice. Now, if you stockpile up to 750 pounds of each grain per year, that's already 3,277 calories per day, which, to be honest, is too much for most people. And don't forget, you don't have to get it all at once. You can go to

Sam's Club and buy one or two 50-pound sacks of each of the grains regularly until you hit your 750-pound target. A bit of advice here: it is better to get your corn feed from the feed store, cheap and of great quality. If you're allergic to gluten or can't get wheat where you are, you can easily cut it out and add 250 pounds extra to the remaining three grains. And if you like a variety of flavors, get different types of dried beans. You can also buy different types of rice: basmati, brown, short grain, long grain, and others.

Then let's go into what a lot of preppers call the seven-meals plan. Remember that the minimal stockpiling period I recommended is three months' worth of food? This is because if there's suddenly an ice storm, a massive hurricane, an earthquake, or some other thing that will keep you cooped up in your house and unable to go to the store, this three-month shelf-stable food supply should last you for as long as you might need to stay in. So, you're going to identify seven easy-to-make meals, something simple, because time and calories matter in survival. I'll go into meal planning in detail in chapter 6. The reason I'm mentioning it is because your meal plan will help you know what other foodstuff to stock. You might need canned foods and maybe spaghetti, vegetables, or flour (don't skimp on flour because you can make bread or other pastries in different ways with this on hand). You can calculate the quantity you'll need to have saved at home based on your meal plan and how much you eat as a family. Once you make your meal plan, you have a list of foods to get, you know where to target your effort, and every time you visit the supermarket, you can get a little at a time. You can also add what you and the kids love to snack on in your inventory and get some of that as well.

Having an adequate supply of food is not the only thing there is to stockpiling. If you don't know how to properly store your food, then you might struggle to thrive during emergencies.

So, storage. The four grains you got and any other bulk items can be stored in a cool, dark, and dry place. You can store dried goods like pasta, flour, sugar, etc. in airtight containers to prevent moisture absorption and so they can stay fresh. Temperature also matters. Your food storage area should be cool, dry, and well-ventilated. Ideal storage temperatures also vary depending on the different types of food; for example, the grains I've mentioned should be stored at room temperature, although slightly colder temperatures can preserve shelf

life. However, don't keep them too cold. As well, grains kept at over 50°F will start growing mold. Except for bananas and avocados, which should be kept at room temperature until ripe, fresh fruits and vegetables should be stored at temperatures between 32°F and 39.2°F, and meats should be frozen. Dairy goods should also be stored in the refrigerator at temperatures below 39.2°F. Storage conditions for potatoes should be between 44.6°F and 50°F in cool, dark, well-ventilated settings. Avoid storing them in the refrigerator, as cold temperatures can convert starches to sugars.

I usually use airtight containers and Ziploc bags to protect my food from moisture, pests, and oxygen, which can cause spoilage. You can invest in Mason jars, especially if you're going to be canning, Mylar bags, food-grade buckets, and hermetically sealed containers. Then clearly label all the stored items, especially canned goods, with the purchase and expiration dates. This way, you'll be able to track how fresh your supplies are and consume and replace them as needed.

You should also implement the "first in, first out" rotation system in your pantry to ensure that you use up older food before the newer additions. Use pest control measures like traps, repellents, or sealed containers to prevent pests from accessing your food storage. And lastly, regularly inspect your food storage for signs of spoilage, damage, or pests. Early detection will help prevent further issues. These strategies will help you stay well-prepared to maintain a reliable and diverse food supply.

WATER STORAGE AND PURIFICATION



Unless you have water in an emergency when you have to survive on your stockpile for a while, your chances of survival are slim to none.

This is why when it comes to water storage, you need to consider both long-term and short-term needs (Hunt et al. 2020). For short-term needs, usually immediate emergencies, food-grade water containers and jugs will suffice. For the longer term, you'll need water barrels or tanks, as they can hold significant amounts of water, and some even come with UV protection to prevent algae growth. Keep them in a cool, dark place so they can stay fresh.

Water Purification

You need to understand water purification methods if you're going to ensure that the water you store will still be safe for consumption regardless of how long it has been stored. Some of these methods include:

1. Boiling: One of the oldest, most effective methods known to man. Create a rolling boil for at least one minute and you can bid those pathogens goodbye.
2. Filtration: Being safe is more important than being frugal if you're going to invest in water filters. Ensure you buy a quality water filter with a pore size of 0.2 microns or smaller that's capable of removing bacteria, protozoa, or even viruses.
3. Chemical Treatment: Chlorine tablets or iodine-style treatments are affordable and can easily disinfect your water. Just follow the instructions carefully for safe usage.
4. UV Purification: Some water tanks or barrels even come with them. They're compact, and the ultraviolet light is efficient in treating water.
5. Gravity Filters: These filters work by letting water pass through a filter media, removing contaminants, and are suitable for purifying large quantities of water.

You can also get Pedialyte to add to your water. It gives your immune system an extra boost of electrolytes, especially when you're stressed.

Regularly inspect and rotate water storage containers so you can always have access to clean, fresh water. You should also find out about water sources in your area as you might need to supplement your stored water with readily available sources. Securing access to clean water is fundamental to a prepared future, because water is life, after all.

MEDICATIONS AND FIRST AID SUPPLIES



Another important aspect of a self-sufficient lifestyle is your health and well-being, which is why you need a first aid kit that's fully stocked with the essentials. Your first aid kit should include:

Bandages: Leaving cuts open for a long time can lead to infection, which you can prevent by using bandages, sterile gauze, or band-aids. Buy different sizes to cover and protect your wounds.

Antiseptics: You can get antiseptic wipes or even solutions to clean your wound and prevent infection.

Pain Relievers: You can easily get OTC pain relievers like acetaminophen, aspirin, or ibuprofen.

Allergy Medication: Get antihistamines for allergic reactions. Benadryl also helps in dealing with allergies.

Ointment: You can get antibiotic ointments for cuts and scratches or even bug tablets for bug bites.

Tools: Scissors, tweezers, and thermometers are essential tools. With the thermometer, you can measure someone's temperature to see how bad their fever is, and scissors and tweezers come in handy when you need to cut something.

Burn Cream: There's the possibility of burns, even from hot objects, so get a specialized cream for treating burns. And if you live in a place like Florida, then you shouldn't forget your sunscreen either.

A First Aid Manual: A reference guide that will help you administer first-aid doesn't mean you should skip training though.

Medications

In the case of medical vulnerabilities in any member of the family, consider stocking essential medications like:

Prescription Medications: If any member of your family has a chronic condition that requires prescription medications, ensure to maintain an ample supply.

Over-the-counter Medications: Your kit should contain common OTC drugs for colds, fever, allergies, and even gastrointestinal issues. A lot of people shy away from generic brands but they're just as effective as the big brand names.

Pain Relievers: Anti-inflammatories (ibuprofen especially) are my go-to pain relievers. You can buy aspirin or other suitable pain relievers for your family.

Specialized Medications: If a member of your family needs specialized medications like an insulin pump, an EpiPen, or an inhaler, then make sure this is also in your kit.

After stocking up your first aid kit, don't just leave it, waiting for when you'll use it. Regularly check and update your kit and medications to ensure that they are still in good condition and not expired.

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT FOR SELF-RELIANCE

Having the right tools and equipment can make all the difference in a self-sufficient lifestyle. Being handy with these tools is also, of course, necessary. Here's a rundown of essential tools to consider.

Whether you need to do repairs in the house or manipulate and craft from materials out in the wilderness (in case you need to evacuate), you'll have to look through your toolbox for the saws, pliers, wrenches, nails, reamers, awls, or hammers that you urgently need, therefore you must get sturdy ones as soon as you can.

In case you'll be doing a little building and construction of your own, you can buy chainsaws or cordless drills to help ease the work. You should also have duct tape or Gorilla Tape. Having duct tape can help you improvise in a lot of situations, even tape back the sole of that shoe that seems to be falling off.

We'll be looking at ways to grow food as we move forward in this book, and if you're interested in growing your own organic food as well, you'll need gardening equipment like pruners, hoes, rakes, and shovels. When searching for these tools, choose ergonomic designs; they are more comfortable if you want to use them for an extended period. You may decide to keep animals in addition to your agricultural production; in this case, you will also need milking equipment, shears, fencing materials, and grooming supplies.

Food is important, and apart from stocking up on foodstuff, you'll also need to have cooking and presentation tools at home. You can invest in a propane stove, which is portable and easy to carry around, or you can buy a solar oven or a wood-burning stove for cooking. You can also get foil as you can wrap food in it and cook it over fire, and a little wire mesh can work as a grill. Paper cups and plates are also needed, especially when there is a limited water supply and you don't want to waste water washing them. For food preservation, you can invest in a pressure canner or atmospheric steam canner, Mason jars, a dehydrator, a ladle, a jar lifter, and a root cellar for storing produce.

Raw meat and fish are some other foods you might not be able to store up, so you might need to use your hunting and fishing skills for these. In

that case, you should be prepared with your fishing and hunting equipment; you'll need fishing rods, hooks, guns, hunting knives, etc.

You'll also need battery-powered headlamps or flashlights to see and perform tasks or navigate in the dark. Since they're battery-powered, you need to have durable batteries too. Of course, I use Duracell.

If you live in a remote place, you may need to use two-way radios, satellites, or even signal flares to communicate in an emergency.

In all honesty, the specific tools and equipment you'll need will depend on your self-sufficiency goals and the lifestyle you want to lead. All you have to do to ensure that your equipment remains in excellent condition for many years is to store it well and maintain it frequently.

FUEL AND ENERGY SOURCES

The most likely scenario among the numerous possibilities of “disaster” that could happen in the United States is a power outage (Petermann et al. 2014). If this happens, you'll need to depend on alternative fuel and energy sources.

The first reliable source of energy that will come in handy is the sun, ever reliant, ever shining. You can buy solar panels that come with efficient battery storage, and these panels will convert electricity to a clean and sustainable power supply for you and your family. Another natural resource to take advantage of is the wind. If your location allows, you can build a wind turbine, especially if you stay where there are consistent wind patterns. It is an excellent complement to solar power. If you'd rather not install solar panels or wind turbines, or in case you want an additional backup, generators are a good choice. Backup generators can meet your electricity needs in case of emergency. Just make sure you have enough fuel (diesel, propane, or gasoline) and keep your backup generator maintained because you don't want it to break down when you need it the most. Due to how volatile gasoline is and the necessity to avoid mishaps, proper gasoline storage necessitates storing it in containers designed for long-term storage. You should also keep your fuel supply in well-ventilated spaces and away from extreme temperatures to prevent degradation. When I initially stored fuel, I filled a 25-gallon keg with gasoline, only to discover when I went back months

later that the amount had decreased by about half; that's when I realized the need for proper fuel storage.

Then you can use wood-burning stoves to create heat or fire; provided you have properly seasoned wood, a fire will ignite in no time. Automobiles, generators, and other devices can be run on ethanol produced from your maize supply or biodiesel produced from discarded vegetable oil in the absence of gasoline or wood. Cotton balls dipped in Vaseline or baby oil also make good fire starters. A ferro rod will also give you thousands of strikes.

Additionally, to save energy during power outages, utilize energy-efficient lighting and appliances when using electrical equipment. Since I've found that LED bulbs are fairly energy-efficient, I stick to them for light.

Combining these energy and fuel sources will help you create a reliable energy infrastructure, and what's more? Most of these options help you stay environmentally responsible.

CLOTHING AND SHELTER

Clothing and shelter are foundational aspects of preparedness, necessary for your comfort and safety during challenging times, so you can't make this choice based on your favorite color, favorite clothes, or what you think you look cute in. The four crucial things to come to mind are durability, season, repair, and safety. Then you can make your stockpile choice based on these factors.

Durability

Be it clothes or shoes, you have to make sure they are sturdy and comfortable. You don't want clothes that will tear when they get caught on tree branches or shrubs. Neither do you want broken heels or your soles opening along the way, especially if it's a situation that's going to warrant you leaving home. Besides, the clothing you purchase is not only for survival, but you'll probably wear it before the scenario arises, and who knows, maybe long after that.

Repair

Also, thrift wear and hand-me-downs are the best for children. Buy clothes that if they have tears, you'll can easily stitch using a needle and thread from your sewing kit. You want something that you can easily rinse out in river water and set to dry in the sun and rest assured that it will still be in great condition.

Seasonal Considerations

No matter how cute that off-shoulder floral gown is, you can't wear it in the winter. Yet, wearing gloves and layering up will do you more harm than good underneath the scorching sun. So, when stockpiling, have both warm-weather and cold-weather items. Include hats, gloves, sunglasses, thermal underwear, a fleece jacket, and waterproof outerwear. Also invest in clothes suitable for layering, so you can adapt to different weather conditions by easily removing or adding layers as needed.

Safety

Consider camouflage clothing that can help you blend in with the natural environment and evade threats. Clothes like this will also serve you better when hunting and are great for both your survival and defense.

Now that we've covered those four crucial things, let's look at the essential clothes you need to stockpile. Don't forget that they should follow those four requirements.

- Underwear
- Heavy socks
- Gloves
- Boots
- Extra shirts and pants
- Handkerchiefs
- Well-fitted shoes
- Rain gear
- Sweater
- Moleskins
- Washtub, soap, clothesline, clothespin
- Hats
- Earmuffs
- Scarves, etc.

Shelter

For shelter, you can buy tents and tarps, and ensure that they are durable and can weather any condition. They should also be easy to set up, and don't forget to take stakes and ropes with you. Sleeping bags are another nice investment. You can lay them down anywhere, and voila, you're ready to sleep. Make sure that they can protect you against the lowest temperatures. Emergency blankets are a must; they are lightweight and won't take up much space in your backpack or bug-out bag.

This survival-prepping journey involves being prepared for anything, so you need to learn how to construct improvised shelters using natural materials like sticks or fronds. You should also regularly check on your shelter gear for damage and perform maintenance when needed to ensure it remains functional.

Focusing on clothing and shelter that suits various weather conditions or can be adapted to different scenarios means you're already ensuring your comfort and safety when the need arises.

BARTERING AND TRADE ITEMS

Panic buying is common during a crisis and involves buying lots of what isn't needed and forgetting to buy what is needed. But lucky you, or should I say "prepared you"? You have most of everything you need and even lots to spare. Plus, you have the flexibility to acquire what you need when traditional resources are scarce.

So, peradventure you might need to trade skills or goods when the need arises, what are examples of items that are likely to be in short supply during a disaster? First, consider stocking up on goods with universal appeal: non-perishable food, hygiene products, medical supplies, and even some of those durable tools and equipment you bought at the hardware store. These are important items that people don't buy enough of, or forget to buy altogether, and they will surely come in handy in a trade or barter scenario. Also, buy goods with a long shelf life, like canned foods, dried foods, and properly stored grains.

Skills can also be exchanged for goods, whether you're the one with the skills or with the goods. Skills like first aid, carpentry, or even farming are usually highly sought after during cases of survival. You can meet

your needs in terms of skills or goods. You should build connections within your community or local prepper networks, as having a good rapport with them will facilitate smoother bartering arrangements. This way, you will also be kept in the loop about their needs and demands.

During a period of survival, you need to keep your stockpile secure to avoid theft, since a lot of people would want to get their hands on the things they need by hook or by crook. Separate the items you'll be bartering from your regular stockpile, so there won't be a mix up and you won't barter more than you can afford to. Then make an inventory of your bartering items, quantities, and how you intend to use them.

By doing this, you're not only making yourself more self-sufficient, but you're also making an impact in the community and contributing to the growth of a resilient and mutually supportive community.

MANAGING YOUR STOCKPILE ROTATION

Lastly and very importantly, you need to learn how to rotate your stockpile. This will help you efficiently manage it and ensure that you have a fresh supply readily available for use.

First, you need to establish a regular rotation schedule; maybe every three or six months you dedicate time to accessing and rotating your stockpile. You can use this opportunity to replace expired or damaged products. You will use these routine checkups to look for signs of spoilage, damage, or pests. While doing this, you need to adopt the FIFO principle, where you use the oldest items in your stockpile first. When replenishing your stockpile, you'll add the newer items to the back or bottom of the storage and push older ones to the top or front for easy access.

Then, every time you buy new items for your stockpile, keep a detailed list that includes item descriptions, quantities, and expiration dates, and always update it every time you use and replace some of these items. You should also employ a labeling system that's easy to use and understand—clearly label items with their expiration dates and storage instructions. You can choose to donate items that are approaching their expiration date, and that you can't use up before that date, to local charities or food banks. In your little way, you'll be helping those in need.

The ability to manage your stockpile rotation is a skill that helps your preparedness efforts to remain effective and budget-friendly, minimizing waste, maximizing shelf space, and ensuring you have the necessary supplies when you need them the most.

WORKBOOK TWO

Your Food Stockpile Inventory

For instance, let's say you get six tins of canned fish on January 12. You'll fill in the date that you got it. Next add the product, which is canned fish (you can add the brand name). Add the quantity of six tins, and the expiration date, maybe June 16, 2025. Then let's say you take the next inventory on March 30, and by then, you've used two tins of the canned fish. You'll write three tins left on the March 30, 2024.

TAKEAWAY TWO

Hey, fellow prepper, you've just learned an essential skill common to all thriving survival preppers—stockpiling. We kicked things off by understanding the essential food supplies that you need to stockpile, but just getting these food items is not enough. Efficient storage is important if your supply will still be useful when needed. Then we looked at how to stock water and ensure a clean water source anytime.

Of course, your health and that of your loved ones is important, which is why we looked at essential medical supplies for your wellbeing, and how to be handy whether in the wilderness or at home. We also learned how to find alternative energy and fuel sources and how to cater to our comfort and needs. We capped it all with a very important skill: how to efficiently manage your stockpile and avoid waste or damage. So, as you continue on your journey to being a successful prepper, keep these lessons in your back pocket as you get ready to tackle any challenge that comes your way.

PART II

SELF-RELIANT LIVING

You know that preppers thrive on self-sufficiency, but moving from a life dependent on mainstream stores to one where you have to make the most out of nature can be quite daunting. In a self-sufficient lifestyle, you have to fend for yourself, and you need skills to thrive. So, in this part, you'll be learning how to thrive off the grid, be food-sufficient, and able to protect yourself, loved ones, and home.

CANNING AND PRESERVATION

One of the reasons why there are a lot of rules necessary for stockpiling food is so that food can last longer and serve you well when SHTF. There are rising food shortages, rising food prices, and many other reasons why we prep, which is why now, more than ever, you need the necessary skills to preserve and store your food. There are several ways to preserve foods, as you know, some of which we even practice at home: freezing, smoking, salting, drying, using Mylar bags, fermenting, etc. Canning is a food preservation method that has stood the test of time and has been in existence since it was introduced by Nicholas Appert in 1805, and since then it has improved to include better techniques. I've always loved canning, although my initial experience with it gave me the solid impression that it's a stressful ordeal. That was when I used to visit Nana, but then technology came along, and I've developed more manageable, faster, and efficient methods of canning, which I'm going to tell you about. We will also discuss other preservation methods and how they can serve you on this journey, so let's get started.

INTRODUCTION TO CANNING

So, what is canning?

Canning is an art, just as cooking is, and can be a form of hobby that extends the shelf life of perishable food items (Rombauer et al. 2019). It's great for homesteaders like me, who will always want to have access

to fresh food items both in season and out of season. It's also for those who want to take control of their food supply, reduce waste, and ensure their family's sustenance in time of need. For someone who isn't a fan of replacing food items but would rather extend their shelf life, canning is an essential skill. When we can, we seal food in airtight containers and heat them. This causes the food in the jars to expand, the steam removes air from the jar, and a barrier for the food is created against bacteria, yeast, mold, and enzymes, preventing them from acting on the food and thus keeping it safe to eat for years.

As a prepper, canning is one skill that helps you become more self-reliant, because not only are you able to grow, harvest, and preserve your food, but you're also independent of grocery stores and supply chains, especially during emergencies. Canning is also a money-saver, letting you take advantage of seasonal abundance and sales. Food has gotten expensive, and I'm always shocked at prices every time I go grocery shopping. With canning, you know you can buy food in bulk (which is cheaper, trust me) and preserve it, which means you have something to fall back on during price hikes. Not only does this food preservation method retain food quality and flavor, but you can also save surplus and prevent food waste.

There are three methods of canning (one thing I didn't learn from canning days with Nana), and they are steam canning, water bath, and pressure canning. The open kettle method, inversion method, sun canning, oven/microwave canning, dishwasher canning (no comments on this one), or other funny methods you might have heard about or seen being practiced are not safe and so a no-no, as they can't get completely get rid of bacteria in your food.

Unlike situations where you need to weigh the pros and cons of three options, the choice of these methods depends on food acidity and, at times, your level of expertise.

Steam canning is relatively simple for the beginner; it's less stressful and reaches processing temperature quicker than other canning methods. It is a relatively new canning method (wasn't recommended until 2015 by Dr Barbar Ingham in collaboration with the National Center for Home Food Preservation). This method is suitable for acidic or acidified foods with a pH of not more than 4.6, like fruits, preserves, and pickled vegetables.

The boiling water bath method is also for canning highly acidic foods with nothing less than a pH of 4.6, like fruits, pickles, jams, and jellies. The acidic content of these foods can prevent the growth of *Clostridium botulinum* spores, the culprit behind botulism, the most common of foodborne diseases. This is why they can be safely canned at boiling temperatures (212°F at sea level), and acids such as lemon juice or citric acid are added to the water. In the steam canning methods, prepared jars are arranged in a rack above a reservoir of water and then the steam generated from the boiling water provides the thermal treatment. In the boiling water canning method, the prepared jars are fully submerged in the boiling water.

Then we have the pressure canning method, which is suitable for low-acid and non-acidic foods (with a pH over 4.6) like vegetables, meats, seafood, and poultry. It's the only safe method, to be honest. In this method, prepared jars of food are placed in water in a pressure canner (not necessarily submerged as in a boiling water bath) and then heated to a temperature of 240°F, a temperature that can only be attained in a pressure canner.

If you don't can safely, you're still at the risk of botulism. So, for safe canning, always follow trusted canning recipes approved by the USDA, and use proper canning techniques based on your altitude. Also ensure that your jars, lids, and bands are not damaged so they can seal properly, and inspect your canned goods before consumption.

I always advise beginners to start with high-acid foods using the water bath canner or atmospheric steam canning method before they venture into pressure canning because these canning methods are relatively easy to get the hang of. So, if you're looking to take control of your food supply, whether for emergencies or simply sustainable living, canning is one skill that empowers you to thrive. The key is to start small.

CANNING EQUIPMENT ON A BUDGET

The main essence of this book is helping you to live a self-sufficient lifestyle without breaking the bank. Although some canning equipment is quite expensive, with the right choices and a bit of resourcefulness, you can preserve your food without compromising on quality and safety.

Let's start with the basics that won't stress your wallet too much.

Mason jars: These or canning jars are the most essential item and come in different sizes (the size you use depends on the quantity of food you want to can or your canning guide calls for). They also come with lids that contain both the covers and rims. Now, while the jars can be reused, the lids and rims cannot. Or you can buy reusable lids, though they're expensive. If you would rather not buy lids every time you need to, buying these will pay for themselves over time. And you can get the jars from thrift stores or even garage sales, but make sure they are not cracked or chipped.

Canner: If you're going to be practicing safe canning, then a canner is something you can't skimp on. You can start with a water bath canner. They're cheaper and you can get a gently used one (or even a pressure canner) in a second-hand store. You can also use a large stockpot with a lid as an alternative to a water bath canner. For the pressure canner, you can choose to buy one with a weighted gauge, which is cheaper but quite complicated to use, or one with a dial gauge, which is expensive but easier to use.

Canning utensils: You're going to need a funnel, jar lifter, and lid lifter. Although a normal kitchen funnel works, it was pretty slow and messy when I used it for canning, while the jar funnel fits into both the regular and wide-mouth Mason jars. The jar lifter helps you easily transfer a hot Mason jar. An alternative is tongs with rubber at the end. A lid lifter also helps you pick lids up out of hot water (when you're sterilizing them) or from the countertop for better handling and to avoid contamination. You can buy the three cheaply in a canning toolset.

Canning racks: This is what you'll set your prepared jars on, so make sure they fit inside your canner or stockpot. They can be found secondhand, or, as an alternative, you can arrange extra Mason jars at the bottom of your canner.

Kitchen scales: Just as in baking, inaccurate measurement can affect how your canned produce comes out, so you should have one on hand.

Canning labels: It's important to label your jars for easy identification. If you like fancy-schmancy things, you can buy fancy labels, but if not, you can use masking tape or printable labels.

Ladles: I trust you already have one of these in your kitchen. If not, you can include one on your shopping list since you'll be scooping a lot of

things in the canning process.

You can save costs in the canning process by canning in small batches. Instead of canning everything all at once, focus on what's in season, extra produce from your garden harvest, or foods that keep experiencing a hike in their prices. You can also pool resources and share equipment with a group of friends or neighbors who also have an interest in canning. Although, we humans can be funny, so only share if you can handle the frustration now and then; if not, buy your equipment.

So, as you can see, canning on a budget is very much possible. I can assure you, the satisfaction of preserving your harvest and being prepared for any situation is worth every penny spent and saved.

STEP-BY-STEP CANNING TECHNIQUES

How do we go about this canning process?

Step 1: Gather Your Supplies

As a prepper, you're to be prepared for everything, without running here and there to get this and that. Ensure you have every ingredient and piece of equipment you need. This includes jars in their appropriate sizes, lids and bands, a jar funnel, a jar lifter, canning pots, and your fruits, meats, or any other items for canning, necessary spices as per the recipe, and any other thing you might need to get you through the day. Also, while doing this, ensure your jars and lids are in pristine condition and, if using a pressure canner, clean and inspect it before use. Also, make sure the gauge is accurate before use.

Step 2: Sterilize Your Jars and Lids

Usually, canning will sterilize both jar and food, but if your canning time is less than 10 minutes, then sterilize all your jars and lids by submerging them in boiling water for at least 10 minutes, and they should remain hot until ready to use.

Step 3: Prepare Your Recipe

Following a trusted canning guide, prepare the food you want to can, and don't forget to make necessary adjustments for altitude.

Step 4: Fill the Jars

Carefully fill your sterilized jar with your prepared recipe using a ladle and funnel. There's always a recommended headspace at the top of the jar that allows food to expand during processing, so stick to this recommended headspace.

Step 5: Remove Air Bubbles

You can do this by sliding a non-metallic utensil down the sides of the jar to release trapped air, as air usually causes spoilage. I use a spatula for doing this.

Step 6: Apply Lids and Bands

Then I use a damp kitchen towel to wipe the rims of the jars, cleaning off any residue or food particles so that the jar can seal properly. Then I place a lid on each jar and secure it tightly with a band. Avoid the band being so tight that its pressure would break the jar.

Step 7: Canning Time

Arrange the filled jars on the canning rack in your canner. For water bath canning, submerge the jars in boiling water, ensuring they're covered by at least one inch. Begin timing the process once the water reaches a rolling boil. For pressure canning, fill with about two to three inches of hot water, and make sure the vent pipe is open before covering the canner. Vent the canner by adjusting the canner's heat to a relatively high temperature, and maintain for about 10 minutes, letting the canner vent excess air. If it's a dial range pressure canner, just set the burner on heat high and let it continue heating until the desired pressure, and start timing once the pressure reaches 11 pounds. If it's a weighted gauge, place the pressure regulator on the canner. Once it is under pressure, the safety valve (if it has one) will pop up. Once the regulator starts to rock, turn up the heat until it rattles at a steady pace and start the timer.

Step 8: Remove and Cool

For a water bath canner, simply remove the hot jars using a jar lifter and place them on a clean towel or cooling rack. You might hear the lids pop as they seal while cooling. If you're using a pressure canner, turn the heat off and let the canner depressurize by itself (please note this: no funny tricks), the canner will let off a clicking sound once it depressurizes. Then let the canner cool for about 10 minutes or so before opening it. Once it is cool, it will have released all the pressure inside,

and you won't need to force it open. After this, you can remove the jars the same way as in the water bath method.

Step 9: Test the Seals

After the jars have cooled for about 12–24 hours, I test the seals by pressing down on the center of each lid. If it doesn't pop up or down, that means it is properly sealed. But if it flexes or makes a popping sound, it is not properly sealed, and you can store it in the refrigerator to use for later. If there's no immediate need for it, reprocess immediately.

Step 10: Label and Store

First, remove the bands from the jars as they usually rust over time, then label each jar with its contents and the date it was canned. Then store your canned goods in a cool, dark, and dry place. The quality, flavor, and smell can last for a year or more.

Pressure Canning Altitude Chart

| Altitude(ft) | Pressure Weighted gauge | Pressure Dial gauge |
|--------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| 0–1,000 | 10 | 11 |
| 1,001–2,000 | 15 | 11 |
| 2,001–4,000 | 15 | 12 |
| 4,001–6,000 | 15 | 13 |
| 6,001–8,000 | 15 | 14 |
| 8,001–10,000 | 15 | 15 |

A quick tip: I usually add two spoons of white vinegar to the boiling water in the canner to prevent water stains on my jars.

PRESERVING FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Believe me, only a few skills are as rewarding as canning fruits and veggies. If fresh produce is in surplus now, you might not yet feel how rewarding it is, but wait until they're out of season and you desperately want some. The ability to store the vibrant essence of summer or the bountiful harvest for future consumption is a hallmark of the self-reliant lifestyle. Let's look at the process involved.

Choosing the Finest Produce

Begin with the best ingredients—ripe, firm, unblemished fruits and freshly harvested vegetables (nothing later than three hours after harvesting). Whether it's plump, sun-ripened tomatoes or the juiciest peaches, selecting top-quality produce is the foundation of successful canning.

Preparation and Processing

Properly prepare your fruits and vegetables by washing, peeling, and cutting them according to your chosen recipes. The method of processing—water bath or pressure canning—varies based on the acidity of the food. High-acid fruits are suitable for water bath canning, while low-acid vegetables require pressure canning.

Now we go to either hot packing or raw packing.

Raw Packing: This only requires washing, chopping, and packing the fruits/veggies—there is no need to warm them first. Raw packaging is quicker and less stressful than heat packing. The difference in result is that the fruit can float, which means huge pieces of fruit float to the surface during canning. This a common occurrence in raw packaging but is absent in heat packaging. During the canning process, some of the floating fruit pieces will turn brown. It has no impact on the taste or quality, but call me picky 'cause I like my food to look a certain way.

Hot Packing: Cook the food until boiling, then reduce the heat and simmer for two to five minutes. Then, loosely pack these boiling fruits/veggies into the jars you are using (since they've already shrunk in size). You should boil the fruits in the sugar syrup, if you're going to add it, or with the canning liquid you intend to use.

Although raw-packed and hot-packed fruits/veggies may appear the same after canning, hot packing remains my preferred method for prepping fruits for preservation. Fruits/veggies packed hot retain more of

their color and flavor throughout a short time of storage than fruits packed uncooked. It increases the shelf life by reducing the food, removing air from the food tissues, increasing the vacuum in sealed jars, and keeping food from floating in the jars.

After hot or raw packing into jars with the required headspace and pouring in the canning liquid (can be syrup), put fruits in the water bath canner and vegetables in the pressure canner for the required time. Once your canning process is complete, allow the jars to cool, check for sealing, and label them with the contents and the date of canning. Store them in a cool, dark, and dry place. Regularly check for signs of spoilage, such as bulging lids or off odors.

Also, fruits usually darken if on the shelf for long. Some solutions for canning fluid can help prevent this if, like me, you like your food to look as delicious as it tastes.

1. Use 1 gallon of water to 2 tablespoons of salt and 2 tablespoons of vinegar.
2. Mix commercial ascorbic and citric acid with 1 gallon of water. The amount of the ascorbic and citric acid should be based on the product's description.
3. Crush and dissolve 3000 mg of vitamin C tablets (that is six 500 mg tablets) in 1 gallon of water.
4. Mix 1 teaspoon of ascorbic acid powder with 1 gallon of water.

Canning fruits and vegetables is more than a preservation method; it's a celebration of self-sufficiency. It empowers you to enjoy the flavors of each season year-round, strengthening your food security.

CANNING MEATS AND PROTEINS



Canning meats and proteins is a valuable skill for self-sufficiency and preparedness. It ensures a reliable source of protein even in challenging situations. And it is very versatile, as you can warm meat/fish and eat it right out of the jar, thus you can make a quick meal without having to rush to the market or thaw frozen meat (which I find tedious).

To can meats, begin with high-quality meat. Look for lean cuts with minimal fat, as fat can affect the quality and shelf life of canned meat. Meats are low-acid foods, except for fish which must be canned using a pressure canner.

Trim any visible fat and cut the meat into manageable chunks or slices. Season lightly if desired, but avoid using thickeners or flour. You can also raw pack meats, where you pack it just the way it is after washing

and cutting. Or hot pack, where you steam, boil, or bake the meat until it is about two-thirds done (for rabbits and chicken). I usually add in the broth when packing the meat pieces into the jar and, of course, I can only get the broth from hot packing, which is probably why it's my go-to choice for packing meats as well. Or you can use the browning method, where you heat the meat in hot oil for a while. All you need to do for fish, however, is nob, wash, descale, and brine.

Clean and sterilize your canning jars, lids, and rings. Keep them hot until ready for use to prevent temperature shock. Fill hot, sterilized jars with the prepared meat, leaving the recommended headspace (usually 1 inch for meats, rabbits, and poultry, and 1 ¼ inches for fish). Add hot water or broth to cover the meat, leaving the same headspace.

Remove air bubbles, wipe jar rims, and apply the lids and rings.

For the meat, poultry, and rabbit, process pint-sized jars for 75 minutes and quart-sized jars for 90 minutes at a pressure specified for your altitude. You process fish in pint-sized jars for 100 minutes and fish in quart-sized jars for 160 minutes.

Cool and check seals. Then label and store properly.

And to answer the question you're asking: yes, you can process all kinds of meats, both domesticated and hunted.

Canning meats provides a valuable source of protein for your self-sufficiency journey. Ensure you follow reliable recipes and guidelines to maintain safety and quality.

PICKLING AND FERMENTATION

Pickles are yummy, and instead of buying pickles from the store, you can make a batch in the comfort of your home. When people hear the word fermentation, they often only think of yogurt, beer, or wine—or at least that's what a millennial I recently discussed this topic with thought. Yet even your foods at home can be fermented. Pickling and fermentation are time-tested methods of preserving food that every self-sufficient enthusiast should master. These techniques extend the shelf life of your harvest and enhance flavor and nutritional value.

Pickling

Pickling involves immersing food items in a solution, typically vinegar or brine, to preserve them. The acidity in the pickling solution prevents the growth of spoilage microorganisms. Pickled items are known for their tangy, sharp flavors. Common pickled foods include cucumbers (pickles), onions, and various vegetables.

Fermentation

Fermentation, on the other hand, is a natural process where beneficial microorganisms, like lactic acid bacteria, break down sugars and starches in food, creating an environment hostile to harmful bacteria. This method preserves food while developing unique, complex flavors. Fermented foods include sauerkraut, kimchi, yogurt, and kombucha.

Key Steps for Successful Pickling and Fermentation

Cleanliness

Ensure all equipment, jars, and utensils are thoroughly cleaned and sanitized. Any residual bacteria can affect the fermentation process (Katz, 2016).

Proper Containers

Use appropriate containers for pickling and fermentation, such as glass jars with tight-fitting lids. These help to maintain a controlled environment.

Salt and Seasonings

Use the right type and amount of salt for fermentation (avoid iodized salt). Herbs, spices, and seasonings can be added for flavor. Follow recipes carefully to maintain the correct salt-to-water ratio.

Temperature Control

Keep the fermentation process at the right temperature. Most fermentations occur between 60°F and 75°F (15°C to 24°C). Cooler temperatures slow down the process, while higher temperatures can lead to spoilage.

Patience

Fermentation takes time; it can range from days to weeks. Allow the process to proceed naturally and check for signs of completion, like

bubbles and a sour aroma.

Storage

Once fermentation or pickling is complete, store your preserved foods in a cool, dark place or a refrigerator. Properly sealed containers help maintain freshness.

Steps Involved

- Wash and sterilize canning jars, lids, and rings.
- Slice cucumbers or other vegetables into desired shapes and pack them into the jars.
- Create a pickling solution by heating equal parts water and vinegar. Add salt, sugar, and your choice of pickling spices.
- Pour the hot pickling liquid over the vegetables, leaving some headspace.
- Wipe the jar rims, place the lids on, and screw the rings until they are fingertip tight.
- Let the jars cool to room temperature, and then refrigerate them for a few days to develop flavors.

Now we want our pickles to taste as good as, if not better than, store-bought ones, so here are some tips to ensure that crunchy solid taste you're used to.

- Use fresh, well-developed pickles.
- Remove blossoms from cucumbers.
- Fully submerge them in brine.
- Ensure that the salt and acid to water ratio is perfect and follow instructions to the letter.
- Ensure that the container is airtight.
- Don't overcook or undercook.
- Avoid using too much spice.

These methods offer a wealth of possibilities for self-sufficiency. Not only can you preserve the fruits and vegetables you've grown, but you can also create delicious, probiotic-rich foods that contribute to a healthy diet.

DEHYDRATING FOODS

Dehydrating foods is a valuable skill for self-sufficiency enthusiasts. It allows you to extend the shelf life of your harvest, reduce food waste, and create lightweight, portable snacks for your adventures. It is an eco-friendly way to reduce food waste, minimize your carbon footprint, and another reason to buy food in bulk.

You can dehydrate a wide range of foods, including fruits, vegetables, herbs, and meats. Choose ripe, fresh produce for the best results. Slice or chop them uniformly to ensure even drying.

Dehydrated foods are incredibly versatile. Use them for backpacking meals, trail snacks, camping trips, or as additions to your daily meals. All you need to do is rehydrate dehydrated vegetables and meats with hot water for quick and nutritious dishes. They retain most of their nutritional value, including vitamins and minerals, and they are free from additives or preservatives, making them a healthy choice for your self-sufficient lifestyle.

You need to first invest in a good-quality food dehydrator. You can also consider using your oven or even the sun for solar dehydration. Dehydrators offer precise temperature control, making them a popular choice.

Some foods will first have to be blanched or soaked in citric acid or lemon juice to preserve color and flavor. Follow the recommended preparation steps for each specific food item. After this, place your prepared foods on dehydrator trays or oven racks, leaving space for air circulation. Set the temperature according to the food you're dehydrating. Fruits typically dry at 135°F (57°C), while vegetables and herbs require slightly higher temperatures.

Drying times vary depending on the food and drying method. Regularly check your foods for dryness. Pieces should be leathery and free of moisture. I kept a record of the drying times of most food items I preserve, so I don't need to constantly go and check if they're fully dried or not. You can also keep a record.

Allow the dehydrated foods to cool completely before packaging. Store them in airtight containers, vacuum-sealed bags, or glass jars with tight-fitting lids. Keep your dehydrated foods in a cool, dark, and dry place.

Experiment with different foods, create your flavor combinations, and enjoy the convenience of having nutritious, homemade snacks at your fingertips.

VACUUM SEALING AND MYLAR BAGS

We preppers can't do without vacuum-sealing and Mylar bags; they're practical and have many benefits, as discussed next.

Preserving Freshness

Vacuum sealing removes air from containers, Mylar bags, or vacuum-seal bags. This airtight environment prevents the growth of bacteria, molds, and fungi, preserving the freshness of your food for an extended period.

Longer Shelf Life

By eliminating oxygen, vacuum-sealing and Mylar bags can significantly extend the shelf life of various food items, including grains, beans, dried fruits, and more. Some foods can last up five to ten times longer when properly sealed.

Protecting Against Moisture

Mylar bags are particularly effective at shielding your food from moisture, which can lead to spoilage and the growth of harmful microorganisms. This feature is essential for safeguarding your stockpile of essentials.

Easy Storage

Vacuum-sealed packages and Mylar bags are compact and stackable, optimizing your storage space. This is crucial for those living off the grid or with limited storage capacity.

Preserving Nutritional Value

Vacuum sealing maintains the nutritional value of your food by preventing oxidation, which can cause nutrient degradation over time.

Customizable Portions

You can portion your food items before sealing, allowing you to use only what you need and minimizing waste.

Protection Against Pests

Mylar bags provide an extra layer of defense against pests and critters that might infiltrate your food storage area.

Using a Vacuum Sealer

1. **Prepare Your Food:** Start by preparing the food you want to vacuum seal. This can include dried goods, meats, vegetables, or leftovers.
2. **Choose the Right Bag:** Select an appropriate vacuum-seal bag or roll for your food items. Ensure the bag is clean and free from any residue.
3. **Portion Your Food:** If you plan to use the food in portions, divide it accordingly before sealing. This helps you avoid opening and resealing the bag multiple times.
4. **Sealing the Bag:** Place the food items in the bag, leaving some space at the top for sealing. Ensure that no food particles or liquids come into contact with the sealing area, as this can prevent a proper seal.
5. **Seal the Bag:** Place the open end of the bag into the vacuum sealer's sealing channel. Close the lid and select the appropriate sealing setting. The machine will remove the air from the bag and heat-seal it. Wait for the machine to complete the process.
6. **Label and Date:** After sealing, label the bag with the contents and date of sealing. This helps you keep track of freshness and expiration dates.
7. **Store Properly:** Store your vacuum-sealed bags in a cool, dry, and dark place. Keep them away from direct sunlight, extreme temperatures, and humidity.

Using Mylar Bags

1. **Choose the Right Mylar Bag:** Mylar bags are particularly effective for long-term food storage. Ensure your bags are food-grade and come with oxygen absorbers if needed.

2. Prepare Your Food: Similar to vacuum sealing, start by preparing the food you want to store. Divide it into portions if necessary.
3. Use Oxygen Absorbers (personal choice): For extra protection against oxygen, you can include oxygen absorber packets in your Mylar bags. These packets will remove any remaining oxygen after sealing.
4. Fill the Mylar Bag: Fill the Mylar bag with your food items. Be cautious not to overfill; leave some space at the top for sealing.
5. Seal the Mylar Bag: Seal the open end of the Mylar bag using a hot iron or a specialized bag sealer. Ensure you achieve a tight seal across the entire width of the bag.
6. Double-Bag for Added Protection: For an additional layer of defense against oxygen and moisture, you can double-bag your Mylar bags.
7. Label and Date: As with vacuum-sealed bags, label the Mylar bags with the contents and date of sealing.
8. Proper Storage: Store your Mylar bags the same way as vacuum-sealed bags—in a cool, dry, and dark place.

Both vacuum-sealing and Mylar bags are excellent methods for food preservation. When done correctly, they can extend the shelf life of your food items, ensuring you have a reliable source of sustenance in challenging times.

Remember to regularly check your stored food for any signs of damage, and rotate items to maintain freshness. With these techniques, you'll be well-prepared for self-sufficient living and emergencies.

LONG-TERM FOOD PRESERVATION

Long-term food preservation is very important in the life of a prepper. If you can't preserve food long-term, it's almost the same as being a hoarder because the food you store will no longer be of value to you in a very short while. As a dedicated survivalist, you understand that securing a reliable source of sustenance is paramount. This is why we'll be discussing two other methods, aside from the ones we've discussed, to preserve food for extended periods while maintaining its nutritional value and flavor.

Freeze-Drying: While not the most accessible method for the average prepper, freeze-drying is highly effective for long-term preservation. It involves freezing food and then slowly removing the moisture in a vacuum chamber. The result is food with a remarkably extended shelf life and that retains its original taste and nutritional value.

Root Cellaring: For those fortunate enough to have access to a root cellar (which most farmers have and use), it offers a fantastic way to store crops like potatoes, carrots, and apples. These naturally cool and humid environments help maintain freshness for months.

Regardless of the method chosen, proper storage conditions are essential. Store your preserved food in a cool, dry, and dark location, away from direct sunlight, extreme temperatures, and humidity. Regularly inspect and rotate your stock to ensure freshness.

Long-term food preservation is not only a practical skill but also a smart investment in your self-sufficiency journey. It provides peace of mind knowing that you have a secure source of nourishment in times of need.

CREATIVE CANNING RECIPES

Being a prepper doesn't mean you can't be creative. Life can be quite bland without creativity, if you ask me. Creative canning recipes not only extend your food stores but also tantalize your taste buds during times of need.

Fruit Salsas

Elevate your game with fruit salsas. Mix diced peaches, tomatoes, jalapeños, onions, and cilantro. Season with a dash of lime juice and a pinch of salt. These salsas make excellent companions for grilled meats or as toppings for tacos and burritos.

Herb-Infused Oils

Preserve the essence of fresh herbs like rosemary, basil, or thyme by infusing them into oils. It's very simple: blanch the herbs, place them in a jar, and pour warmed olive oil over them. Seal and store. Then add these aromatic oils to salads, pasta, and roasted vegetables.

Spiced Jams

Take a break from the ordinary and experiment with spiced jams. Combine seasonal fruits like apples, pears, or plums with warm spices like cinnamon, cloves, and nutmeg. These jams are perfect for spreading on toast or glazing roasted meats.

Pickled Vegetables with a Twist

Traditional pickles are delightful, but don't stop there. Experiment with unique combinations like pickled asparagus with dill and garlic or pickled watermelon rinds with a hint of ginger. These add flair to charcuterie boards and salads.

Savory Chutneys

Chutneys are a canning gem. Craft them with fruits like mangoes, peaches, or cranberries paired with onions, vinegar, and spices. They make splendid accompaniments to cheese platters or roasted meats.

Tomato Concoctions

Tomatoes are incredibly versatile. Consider canning your tomato sauces infused with garden-fresh herbs and garlic. Or get creative with tomato-based salsas that incorporate ingredients like corn, black beans, and avocado.

Beverage Concentrates

Don't limit canning to just food. Create concentrated syrups for refreshing beverages. Lemonade concentrate, fruit-infused simple syrups, and even spiced apple cider concentrates can be stored for months and reconstituted with water when needed.

The key to creative canning recipes is experimentation and imagination. Start with trusted recipes and, as you gain confidence, make modifications to suit your preferences. Record your creations so that you can replicate your culinary successes.

SAFETY AND HYGIENE PRACTICES IN CANNING

No matter how long we want to preserve our foods, safety and hygiene are still very important. This is why you must follow crucial, rigorous practices that keep your provisions safe for the long haul. How do you do that?

1. Start with Pristine Ingredients

Your canned goods are only as good as the ingredients you use. Begin with fresh, high-quality produce and proteins. Inspect them for any signs of spoilage and discard anything questionable. Remember, the quality of your starting materials impacts the result.

2. Sterilize Your Equipment

Before you embark on any canning adventure, ensure that your canning equipment is impeccably clean and sterilized. This includes jars, lids, funnels, and utensils. Use hot, soapy water and follow up with thorough rinsing or dishwasher sterilization.

3. Choose the Right Processing Method

Don't forget that different canning methods are suitable for different food types. Water bath canning and atmospheric steam canning are suitable for high-acid foods like fruits, jams, and pickles, while low-acid foods, including meats and vegetables, require pressure canning. Using the wrong method can result in unsafe preservation.

4. Follow Proven Recipes

Reliable recipes from trusted sources are your best friends in the canning world. Deviating from established recipes can lead to underprocessing or overprocessing, both of which can result in spoiled food. Refer to reputable resources like the USDA or respected canning books.

5. Mind Your Headspace

When filling jars, leave the recommended headspace as specified in your recipe. This headspace allows for expansion during processing and helps create a proper vacuum seal.

6. Handle Lids with Care

Always use new, undamaged canning lids. After simmering them in hot water, ensure they are clean and dry before placing them on jars. Screw the bands on firmly but not too tightly to allow air to escape during processing.

7. Maintain Cleanliness

Throughout the canning process, maintain a clean workspace. Wipe off any spills promptly, especially on jar rims. Cleanliness minimizes the risk of contamination and mold growth.

8. Process Safely

Diligently follow your recipe's instructions for processing times and pressures. These times and pressures are meticulously calculated to destroy harmful microorganisms while preserving food quality.

9. Store Correctly

Once your jars are sealed and cooled, store them in a cool, dark, and dry place. Inspect jars regularly for signs of seal failure or spoilage, such as bulging lids or off odors.

10. Label and Rotate

Label your canned goods with the contents and the date of processing. Implement a "first in, first out" system to ensure you consume older items first, maintaining freshness and nutritional value.

By adhering to these safety and hygiene practices, you'll not only create a well-stocked pantry but also guarantee that your preserved foods remain a source of sustenance in times of need.

WORKBOOK THREE

What food preservation method do you prefer and why?

Preserve food using your preferred food preservation method and explain how the process went.

TAKEAWAY THREE

While stockpiling your food, it is also very important to be able to preserve your food for the long term. You must be able to make the resources you're stockpiling last—to make every meal count. Throughout this chapter, we've explored the many budget-friendly ways to preserve food supplies. Now, you can go ahead and preserve your food for up to several years.

OFF-GRID LIVING

The moment I told some of my friends that I'd started the survival-prepping lifestyle, they immediately imagined me living in a shack in the middle of nowhere, with a hat on my head, herding sheep and cattle with my wife busy tending to the garden in our backyard. Can't blame them, that's what comes to lots of people's minds when you tell them you want to start a self-sufficient lifestyle or start living off the grid. You probably had that mental picture as well when you first read the chapter topic. Yes, I moved away from the city, but not to a shack in the middle of nowhere, herding cattle and sheep.

When I made the life-changing choice to live off the grid, I didn't know I'd love it as much as I do right now. It has reshaped who I am as a person. It has reconnected me back to nature and family, and I am living an independent lifestyle where I don't have to depend on other people for my food, water, shelter, and energy.

I'm not making an ad or campaign or something, but the moment you start living off the grid, trust me, you'll never want to go back.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT OFF-GRID LOCATION

Selecting the right location for your off-grid adventure is a thrilling yet significant decision. One thing about off-grid living is that if you don't choose a location that is just right for you, living off the grid will be frustrating instead of an enjoyable experience. Living off the grid is

about seizing control of your life, and this begins with choosing the perfect location for your unique needs.

So, while making this choice and scouring the net for potential locations, don't forget to define your vision for off-the-grid living, as this will guide whatever decisions you make. Do you want complete independence or a balanced approach with some modern conveniences? The answer to this will determine if you'll live in the remote wilderness or on the outskirts of a small community that will help you perfectly blend both convenience and an off-the-grid lifestyle.

This will help you decide how far you want to be from civilization and how much distance you want between yourself and the closest town or city. Do you want access to amenities, public transportation, or other essential services? Also, you have to consider the climate of the locations you've pinned down. Whether you'd prefer beachside tranquility, mountain vistas, a change of seasons, or a temperate climate, you're choosing a place to live, so let it be a place you love as well. Check for a natural water source like a well, spring, or river, and ensure the land in that location has a solid bedrock for building structures, avoid wetlands or land that constantly experiences floods.

If you want to grow your food, keep animals or go fishing or hunting, then the location you pick should permit these activities to make the goals you set in chapter 1 more feasible. No matter where you choose to stay, it must be a place your family and friends can easily come to visit, whether for a social visit or in case of emergencies. A prepper's life is not a hermit's life, so how close do you still want to be to your social circle? When you narrow down your options, you can then research the rules and regulations governing land use, building, and self-sufficiency. If your goals don't align with the region's policies, then things might not work out the way you want. Don't forget to also consider the costs and expenses of living in your chosen location—account for property taxes, mortgage payments, and what you have.

The Perfect Off-Grid Location: It's Personal

The best off-grid location is not a one-size-fits-all concept; it's about what resonates with you. Create a list of your needs, focusing on the "holy trinity" of survival: water, shelter, and food. Select a location where these essential resources are readily available without constant importation.

Embrace technology and the internet to connect your off-grid lifestyle with the world. The internet allows off-gridders to reach a global community, contribute to society, and maintain the social aspect of life while living self-sufficiently. I am off the grid right now, but thanks to the internet, I can also contribute my quota to the prepper's community and society at large.

In summary, your perfect off-grid location is a personal choice that mirrors your unique needs and aspirations. Ensure it provides the essential resources for survival while accommodating your desired lifestyle. This location, guided by your vision, will serve as the foundation for your self-sufficient off-grid journey.

SURVIVAL SKILLS

You are not self-sufficient if you don't have some essential survival skills. Since the essence of off-grid living is independence, lacking some skills will ultimately make you dependent. Self-reliance and resourcefulness are the first qualities you should possess. You should be able to use what you already have to get by in an emergency and be creative in your problem-solving. Additionally, you should be able to locate a clean water source and learn how to treat it so that it is suitable for drinking. You can also learn how to grow your own food through gardening, foraging, rearing animals, fishing, or even hunting. And you need to know how to store your food effectively for long-term preservation.

Even if you don't have to build your house yourself when living off the grid, you'll still need some structures like a pen house, yurt, or tree house. You can even make some changes to your current home, but for this you'll need skills like construction and materials like insulation. You'll even need to learn how to harness alternative energy sources if you want your dwelling to be habitable. When you are in desperate need of heat, starting a fire will provide more than just heat for warmth and cooking; it will boost your mental health immediately, which is why you also need to understand how to start and maintain fires. In case of injuries and health emergencies, you want immediate help, so you need basic medical knowledge plus a well-stocked medical kit.

If your choice of location ends up being someplace remote, you'll need navigation skills to ensure that you always find your way back home. And while we hope for the best, it's good to always be prepared for the worst, so you'll need to be good at self-defense techniques and learn how to safeguard your home against potential threats. No matter where your heart takes you, embrace the off-grid community spirit and join forces with like-minded people for mutual support, sharing resources, and a sense of camaraderie.

These survival skills are tools you need if you're going to thrive as a self-sufficient prepper, and then you can be sure you'll have an enjoyable experience.

SOLAR POWER AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

If you're moving from an urban area or city to somewhere remote, then I can assure you that a life without electricity is not one that you're ready for. I lived without electricity for only a week before I couldn't take it any longer. At this point, harnessing solar power and alternative energy sources is your lifeline to a self-sufficient future. One thing you need to know as a prepper is that solar energy is not only a technology for the future but a game-changer for us off-the-gridders.

First, you need to understand passive solar, which, unlike its name, doesn't include solar batteries or panels. It's more about designing your home and its orientation to keep summer heat out and winter heat in. For example, this might entail building your house with windows facing south in the northern hemisphere or windows facing north in the southern hemisphere, or building your home near the shade of a large tree in a hot climate. You can also insulate to prevent heat loss through the walls, ceilings, or floors to ensure heat in the winter and cool in the summer by adding thermal mass to your off-grid home design. You can use materials like cob, brick, or even tiles.

Now, to harness solar power—solar panels convert sunlight into electricity that you can use to power your home and appliances, like charging your laptop, phone, or even the cooker and water heater. Panels can basically supply all your electricity needs. So, the first thing you need to do is quantify your daily energy usage. You can easily do this with an electricity use monitor, and you can switch out some of your

appliances for more efficient ones to cut down on your solar requirements.

Quantifying your energy needs will help you know the amount of wattage (determines the amount of electrical output your solar panel will be able to generate in optimal conditions) to get when installing your solar panel. There are also three major types of solar panels to choose from, and they include: the monocrystalline which, is the most expensive but has the highest efficiency; and the thin film, which is the cheapest and has the lowest efficiency; and the polycrystalline, which is somewhere in between. You can choose to install them yourself and then pay an electrician to examine them. I did (I got the all-clear, though, and was even commended for a job well done). If you'd rather not go that route, you can choose to pay for installation, which can cost as much as \$10,000 for a 1000-square-foot-sized home to well over \$75,000.

The batteries are actually the most expensive part of installing a solar panel, but a battery is also what differentiates an off-grid solar panel from an on-grid solar panel. If you're looking for a long-lasting and better-performing battery, then the lithium-ion is the best choice. It is the most expensive but also has the longest lifespan, is low weight, and requires the barest minimum maintenance. Coming right after it is the nickel ion battery with a mid-price point. They also last long and even withstand being under or overcharged. Right after them, comes the AGM battery, which is also mid-price but is a sealed gel battery that performs better. The cheapest of all is the flooded lead acid battery, which has the shortest lifespan and causes off-gassing fumes (so it can only be stored outside). It also requires constant maintenance.

Other important components of your off-grid solar system include the charge controller, which monitors charge input to your batteries; the inverter, which converts DC to AC; the battery protection to prevent electrical surges; the battery monitor that tells you how charged your batteries are; and the breaker box that distributes 120V energy to your household plugs, wiring, fuses, and other miscellaneous items.

Ensure that your solar panel is large enough to fully charge your battery because undercharging or overcharging your battery can damage it. Also, there's nothing wrong with having a backup for your backup in case a crazy storm comes that causes a lack of sunlight for a week or more. If you can, invest in wind turbines, hydroelectric systems, or a generator.

This will not only ensure that you are ready for any scenario but will also help you reduce your carbon footprint and have peace of mind.

WATER SOURCES AND COLLECTION METHODS

Whether on the grid or off the grid, you can agree with me that access to clean water is non-negotiable. Off the grid, we usually rely on nature's gifts for our water sources: rain, rivers, springs, and stream flow. You can easily harvest rainwater by collecting it from your roof and storing it in tanks (that's if you're using a non-toxic roofing material). It's pure and free, and you can drink it, use it to cook, water your plants, and meet other water needs. Rivers and streams are not only good water sources but also perfect for micro hydropower. If you're going to use them for your water needs, just make sure you employ a filtration system. It's hard to find land with a spring on it, but in case you get lucky and your land has one, make sure to install a pump system, and do your best to avoid contaminating or damaging it. Also, you'll need an additional water source.

In case all things fail, wells are one of the most reliable options but also the most expensive. They cost about \$5,000, and the price is dependent on the depth required for drilling, which means it can still increase. Once your well is drilled, it is usually a source of clean, healthy, mineral water, and it requires little to no maintenance. It also needs a pump. You can opt for the solar, hand, or electrically powered one. If your land has a high water table, you can dig a well, which is much cheaper to do, and line it with cement casings or even stones.

As always, you must be prepared for the worst. In case your water source gets compromised, always have water stored in food-grade containers that can last you for as long as the emergency. And quality matters, so investing in filtration and water purification systems is necessary.

SUSTAINABLE FOOD PRODUCTION

The cornerstone of off-grid living is sustainable food production, and you can't say you're self-sufficient if you cannot grow and produce your own food. This entails more than just planting crops, as anyone can do

this (my grandkid planted corn for a school project). Instead, it's about you creating a resilient food system that can withstand any challenges.

A lot of things go into this process, and you have to focus on crops that thrive in your region because that's the only way you can be assured of a resilient food system. Then to ensure that you grow only organic foods and not the chemical-infused ones we get from stores, you have to implement organic gardening techniques, and you need composting and water conservation to sustain your organic gardening practices. Practicing organic gardening will also help your land stay healthy for a long time.

Aside from growing crops, you can also complement your food production process by practicing animal husbandry. You'll get eggs, dairy products, and meat on your farm. All you need to do is ensure they're well-fed and properly taken care of.

As a prepper, you shouldn't eat all your harvest, but save some seeds for the next planting season. That's the way to ensure that you have food every harvest season. Embracing permaculture principles will also help you produce healthy food in abundance.

WASTE MANAGEMENT OFF THE GRID



Off-grid waste management is a key component of self-sufficient living. Maintaining a clean environment extends beyond simply your immediate surroundings; it also involves reducing your ecological footprint and making sure your off-grid existence is sustainable.

Consider eco-friendly substitutes for waste management that work. The creation of nutrient-rich soil for your garden through composting is a great approach to reduce kitchen waste. To manage human waste properly and hygienically, you can also install a low-tech, off-grid septic system.

Another important element is recycling. When feasible, reuse resources and find inventive new uses for them. Living off the grid frequently calls for adopting a “waste not, want not” philosophy.

When living off the grid, it's imperative to take a "leave no trace" stance. This entails disposing of waste responsibly by burning or burying non-recyclable waste. It's important to be knowledgeable about local laws and environmental effects, though.

Effective trash management improves your independence while also assisting in environmental protection. By managing waste properly off the grid, you reduce your dependency on outside services and show a dedication to protecting the environment while coexisting peacefully with it.

OFF-GRID COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS

Off-grid living doesn't mean cutting ties with the outside world; effective communication is essential, especially during emergencies. Some tools you can have in hand, aside from your laptops and phones, include the following.

Ham Radios: They are a tried and tested method. They offer reliable long-distance communication and are relatively easy to learn to use. Plus, they allow you to connect with a like-minded community of ham radio enthusiasts.

Satellite Phones: When you're far from cell towers, satellite phones come to the rescue. They ensure connectivity even in the most remote areas. While they can be expensive, they are invaluable for emergencies.

CB Radios: They are a cost-effective option for short-range communication. They are commonly used in off-road and outdoor adventures.

Hand-Crank Radios: Invest in a hand-cranked or solar-powered emergency radio. These devices can charge your mobile phone and keep you updated with weather alerts and news.

Messengers: Utilize messenger apps that work offline, like FireChat or Signal. Preload maps and establish a communication plan with your off-grid community.

Emergency Signaling: Learn basic signaling methods, such as Morse code or the use of signal mirrors. These low-tech approaches can be surprisingly effective.

By combining these communication methods, you can stay connected and informed, ensuring your safety and peace of mind as you embrace off-grid living.

BUILDING OFF-GRID STRUCTURES

Building off-grid structures that stand up to the test of self-sufficient living is both an art and a science. It's about creating spaces that are not only functional but harmonize with nature. Plus, they can utilize passive solar design as well as thermal mass and solar systems, which I mentioned in the section on solar power and alternatives.

Set up a rainwater collection system for rainwater harvesting. It's a sustainable way to secure your water needs while reducing reliance on wells or municipal sources. The materials and equipment you need for this include a non-toxic roofing material, water collection tanks, a tank screen, a water filter, a pump system, underground pipes that lead to indoor plumbing, a first flush diverter, and a water level indicator.

Also, perchance traditional plumbing is not a feasible option, composting toilets are an eco-friendly solution that helps turn waste into valuable compost for your garden with the aid of a urine diverter that separates liquid from solids and breaks down solid waste using ash and sawdust or peat moss. The separate components of composting toilets allow for emptying. You can empty the liquids at the base of "manure trees," and the solids can be poured into a compost pile or trash can. The solids usually look like garden soil at this point.

You can also design your compost toilet yourself, a cheaper option, if you ask me. These designs are usually pits dug in outhouses so the waste can compost in place. The only downside is that there is no urine diverter but you can have ash, sawdust, or peat moss at hand for the composting process.

While constructing any structure, plan for expansion. Ensure your structure can accommodate changes in your needs and lifestyle.

By combining these strategies, you can create off-grid homes that are resilient, eco-friendly, and perfectly suited to the challenges and rewards of self-sufficient living.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

While living off the grid offers unparalleled freedom, it's crucial to navigate the legal and regulatory landscape.

The first thing you need to keep in mind is zoning regulations. The structures you can build and permitted land usage depends on the local zoning, which is why you must always check with the local government to ensure your off-grid project complies with zoning regulations. You also need to be aware of property rights and land ownership so you can identify and respect land boundaries. While you might live independently, you shouldn't live independently of safety, so ensure that you follow the building codes and safety standards the local government has in place.

We preppers are also environmentalists, so you need to do your part in protecting the environment by familiarizing yourself with laws related to waste disposal, water use, and land management. Some regions have laws requiring utility connections, even if you are self-sufficient. Explore any exemptions or alternative compliance options that may be available.

Living off the grid is not without tax implications. Investigate the tax codes relevant to your area to understand how your self-sufficiency efforts might impact your finances. Ensure you have legal access to your property. Easements and right-of-way agreements may affect your off-grid plans.

While navigating these legal aspects may seem daunting, it's essential to ensure a smooth off-grid lifestyle. Always consult with local authorities and legal professionals to understand the specific regulations and requirements in your area.

THRIVING OFF THE GRID ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET

If it has always been your dream to thrive off the grid, but you have been held back by your budget, I am glad to tell you that your dream can now become a reality.

1. Start Small and Simple

Begin with the basics. A tiny off-grid cabin, solar panels, and rainwater collection can create a comfortable and sustainable living space without a hefty investment.

2. DIY Everything

Learn new skills, from carpentry to gardening. DIY projects save money and empower you with essential knowledge. As I mentioned, YouTube is a huge classroom where you can find everything you need.

3. Second-Hand and Salvaged Materials

If you're not picky, you can scour garage sales, online marketplaces, and local recycling centers for materials. Repurpose, reuse, and upcycle to reduce costs.

4. Rainwater Harvesting

Collect and filter rainwater for all your non-potable water needs. It's a sustainable way to reduce dependency on traditional water sources.

5. Grow Your Food

Establish a garden or permaculture setup. Growing your food cuts grocery costs and provides fresh, organic produce.

6. Barter and Trade

Create a local network for bartering skills, surplus produce, or even services. This can be a cost-effective way to meet your needs.

7. Financial Savviness

Carefully craft a budget with your expenses and stick to it. Prioritize essentials and minimize waste.

8. Community Involvement

Engage with your local off-grid community. Shared resources and knowledge exchange can lead to significant savings.

9. Continuous Learning

Stay informed about off-grid living practices and innovations. Embrace the learning process as you adapt to this lifestyle.

Thriving off the grid on a tight budget is a journey that rewards self-reliance and sustainability. Remember, it's not about how much you spend but how well you adapt and innovate to live comfortably and harmoniously with nature.

WORKBOOK FOUR

Deciding Your Location

What's your off-grid goal?

What locations are well-suited to your off-grid goal?

The cost of living and expenses in these locations you've pinned down:

Which of these locations are within your budget?

Rules and regulations guiding the locations:

Which of these regions' policies are within your goal?

Which of the remaining locations do you love the most?

TAKEAWAY FOUR

Living off-grid might have always been your dream, but after this chapter, I can honestly say you have what it takes to live off-grid. You now know how to live sustainably without exceeding your budget. And now that you've discovered the power of self-reliance, I'm sure you're ready to choose that way of life.

HOME DEFENSE STRATEGIES

As a prepper who is always prepared for anything and everything, you must also be ready to defend your home and property against all forms of threats. Even if you're living on the grid, it's been proven over and over again that the world is not a safe place. With home invasions, violent crime on the streets, and the like, you can't always expect the police to save you. Locks keep only honest people out, and people can easily kick down a door or rip it apart from the hinges. This means you have to make your home impenetrable and be able to save yourself and loved ones from danger. Thus, you need to put defense strategies in place.

HOME SECURITY ASSESSMENT

To secure your off-grid haven, the first thing you need to do is assess your home security to identify the needs of, and lapses in, your home security system. To get started, you'll conduct a perimeter evaluation where you walk around your property's perimeter and check for vulnerable points like broken fences, overgrown vegetation, or even unsecured entry points. Noticing these vulnerable points is not enough, as you should also fix these issues ASAP.

After noting the weak and vulnerable points, make a plan to reinforce your entry points (this includes doors and windows) with sturdy locks, deadbolts, and shatter resistant glass. I added security bars to my windows for good measure, and you can do that as well.

Well-lit areas serve as a deterrent to intruders, so check how lit your home is. Are there measures in place? Does your home light and alarm system have a backup power source? The effectiveness of your security measures depends largely on how ready you are to implement them.

Do you have a plan in place for different security scenarios? Maybe a safe room or a communication plan? If you have a plan in place, will you and your family be able to effectively practice it when the need arises? If you have firearms, are you well trained to use them, or are they just for aesthetic purposes? These are things to keep in mind.

Also, periodically review your security measures. Has anything gone awry, or are things still looking great? Also, what worked today might not work tomorrow, so do you need to up your defense system? Be aware of current security threats all around the world. That way, you can adapt your strategies to face any security threat head-on.

Don't forget that assessing your home security measures is the first step to being prepared.

AFFORDABLE HOME SECURITY UPGRADES

After assessing your home defense system and noticing the lapses, what's left to do is work on them. If there's a need to make upgrades to your security systems, there are budget-friendly and affordable ones you can make.

Some of these upgrades include reinforcing entry points like I already mentioned. You can use longer screws to strengthen doors and windows, making them less susceptible to being ripped off, as well as strike plates so forced entry will also become more difficult. Reinforcing your home's entry points also includes applying shatter-resistant window film to your glass to make it harder to break and installing smart locks on your doors for keyless entry and so you can easily monitor it. Then you can install locks on your sliding windows to prevent them from being forced open, as well as peepholes in your front and back doors to see who's at the door without necessarily opening it.

Another cost-effective upgrade you might need to make includes installing motion-activated lights around your property. That way you can know when someone is in your home perimeter before they get to

the door (especially when it is dark outside). You can also create the illusion of being at home when you're not by using timers for lights and electronics. Defensive landscaping also works; you can plant thorny or dense plants around your property to create a natural barrier. Or you can make rocks or gravel paths, which are noisy when walked on and can alert you to potential intruders.

You can also get a DIY alarm system for cheap and install it yourself. The good news is that you can connect this system to your smartphone and easily monitor your home. Even if you don't have a security system, planting signs or stickers from a security company near your home can also deter potential burglars.

People close to you might think you're being paranoid by having all these systems in place, but you know deep down within yourself that you're being proactive, not paranoid, and you can't place a price on safety and peace of mind.

DEFENSIVE WEAPONS AND NON-LETHAL OPTIONS

In the case of a security threat, it doesn't matter if the intruder is a man or an animal. What matters is if you and your loved ones will sail through such a situation safely. To be able to answer yes to this question means that not only have you fortified your home by upgrading your security system, but it also means if push comes to shove and you come in direct contact with this intruder, you can protect yourself and your family.

Defensive Weapons

If you're comfortable with carrying a firearm, then you should probably get one because it provides effective protection. A gun, even if not used, will make you feel secure due to the mere fact that it is sitting somewhere in your home. You can also have a knife at home without the legal requirements it takes to get a gun. You can otherwise choose to keep a metal rod at home; hit the intruder in a few sensitive places, and they will be down in a moment. Like the knife, a rod doesn't need legal registration.

Other defensive weapons include pepper spray. As you know, once the spray comes in contact with the intruder's eyes, they will be incapacitated for a while, giving you the chance to fly or fight. If you do get one, just constantly check that it is within its expiration date. Also, an electric shock from a taser can do wonders in immobilizing your aggressor, although you also need a little bit of training to use it. You can also invest in barbed wire and keep it hidden. The funny thing is that if you are living off the grid, no one expects barbed wire in the middle of nowhere. The best investment of all are dogs. Loyal dogs are not only for protection but also companionship. Their presence alone deters thieves, and they also bring much joy into our lives.

Non-Lethal Options

The first non-lethal option is your physical reaction, especially if your firearms, pepper sprays, etc. are out of reach. What self-defense moves can save you in situations like this? Learning how to sprawl, do a guillotine, or a rear arm grab will help you disable your human attacker, after which you might decide to throw in some punches (to the face, please—no one who attacks you should go back looking the same way they came).

Other options include a stun gun that, like a taser, can also deliver an electric shock when it comes in contact with your assailant. Personal alarms are also loud enough to potentially scare off an intruder as they attract attention. Making those security upgrades we discussed earlier, like reinforcing entry points and investing in motion-activated lights, is also an investment you should probably make. Design a safe room or secure area in your home to which you and your family can retreat during an intrusion (make sure you stockpile supplies in there as well). Last but not least, make sure you have a reliable means of communication to call for help when needed.

You can get any defensive weapons you want, but training is important, and so is safety. Don't put weapons in places where young children can easily access them. To avoid accidents, always put the safety on when you're not using a gun, or take out the bullets before putting it away. Non-lethal options, however, are a better option for protecting your home without taking the life of or injuring someone. Having measures in place and being confident in your chosen method is already self-defense on its own.

HOME DEFENSE PLANNING AND DRILLS



Whether you're off the grid or on the grid, no one wants to be a part of the statistics. Over a million burglaries occur yearly, and it has even been forecast that within the next 20 years, 75% of homes will be broken into. If you think the police can help prevent these break-ins, what about the over a million homes that get broken into yearly? You can see why a defense plan for you and your family is the right thing to do. It will prepare you all both mentally and practically for anything that might come your way.

There are some principles involved in home defense planning. The first one is that prevention is better than cure, so putting security systems as

well as security signs in place is going to be a red flag, warning intruders that breaking into your home is going to bring them more trouble than they can handle.

The second principle is communication. A defense plan will only work if everyone knows it and the roles they play. Discuss strategies for different scenarios, and let everyone know that this plan is only put in place if something like this happens. Examples of strategies include: everyone should head to the safe room if an intruder alert is given, someone should go to the children's room with a gun to protect them if an intruder is in the house, or someone should dial 911. You can also implement code words to alert the whole family that they are under threat or when the threat has worsened or passed.

The third is that there should be a safe room. If someone is trying to ward off the intruder, other members of the family should be in the safe room and call the police. This safe room should also have escape routes in case things go south. There should be a defensive spot in the house for the person who's trying to ward off the intruder by saying they have a gun or they have called the police. The defensive spot should be in direct line with the door so that someone coming in won't be able to decipher where they are.

The fourth principle is to dial 911. This way you can avoid a prolonged invasion and quickly get medical help for a hurt member of the family.

The fifth principle is to stay locked and loaded. Always ensure your home defense gun, ammo, a charged phone, and a flashlight are beside you. The flashlight will be helpful in case lights are out, and a charged phone will be useful in putting a call out to the police.

The sixth and final principle is to drill. Creating a home defense plan is not enough; you have to test it to see how viable the plan is, put it into practice, and perfect it. Everyone must master the plan. You can spring emergency drills as a way of having fun. After making the plan, anyone who will be using a gun should start practicing so they can get comfortable using it.

Home Defense Drills

Home Intrusion Scenarios

This drill will simulate different intrusion scenarios such as break-ins, attempted forced entries, or even suspicious activities near your property to help your family practice responding to potential threats. To conduct this, you can develop different scenarios, and even use your alarms and signals to mimic real-life events. When doing this, ensure every member of the family understands their role and responsibilities during each scenario and record the response times to evaluate how effective your reactions are, as well as each family member's decision-making under pressure.

Safe Room Drills

This drill will help everyone in your household know how to respond to a security threat, as it focuses on how quickly you can reach your designated safe room during a home invasion. After you've chosen a secure location that has reinforced doors and communication tools, alert your family members about the drill and measure how long it takes everyone to gather in the safe room. Also, make sure everyone can communicate effectively from within the room.

Firearms Training

It is important to conduct regular training sessions, as they will enhance your ability to use firearms safely and effectively. You can conduct this by always prioritizing safety during training and maybe even receiving training from certified instructors. Practice target shooting to improve accuracy and help you familiarize yourself with your weapons.

Alarm Testing

This drill helps you verify how reliable your home security system is and if it is still functional. You can conduct this by scheduling specific dates for alarm system testing, which can be done monthly or quarterly. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for testing procedures, check how responsive the signals and alarms are, and document the outcomes of each test.

Don't forget to regularly review and update your defense plan as your situation evolves. Regularly conducting these drills helps you and your family build essential preparedness skills.

COMMUNITY SECURITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

As I have mentioned, self-sufficient living is not the same thing as living like a hermit. So even if your shelter is your fortress, the shield of the community might be the shield that defends it. The importance of building a network of like-minded individuals who all work together to ensure safety and security in your off-the-grid living cannot be overstated.

Neighborhood watch is a community-based program in which residents actively take part in identifying and preventing potential threats. This program fosters a sense of shared responsibility among people and helps foster cooperation and unity in the community. The major objective of a neighborhood watch is to deter potential intruders; nothing prevents crime as much as a vigilant community. It also helps residents to quickly detect suspicious behavior, as they will always be on the lookout for unusual activities or people, and they can quickly report to law enforcement. Also, in the event of an emergency, there will be a rapid response because residents are already aware of what to do in such a situation. Most importantly, it fosters trust, love, and unity among members of that community.

Setting up a neighborhood watch begins with organizing a community meeting to discuss the idea with other people, explain its benefits, and encourage residents to get involved. Afterward, the whole community should come together to choose a leader or coordinators to oversee the program. These coordinators will be the ones to organize activities and liaise with the local enforcement agency, as well as manage communication within the group. Next, you'll establish communication channels, maybe phone trees, social media groups, or even messaging apps—anything that will get information to every member of the community as soon as possible.

If residents agree, you can arrange for training to equip members of the community with necessary skills like emergency response and self-defense. Hold meetings regularly and also practice security drills to familiarize everybody with emergency procedures. Lastly, create a reporting system like anonymous tip lines or a designated contact person so people can report suspicious activities.

Working together as a community shows a united front that helps everyone thrive in the face of any challenge, and this bolsters the security of your off-grid lifestyle.

DEALING WITH THREATS AND INTRUDERS

So, we've been discussing crisis preparedness and how to deal with threats and intruders and protect your home and family, especially since living off the grid in a remote location can make you more susceptible to unwanted visitors.

Who exactly are these intruders? They can be criminals (armed or unarmed) looking to steal valuables, food, or supplies. They can be desperate people facing extreme hardship in times of crisis or disasters and seeking refuge or resources, and although their intentions are not malicious, they may still pose a risk. Then we have trespassers who accidentally or unknowingly wander onto your property (humans and animals alike).

You've already learned about the home defense systems and plans to put in place, and you might have even practiced several times and perfected the plan. In the event of a threat or invasion, remember to stay calm and keep a level head so you can make rational decisions. If you have a neighborhood watch or community security system, use your communication channel to alert others about the threat, and place a call to the local law enforcement agency as well. If you will need to confront the intruder, prioritize your safety and defend wisely, don't use weapons unless necessary, and avoid every form of confrontation.

Don't forget that off-the-grid living means taking responsibility for your security. Being prepared to respond to threats will not only help you protect your self-sufficient lifestyle but also enjoy peace of mind.

LEGAL AND ETHICAL ASPECTS OF HOME DEFENSE

While defending your home is important, you also need to be familiar with the local and state laws regarding self-defense. You need to

understand what constitutes self-defense in your area so you don't end up committing a criminal act.

Legal Aspects of Home Defense

Right of Self-Defense

In the United States, everyone has the right of self-defense. It is a fundamental legal principle that allows people to protect themselves, family, and property when facing an imminent threat. However, within this right is the proportionate use of force, and it must also be used only when necessary.

Castle Doctrine

Many states in the US, including Florida, Texas, Ohio, etc., have adopted this doctrine. This law allows homeowners to use force, including lethal force, to defend their homes from intruders, although these laws vary by state, so it is important to learn about your local legislation.

Duty to Retreat

Some states, including New York and New Jersey, follow this principle, and it requires individuals to avoid confrontation at all times and attempt to avoid or escape a threat before resorting to force.

Stand Your Ground

States that don't implement the "duty to retreat" law have this law. In Florida it gained national attention during the Trayvon Martin case, as well as in Alabama, Arizona, and Texas. In states like these, it's not compulsory to avoid confrontation before using force.

Ethical Aspects

Proportionality

This principle of self-defense requires that your response matches the level of the threat. Using lethal force against non-lethal threats may be considered unethical.

Avoidance

This ethical consideration encourages avoiding confrontation whenever possible. One of the ways to do this includes implementing home

security measures to deter threats.

De-escalation

Here, you should try to resolve a situation before resorting to force. However, it takes great communication and conflict-resolution skills to do this.

Training

Ethical practitioners of home defense should be trained in de-escalation techniques, conflict resolution, and the responsible use of force.

Balancing Legal and Ethical Aspects

To balance both aspects, you must study your state's defense laws, understand your rights and obligations in various scenarios, and focus on the proactive security measures that you learned in this chapter. You should also engage in neighborhood watch programs or liaise with the local law enforcement agency to improve your security. Then keep records of any threats or incidents, as not only will they help you plan, but they can also be useful in legal proceedings if it comes to that. To protect yourself in case these incidents result in legal proceedings, always consult with legal counsel to be sure you're acting within the boundaries of the law in the event of a defensive encounter.

By understanding the legal and ethical aspects of home defense, you can protect your off-grid lifestyle while ensuring you act responsibly and per the law. It's a balance between safeguarding your sanctuary and upholding your moral values in a self-sufficient world.

WORKBOOK FIVE

Draw a well-laid-out defense strategy for a home break-in scenario, assigning responsibilities to every member of the family that will be involved.

TAKEAWAY FIVE

There is unrest in the nation. Break-ins and shootings are on the rise, and you shouldn't leave yourself at the mercy of these criminals. You can stay safe, your family members can stay safe, and your properties can be safe as well. Are you ready to do what it takes to protect yourself?

FOOD SELF-SUFFICIENCY



At the core of survival is the ability to feed yourself no matter the situation or crisis. Famine is one of the most imminent threats to our country and the world at large, and we can't call ourselves survival preppers if we are not ready for that at least. So, come along with me as we learn how to become more food self-sufficient.

BACKYARD GARDENING AND CONTAINER GARDENING

In our uncertain world, it is important to be able to grow your food. Backyard gardening and container gardening are two ways to attain food self-sufficiency even if you have limited space or resources. These methods are sure ways to have a sustainable food source that won't be affected by disruptions of any sort.

Backyard Gardening

If you've always dreamt of growing your food and think you don't have enough space, you can turn your backyard into a lush garden. Start with smart planning, which means considering your climate, soil type, and the crops that are best suited to your region.

You can make the most of your small space by practicing companion planting. This can also maximize your yield and be a natural pest deterrent, for instance, planting marigolds to deter aphids. If you have lots of space, you can explore raised bed techniques, which are eco-friendly and promote soil health. Remember the compost I said you can make from waste? Using it can enhance your food self-sufficiency. You can also use organic matter and proper soil management practices to ensure fertile ground.

Lastly, consistently water your garden and practice pest management to nurture your plants' growth.

Container Gardening

What if your space is limited or you live in an apartment? Container gardening is your answer. You can grow an astonishing variety of vegetables, herbs, and even dwarf fruit trees in pots and containers. You can also explore vertical gardening to make the most of the little space you have by using trellis and planting on your walls.

But first, the basics: quality soil and well-chosen containers. The pots or containers you use must have proper drainage, and you should know the crops you want to grow before choosing your pots because you need to know the size and depth that is suitable for each crop. Most veggies and herbs thrive in containers, so you can go for dwarf varieties of tomatoes, salad greens, or even fruit trees.

Sunlight and water are crucial to the growth of your plants, and container gardening helps you adjust these elements to perfectly suit your plants' needs. Container plants dry out faster than plants in the ground, so water your plants deeply, although you shouldn't let the container get waterlogged. Composting can also help your container garden grow a healthy and sumptuous harvest, and you can add slow-release fertilizer as well.

When buying the seeds you're going to plant in either the backyard or container garden, opt for heritage seeds. These seeds usually produce plants with seeds that you can save and replant year after year, so you'll have a dependable source of seeds for the next planting season. You can also prevent soil depletion and pest infestations by annually rotating your crops.

Becoming very good at backyard and container gardening is a substantial step toward food sufficiency that will help you thrive in any scenario. Peace of mind and satisfaction come from providing food for yourself and loved ones without being dependent.

RAISING SMALL LIVESTOCK ON A BUDGET

Small livestock is also an invaluable asset for us preppers and homesteaders who want to attain food self-sufficiency. They are a constant source of meat, eggs, and dairy products and are not that hard to raise. Also, you can successfully raise small livestock without breaking the bank.

Chickens

Chickens are the best for self-sufficiency on a budget. You don't need to invest too much in them, and they are very profitable. Once they are old enough, they offer fresh eggs daily, and they can also be raised for meat. Aside from providing for their dietary needs, you can also let them

forage for insects and give them kitchen scraps to reduce expenses. Another way to reduce expenses while raising them is by using scavenged or recycled materials to build their coop.



Rabbits

They're another small-scale option that is quiet, efficient, and also produces lean, nutritious meat. A single pair of rabbits can easily multiply, so you can start with just a male and a female. To save the expenses of raising them, you can feed them with kitchen scraps and also build your rabbit hutch using reclaimed materials.

Goats

If you are interested in producing your dairy products at home, then goats are an excellent and cheap choice. The milk they produce can be turned into various products like cheese, yogurt, and butter. However, it's probably best that you go for smaller goat breeds like the Nigerian dwarf unless you have a big yard. And if you'll be raising goats, you'll need to invest in a sturdy fence and milking stand. They also reproduce fairly quickly, although I don't quite like the smell of the billy goat, so maybe you should buy male and female goats in a ratio of 1:3.

Quails

Not a lot of people raise quail, but they're budget-friendly and are great for a self-sufficient lifestyle. They are also egg producers and their tiny eggs are packed full of protein. You can maintain them in as little space as possible, as they can be housed in small cages or aviaries.

However, if you choose to raise livestock, especially chickens and goats, it is important to implement pasture rotation. This is where you divide your land into sections or paddocks (about four to six) and develop a rotation system that will outline where your goats and chickens will be kept during different periods. You can choose to rotate them as frequently as you want, maybe one to four weeks, depending on pasture growth and the number of animals you have. You can move goats to a new paddock after the current one has been grazed to about 3/4 inch and then move the chickens right in after them so they can pick at the larvae in the goat droppings. Then rest each paddock after the livestock has left for a new one so the vegetation can regrow. You can choose to add fertilizer or compost. Just make sure you regularly monitor their health, deworm them, ensure that they have access to clean water and shelter in each paddock, and maintain a record of rotation. Also, overgrazing can damage the pastures, which is what we're trying to avoid, so ensure there's a minimal number of animals in the paddock at any time. Pasture grazing reduces feed costs and also improves soil health. Plant forage crops like clover, alfalfa, and perennial herbs around your homestead to provide free, nutritious feed for your animals. Practice good pasture management by aerating, reseeding, and controlling erosion to maintain a healthy forage ecosystem.

Another affordable feeding method is to create DIY animal feed using grains, legumes, and other ingredients. Remember the corn I asked you to get as one of the essential grains to stockpile for survival? It's also a great ingredient for animal feed. For poultry feed, you can also use

wheat, barley, or oats instead of corn. Then for the protein source, mix in legumes like soybeans or field peas, and then you can throw in seeds like sunflower seeds or flaxseeds for healthy fats and nutrients. To provide calcium, crushed eggshells or oyster shells add grit to aid their digestion, and you can give them leafy greens and kitchen scraps occasionally as supplements. After mixing all of these, keep in a cool dry place that is pest-protected to keep fresh.

For goats and rabbits, you can also use barley, corn, or oats as the grain base. Throw in legumes like peas or lentils for added protein and a protein source for lactating does and growing kids such as alfalfa pellets or soybean meal. Then to ensure that they get a regular supply of their necessary minerals and vitamins, you can put in rock salt, kelp, or a premix and treat them with leafy greens and kitchen scraps occasionally.

You can also put predator-proofing measures in place to protect your livestock, like installing sturdy electric fencing or woven wire with small holes to deter both digging and climbing predators. You can also invest in guardian animals like dogs, but, most importantly, ensure your animals have a secure shelter that they can retreat to in the dark or during bad weather, and always keep a close eye on them, especially during vulnerable times like birthing.

Raising small livestock is not just about food self-sufficiency; it's also about a rewarding and fulfilling lifestyle. These animals can thrive even on a tight budget, providing a consistent source of nourishment for you and your family.

HUNTING, FISHING, AND FORAGING FOR FOOD

Hunting, fishing, and foraging are three essential skills that connect us with the land and help us live independently as we provide fresh and sustainable foods for ourselves.

Hunting

Hunting is a skill as fundamental as human activity. If you watch a lot of movies about the old days, you'll see how our ancestors went in hunting groups, even making a competition out of it. Hunting is still as rewarding for us as it was for them, and despite how challenging it gets, you know

that whether it is small game or big game, it is still the promise of food on your dinner table.

First, you have to know the local game if you don't want to go stepping on the wrong toes. You have to be familiar with the local wildlife and learn about the hunting seasons and regulations. Every region has its own different game species and rules, and hunting legally and ethically while following state regulations will preserve the wildlife population, ensuring its health and long-term viability. Make sure you also obtain the necessary permits and licenses.

You also need to invest in hunting gear, get a reliable firearm, bow, or trapping equipment, and you should never skimp on quality. Also ensure that you are proficient in using the tools of choice and that your tools are well maintained. Also, spend some time scouting your hunting area, and look for tracks, droppings, and game trails. You can even use game cameras to track animal movements and study their behaviors. Take it from me: knowing your prey's habits is key to a successful hunt. Then learn essential hunting skills like stalking, tree stand hunting, still hunting, bait hunting, spot and stalk, trap and snare, etc. These hunting techniques are useful for different scenarios and game, so that's where knowing the local wildlife comes in handy.

Finally, you should learn how to field dress, skin, and process game animals. Properly handling your meat is one of the ways to ensure food safety, and our health is important. Trust me, you don't want to start testing how strong your immune system is now.

Fishing

Fishing is another self-sufficient skill that puts a rich source of protein on your table, no matter if you cast your line in freshwater or saltwater. First, garner local knowledge and identify the best fishing spots in your area. You can also talk to local anglers, discuss the local fish species, learn their habits, and visit bait shops to gain valuable information that will help when you're out on the river. Then invest in high-quality fishing gear, and buy fishing rods, reels, lines, and tackle that is specific to the local fish. Then learn various fishing techniques like baitcasting, fly fishing, spin-casting, or even trolling.

Visiting the bait shops and doing a little research of your own will also help you know which baits work best for the fishes you're targeting,

varying from live baits to artificial, and fly patterns. Also, practice casting and reeling techniques. I've watched many cartoons (thanks to my kids) where someone fishing falls headlong into the water when they get a bite and then struggle to reel in. It is a very funny situation when you're not the one involved, so learn how to set the hook when you get a bite.

Catching the food is not enough, but you should also know how to cook it. Learn how to clean, filet, and cook it properly. Conservation is important for fishing as well, so you should understand catch limits and size restrictions for different fish species to protect fish populations. Always follow fishing regulations and acquire the necessary licenses to ensure that you fish ethically and legally.

Foraging

Foraging is another skill our ancestors thrived on, which makes it a connection to our ancestral roots. It involves identifying and harvesting edible plants and fungi in the wild. If you're not careful, a way of survival can lead to death because some wild plants are toxic. This is why, as a rule, you need to familiarize yourself with edible plants in your area and distinguish them from their toxic lookalikes; there are apps that can help with this.

Every plant, not just the ones you grow in your home, has its seasons and habitats, and this is the same with wild edibles. Wild mushrooms, berries, and edible greens have specific harvest times; some are available in spring, some in summer, and some in fall. Knowing their harvest seasons will also help you steer clear of their toxic lookalikes that might be available for harvesting when they are not. Also, double-check your identifications, and if you're not so sure, leave the plant be. Try to be a responsible forager while you're at it, only take the portion that you need and leave the rest to grow. Respect the environment by leaving no traces, as this ensures the sustainability of the ecosystem. Never uproot entire plants unless it's a common practice for plants of that species, like dandelions.

When going food hunting (as my family likes to call it), carry essential tools like a knife, a small shovel, a basket or bag for foraging, or a walking stick if you're going to be navigating uneven terrain. Try to avoid foraging near industrial areas or roadsides as they may be polluted with chemicals, as well as areas like organic farms and parks where there

is the possibility of pesticide use. Wild edibles can be diverse, from berries and nuts to wild mushrooms and leafy greens. Incorporating them into your diet helps with variety, and they are also yummy when properly cooked.

Hunting, fishing, and foraging for food is not only a way to achieve food self-sufficiency but also a gateway to understanding and respecting the natural world. By combining these practices with gardening and livestock raising, you can build a robust and diverse food supply that sustains you and your family.

WILD EDIBLES AND MEDICINAL PLANTS



As we've learned, the natural world can sometimes be our best ally on our journey to self-sufficiency, with wild edibles and medicinal plants all around, providing sustenance, healing, and self-reliance. However, while there are foods and herbs right around the corner, there's poison as well, so identifying them is a valuable skill. Let's look at some of the easiest edibles that you can also grow in your backyard if you wish to.

Wild Edibles

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*): It is an extremely adaptable plant, and all of its parts are edible. The roots can be roasted and crushed to form a coffee alternative, and the leaves can be used in salads.

Clover (*Trifolium* spp.): In addition to being lucky charms, clover flowers and leaves can be eaten and used as a green vegetable or in salads.

Lamb's Quarters (*Chenopodium album*): You can boil the young leaves or use them in salads, and its seeds are also edible.

Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*): This succulent plant contains a lot of important fatty acids and is suitable for use as a potherb, in salads, and stir-fries.

Plantain (*Plantago major*): Its young leaves can be used in salads or as cooked greens.

Acorns (oak tree): They can be processed to create a flour alternative, but first they must be leached to remove the bitter tannins.

Pine Trees (*Pinus* spp.): Pine needle tea can be made by soaking pine needles, which are a good source of vitamin C.

Cattail (*Typha* spp.): Cattail roots can be roasted or boiled, and the young shoots can be consumed as a vegetable.

Pigweed (*Amaranthus* spp.): Pigweed seeds can be ground into flour, and the leaves can be cooked or added to salads.

Chickweed (*Stellaria media*): This weed is full of vitamins and can be used as a garnish or an addition to salads.

Wild Mustard (*Brassica* spp.): Wild mustard greens are edible raw in salads or cooked like spinach.

Morel (*Morchella* spp.): These edible mushrooms are recognizable by their honeycomb shape and are usually found in the woodlands. You can sauté them or add them to a number of dishes.

Oyster Mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*): Due to their adaptability, oyster mushrooms can be used to replace meats in risottos and stir-fries, especially if there's a new vegan in the house.

Lion's Mane (*Hericium erinaceus*): The flavor and texture of lion's mane mushrooms are unique, and they can be sautéed or used in place of seafood in dishes.

Hen of the Woods (*Grifola frondosa*): This mushroom gets its name from its resemblance to the ruffled feathers of a hen, and is great when made in a variety of cuisines, including stir-fries and soups.

Wild Strawberries (*Fragaria* spp.): Although they are smaller than other berries, wild strawberries can nevertheless have a better flavor than other berries. You can use them to make jam or simply eat them raw.

Wild Plums (*Prunus* spp.): Despite being smaller than other cultivated berry species, wild plums, like strawberries, are also excellent for jams, jellies, and desserts.

Blackberries (*Rubus* spp.): Blackberries are widely available in the wild and you can eat them raw, mix them in your desserts, or preserve them for later.

Elderberries (*Sambucus* spp.): They are full of antioxidants and great for creating pies, jellies, and syrups.

Mulberries (*Morus* spp.): You can bake with them or eat them fresh or dried.

Medicinal Plants

Medicinal herbs are another gift of nature to us, and you can make your own tinctures, salves, and teas for healing. Let's say you're out in the wild with no first aid box with you. Plants can provide relief when modern medicine is absent. You can also make herbal remedies that work for colds, headaches, and minor wounds. Also, you can choose to grow most of these plants at home instead of foraging them all the time, or drying and preserving the excess to ensure you have a year-round supply of medical supplies.

Aloe Vera (*Aloe barbadensis miller*): Aloe vera gel is very important to the hair and beauty industry today. If you're a lady, you are probably already using it as a cream or shampoo. You can also apply it topically to treat minor burns and skin irritations.

Elderberry (*Sambucus nigra*): They are known for boosting the immune system, and you can use the dried flower heads for teas during the cold or flu season.

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*): Yarrow flowers and leaves have therapeutic qualities and can be applied topically to treat wounds.

Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*): You can make a relaxing tea or a poultice out of mullein leaves to treat respiratory conditions.

Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*): Chamomile tea is quite common. It is a soothing tea made from this plant's flowers for intestinal discomfort and sleep problems.

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*): This herb contains both antibacterial and anti-inflammatory qualities. You can apply it typically to wounds.

Willow (*Salix* spp.): Willow bark contains salicin. It is a natural alternative to aspirin, which means you can use it both as a painkiller and for fever.

These herbs and edibles can provide you with some of the nutrition you need as a survival prepper and keep you in good health as well.

HOME FOOD PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES

Aside from raising livestock and practicing container gardening and backyard gardening, which I've mentioned before, there are some other ways you can achieve food self-sufficiency as a prepper that will put you in control of your food supply, come what may.

The first thing you need to learn is seed saving so that don't eat all your harvest. Seed saving is an age-old practice that assures self-sufficiency. You select and store seeds from open-pollinated, non-hybrid, and heirloom plant varieties (which you should have if you started with heritage seeds as I told you to at the beginning of this chapter). Saving seeds from your best-performing crops each year gives you a renewable

source of seeds for future planting seasons. You should save your seeds in seed banks, which are usually airtight containers in cool, dark, and dry places in cases of emergencies. They might just be the lifeline you need to restart or expand your garden in tough times.

If you're an urban prepper or you just have limited space, aside from backyard and container farming, aquaponics and hydroponics are other innovative methods that let you grow fish and plants symbiotically.

Aquaponics combines aquaculture (fish farming) with hydroponics (cultivating plants in water, the best method for starting a coconut tree). In this method, plants will get their nutrients from fish waste, while the plants will purify the water, making it a more livable environment for the fish. The result is the symbiotic system that helps you grow fish and plants in a closed-loop system where they're both beneficial to each other's growth. Most who practice this method choose to grow tilapia or trout, and this method often produces a high yield with less water compared to the traditional planting method.

With hydroponics, on the other hand, plants are submerged in nutrient-rich water instead of soil. Crops grown this way include tomatoes, lettuce, and most herbs. This method helps you control the nutrient level, light, and temperature, maintaining perfect control, and you get high yields. It also conserves both space and water.

Another practice is using greenhouses or cold frames. These methods protect your plants from harsh weather and also extend their growing season. A greenhouse is usually a permanent structure with a controlled climate, and people use it for year-round cultivation. Cold frames are temporary structures and are used mostly in early spring and late fall. Cold frames capture and retain heat, letting you grow crops that might not be able to survive outside during colder months.

You can also practice vermicomposting where you use composting worms, usually red wigglers, to break down organic matter. Vermicompost is richer for your soil and plants than ordinary compost, and you can easily set up worm bins using proper bedding material and kitchen scraps. Your poultry can also pick at these worms after their work is done.

By implementing these techniques, you'll be well on your way to achieving food self-sufficiency. Start small, experiment, and watch your

bounty grow year-round.

STORING HOMEGROWN PRODUCE

Storing homegrown food produce is one of the ways we preppers can stockpile food to ensure a lasting supply after harvest seasons and during emergencies. Besides canning and pickling, which are the major preservation methods a lot of us, especially me, like to use, there are other methods, and they don't require as much effort as canning and pickling do.

Root Cellars

For centuries, root cellars have been the secret to preserving garden goodies, and they're effective for preserving a variety of produce. They're usually underground or partially buried structures like your basement, which is why they are often cool, dark, and dry, and are also able to maintain a consistent temperature and humidity despite the outside weather. They're usually great for storing root vegetables like potatoes, carrots, and beets and can also be used to store apples and cabbages, among other crops. Just ensure that there is proper ventilation to prevent mold and spoilage. Also, use wooden crates or bins to store each product, stacking them in layers and separating each layer using straw or newspaper. You should also regularly check for spoilage because the saying that one bad apple spoils the bunch is very true.

Freezing

Freezing is one food preservation method that does not decrease the nutritional values of fruits and vegetables and still maintains their freshness, even after a while. However, you need to blanch them before freezing. To blanch, you will briefly put them in boiling water to stop enzyme activity and then cool rapidly in an ice bath. This method is only advisable if you have access to an alternative energy source since, as you know, freezers are dependent on a power source. When packaging the fruits or vegetables that you want to freeze, use airtight containers or vacuum-sealed bags and remove excess air to avoid freezer burn. Like with the other storing or preservation methods, date each package and use the older ones first.

Preserving in Oil or Vinegar

This method merely involves submerging herbs and garlic in oil, and vegetables in vinegar, to preserve them. Then the herbs or garlic stored in oil can thereafter be preserved in the refrigerator while vegetables in vinegar can be kept at room temperature. Food items stored this way usually end up being more flavorful than ones stored other ways.

Preserving in Salt

You can also preserve food items like lemons, limes, cabbage, etc., in salt to preserve them. The salt acts as a preservative and draws out moisture from the produce. You can bring out these preserved foods later and use them to add flavor to your cooking.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY DIY FOOD PROJECTS

Self-sufficiency doesn't mean you have to spend extravagantly. On the contrary, I believe making your own food items and delectables instead of buying from mainstream stores is cheaper, and by the time you make some calculations of your own, you'll see that it is actually cheaper.

Homemade Bread

Ingredients:

- 3 1/4 cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 packet of dry yeast
- 1 1/2 teaspoons of salt
- 1 1/4 cups of warm water

Instructions:

1. Mix the flour and salt in a large mixing bowl.
2. In another smaller bowl, dissolve the yeast in warm water for about 5 minutes until it foams.
3. Then make a well in the flour and salt mixture and pour in your dissolved yeast mixture.
4. Stir the yeast and flour mixture until the dough comes together.
5. Sprinkle flour on a flat surface and knead the dough on the floured surface (which will prevent the dough from sticking to the surface) until the dough is smooth and elastic.

6. Grease a bowl with oil, cooking spray, or butter. Place the dough in this bowl, and cover it for about 1 hour to let it rise.
7. About 45 minutes later, preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C).
8. Punch down the dough. Then place it in a greased loaf pan and mold it into the shape of the loaf pan.
9. Cover the dough for another 30 minutes to let it rise.
10. Bake for 30-35 minutes or until done. (The bread will sound hollow if tapped when done, and if you put a knife or toothpick in the middle, it will come out clean.)
11. Let it cool and enjoy your homemade bread with the family.

DIY Spice Blends

Instructions:

1. Select the spices and herbs you want for your blend.
2. Measure and combine the spices in a bowl.
3. Mix thoroughly, ensuring even distribution.
4. Store the spice blend in an airtight container or small spice jars.

Pasta from Scratch

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of all-purpose flour
- 3 large eggs
- A pinch of salt

Instructions:

1. Pour the 2 cups of flour to make a mound on a clean flat surface, and poke a hole in the center of that mound.
2. Break the eggs into the well and add a pinch of salt.
3. Gently beat the eggs with a fork, gradually beating in the flour from the edges.
4. Once a dough forms, knead it for about 10 minutes until it's smooth and elastic. Sprinkle flour on the dough if it starts sticking to your fingers and the surface.

5. Place the dough in a bowl and cover it for 30 minutes to let it rest.
6. Roll out the dough with a rolling pin. Then cut it into your desired pasta shape, using any fairly sharp object.
7. Boil the fresh pasta for a few minutes until it's al dente.
8. Enjoy with your favorite sauce or toppings.

Homemade Jerky

1. Slice your choice of meat into thin strips, removing excess fat.
2. Marinate the meat in a flavorful mixture like soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, or spices for several hours.
3. Preheat your oven to a low temperature (around 175-200°F or 80-95°C).
4. Place the marinated meat strips on wire racks or a baking sheet.
5. Bake in the oven for several hours until the meat is dried but still flexible. You can also use a food dehydrator.
6. Allow the jerky to cool and store it in an airtight container.

MEAL PLANNING AND NUTRITION

Survival prepping shouldn't prevent us from eating nutritious food and meeting our nutritional needs. The food we eat affects our health, so you shouldn't compromise on balanced meals, but instead be responsible in providing yourself with healthy food.

Meal Planning for Preppers

I've mentioned creating a seven-meal plan before, but before you do that, you need to set priorities. Your focus should be balanced meals that will provide all the essential nutrients you need and that can also be grown and stored. Doing this will help you with stockpiling or meal planning. Take note that this meal plan is for emergencies, so they should be easy-to-cook meals, not 5-star restaurant meals, and something that will include the four grains you already stockpiled because your calories are important. You can incorporate canned, dried, and preserved foods as well.

After determining what these foods are, you'll know the essentials you'll need to stockpile that will last you and your family throughout that

period. If I'm going to include spaghetti and meat sauce in lunch for my family, for example, I know we'll need two pounds of spaghetti and a big jar of meat sauce. This means if I packed ten pounds of spaghetti and five big jars of meat sauce, we've got five lunches covered. You see how easy that is to calculate, right?

As you will be eating these meals at normal times (as normal as can be right now), you also need to take inventory of your food supplies, as I explained in chapter 2. You should also embrace adaptability in your meal planning. When you find some items that can spice up your food, they should actually make the food more delicious, or at least be something different and still delicious. You should also implement effective portion control to minimize waste and use proper food measurements to ensure that you cook and eat the right amounts of food.

Balanced Nutrition

For balanced nutrition, you can diversify your protein sources. Don't simply rely on meats and fish. Eggs and legumes are great protein sources, too, so legumes are probably one of the plants you should include in your garden. Calcium and dairy are also important and can also be gotten from goats, which are easier to rear and require less maintenance than cows. You can easily get vitamins and minerals from herbs that you can forage for or cultivate in your garden, plus you can keep a variety of multivitamins and mineral supplements in your first aid box to fill gaps in your diet during a crisis. The four grains and other starchy foods you can stockpile will supply the energy you need for physical and mental functions. You also need healthy fats and oils like olive oil, nuts, and seeds to help with nutrient absorption and serve as a long-lasting energy source. Most of all, you should try to incorporate fresh fruits and vegetables into your diet, if and when you can.

You're not fully self-sufficient if you have to sacrifice your nutritional balance, so planning also means planning your meals and optimizing your resources so that you have enough to follow the plan. Meal planning and balanced nutrition as a lifestyle will help you be well-prepared for challenging times and also help you enjoy vitality and health in every meal.

WORKBOOK SIX

1. Decide the livestock you will raise and set up a feeding plan for the particular animal.
2. Pick a good DIY project, practice the necessary skills, and explain how the process went for you.

TAKEAWAY SIX

Food is essential for survival, which is why we've looked at the various ways you can source enough food for yourself, family, and livestock. As you start incorporating these practices onto your daily life and embrace self-reliance, it's only a matter of time before the supermarket aisles become a distant memory.

PART III

PRACTICAL PREPAREDNESS

It's time to put everything you've learned into practice with strategies that can help you start and stay committed to your prepping journey without exceeding your budget.

WATER SECURITY AND PURIFICATION

As survival preppers, we are well aware of the need to be self-reliant and have contingency plans for everything, especially food and water. I've tackled food, and while water might not seem like something you need right now, it's because of its availability and, trust me, you don't want to live without it, especially if you're someone who frets when hot water runs out. This is why in any survival situation, in the face of natural disasters or a prolonged crisis, a reliable source of water is needed. And that's not all; you need to have water purification systems in place to make your water potable.

RAINWATER HARVESTING SYSTEMS

Preppers are environmentalists who would rather make the most of what mother nature gives us than have everything offered to us on a platter (a rather expensive platter, at that). This is why our first choice for water security, especially if living in urban areas, is rainwater harvesting. It is an essential skill if you want to reduce your reliance on municipal water sources and lower bills or simply store water for emergencies. Rainwater harvesting is an eco-friendly practice and a way to contribute to a greener future, and it is a free and abundant water source, meaning you can allocate your water bills to other prepping essentials.

Rainwater is very versatile when treated and, just like the tap water you're used to, can be used for cooking and drinking, as well as hygiene and sanitation purposes like washing, bathing, flushing toilets, etc. You

can also use it to irrigate your crops if you're gardening and provide clean water for both your livestock and pets. The most important reason of all is that your stored rainwater can be your lifesaver during a crisis, ensuring you have water when you need it the most.

The types of rainwater harvesting systems available include direct catchment systems. These are the simplest and cheapest, where rainwater simply flows directly from rooftops into storage tanks. This method is also the most ideal for small-scale water needs. Then there are dry systems that use gutters and downspouts to transfer rainwater to a storage tank. This method reduces the risk of contaminating the water. Wet systems use a network of pipes to direct water into filtration units and transport filtered water from these units into storage tanks. This kind of system is much more suitable for larger-scale water needs. The combined rainwater harvesting system integrates both the dry and the wet systems and is more versatile because it combines the advantages of both.

To create an effective rainwater harvesting system, there are some things you need to put in place. First, you need to identify suitable collection surfaces and ensure that they are clean and free of contaminants. They can be rooftops, gutters, or other catchment areas, although rooftops are ideal, as they're usually large and elevated and are clean after the first two or three rainfalls at the start of the rain season.

Gutters and downspouts are also crucial parts of your rainwater harvesting system, as they channel the water from the collection surface to your storage tank. However, you have to ensure that they're well maintained and always clean so you don't have to deal with debris, algae, or spirogyra in your water.

Then you need a filtration or first flush diverter. If debris gets into your water, it will go from the flush diverter placed at the base of the downspout or gutter, and that diverts initial runoff that might contain contaminants through the gutter or downspout and to the filtration system. You can place a simple mesh filter at the entry point of the storage tank to ensure cleaner water.

And now for the storage tank: choose a high-quality and durable one that is sealed to prevent contamination. Don't forget that the size should depend on the volume of water that can sustain your household during emergencies.

Besides the water being clean, it should also be safe for drinking, and the rainwater you collect will need to be treated before drinking. To treat your water supply, you can opt for chemical purification methods, multi-stage filtration systems, or UV treatments. However, this is only necessary if the water will be consumed. If your water treatment method requires a power source, then it's ideal to also invest in backup power sources like solar or hand-pump systems.

Lastly, maintain your rainwater harvesting system regularly to ensure it keeps running smoothly, and always have a clean and safe water supply so that you're well prepared for whatever challenges might come your way.

AFFORDABLE WATER FILTRATION METHODS



Now that you've stored up your collected rainwater or water collected from any other source, it is important to make it safe for consumption because exposure to waterborne pathogens can result in serious health issues. Since clean, safe water is non-negotiable, it is important to find affordable filtration methods that won't break your budget amidst all the high-end filtration systems available on the market.

The first option is pitcher filters. They are not only budget-friendly, but you can also get them in most stores. Pitcher filters are effective at reducing (not totally removing) common contaminants like chlorine, sediment, and odors. Also, you don't need to call a handyman for installation, as they don't require any installation, and they're only suitable for small households, as they can't filter much water at a time.

Next, countertop filters are not as cheap as pitcher filters but provide long-term savings since they last longer. They can also remove a broader range of contaminants and heavy metals than the pitcher filter. They're pretty straightforward to install and can filter enough water for cooking and drinking.

An under-sink filter is another effective option, although the upfront cost is a little bit higher than that for the previous two. As it is a step up from the countertop filter, it can effectively remove a wider range of contaminants, including lead and microorganisms. However, it requires basic plumbing to install since it has to either be connected directly to your water source before coming out through your tap or other outlets, or it can have own specially designed faucet. It can filter as much as 1,000 gallons of water.

However, if you're trying to survive a dire circumstance, and there's no filtration system in sight, you might need to make a DIY filtration system using readily available materials. The most common DIY filter can consist of a plastic bottle, a craft knife or pair of scissors, a hammer and nail, charcoal, gravel, fine and coarse sand, and a strainer or cloth filter.

You'll first cut off the bottom $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the plastic water bottle and then, using a hammer and a nail, drill a hole in the cover of the bottle. Then uncap the bottle and place a coffee filter at the opening. If you don't have this, you can add cotton balls or cut off a piece of bandana, and then cap the bottle back and turn the bottle upside down. Afterward, you'll rinse your filtering materials thoroughly, as you don't want them contaminating your water. Then break down the charcoal into small pieces and pour them into the bottle. Next comes the fine sand; don't use processed, dyed craft sand so as not to contaminate your water with chemicals. Then add the coarse sand, after which you should add gravel, which should stop about one inch away from the cut part of the bottle. Cover everything with a coffee filter, strainer, or bandana. You're done with your DIY filter; all you need to do is to place the bottle cap down in the jar that you'll use to catch the water that comes out and pour the water you want to filter in it. The water will get cleaner as it passes through the four stages: the first stage where the gravel will trap large pieces of debris, the second stage where the sand traps mid-sized dirt particles, the third stage where the charcoal absorbs some chemicals and bacteria, and the fourth stage where the filter paper removes cloudiness.

The filtering process might take a long time, and you might need to repeat the process if you're working with extremely murky water. Also, if the water appears to be ridden with microorganisms, you might need to boil it after filtering the water to make sure that it's safe for drinking. This, obviously, does not work for large amounts of water.

Whichever filter system you purchase, remember to follow the manufacturer's recommendations for filter replacements. You need to perform system checks as well to avoid your filter up and dying on you someday. And you need to have a backup purification system, like boiling or chemical treatment, in place in case your filtration system fails. Anyway, affordable water filtration methods are a practical solution for clean, safe water, as long as you go for one that meets your specific needs.

DIY WATER PURIFICATION TECHNIQUES

Your health is even more important than being self-reliant. You have a role to play, ensuring that everything you ingest is safe and won't have any harmful effects on you. This is one of the ways to stay healthy.

So, moving on to water purification methods to make your water safe for drinking. The cheapest and safest method to purify your water for drinking is the boiling method. All you need to do is bring your water to a rolling boil and maintain it for one to three minutes, and then cover it and let it cool before drinking. Boiling water gets rid of every microorganism that might be hiding in it.

Filtered water is another safe water for drinking, and the cost varies based on the different filtration systems you implement (whether store-bought or DIY). It eliminates large, small, and disease-causing contaminants from water using both physical and chemical processes. Water purified via filtration is usually considered healthier than water purified from other sources because it doesn't remove water's mineral salt content, and also little water is lost.

Another method of purification is the solar disinfection method. This is a totally free method, and all you need to do is fill clear plastic bottles with water and leave them in direct sunlight for about six hours. This method uses the sun's UV rays to kill most pathogens present in the water,

although the heat also depletes some of the water's mineral content, and there is a little bit of water loss.

Another inexpensive purification method is using the household bleach we all know. Adding about eight or more drops to a gallon of water and letting it sit undisturbed for about 30 minutes kills a wide range of waterborne pathogens. However, you should use unscented. I used scented bleach the first time I tried this method out, and—I'll tell you—I struggled to drink just a cup due to the overpowering smell.

Many preppers prefer ceramic water filters since we don't have to rely on chemicals or electricity to make our water safe for drinking, and the clay material also mimics the earth's natural filtration process. The ceramic water filter has pores the size of 0.5 microns that filter out all kinds of pathogens, viruses included. And you can make it yourself; all you need are clay, sawdust or rice husks, water, fine sand, gravel, or coffee filter, a kiln or open flame, drill, and paintbrushes.

The first step is to mix the clay with sawdust or rice husks, which is the pore-forming material, with the ratio of clay to the pore-forming material being 7:3. Then gradually add water to the mixture and knead until it reaches a dough-like consistency and is free of air bubbles.

Shape the dough into a cylindrical or a cone-like shape (any shape of your choice, just make sure it is wide at the top and tapers down toward the bottom). If you like, you can add a lip at the top to hold the water before it filters through the ceramic.

Then apply a thin layer of clay slip (watered-down clay mixture) to the exterior of the filter using a paintbrush. This clay slip will serve as the initial filtration layer to trap larger particles. Another option instead of the clay slip is to wrap the filter with either fine sand, a coffee filter, or gravel to prevent large particles from clogging the filter.

Make microchannels in the filter using a thick straw or a dowel to press small channels in the filter from top to bottom for the filtered water to pass through. After, let the filter air dry slowly for as many days as it takes. A wet or not fully dry ceramic will crack or break when placed in the kiln.

When it is fully dry, carefully put it in your kiln and then increase the temperature to around 1832°F–2192°F (1000°C–1200°C) to remove

organic materials (rice husks or sawdust) and harden the clay. This process is known as bisque firing.

Next is the glaze firing process where you apply a ceramic glaze inside the filter and then fire it again at a lower temperature of around 1472°F–1832°F (800°C–1000°C) to set the glaze. Doing this enhances the filter's ability to trap impurities.

Then when the filter cools, drill an inlet at the top for water to enter and an outlet at the bottom for filtered water to exit, after which you can test your ceramic filter with water containing impurities. If the flow rate slows down considerably after using it for a while or the filter becomes more difficult to clean, then it's time to mold another filter. Put the filter in a container to hold the water.

When choosing a water purification method, choose the one that is more suitable for your water source. Will you need to only filter out impurities? Will you need to kill the pathogens in it? Or will you need to do both? You should also practice your purification method of choice to test how effective it is before you end up in a dire situation, and you should have an alternative plan, just in case, to make sure that you're well-equipped to secure your water supply no matter how challenging things are.

SAFE WATER STORAGE SOLUTIONS

Even though you have a safe and secure water supply, the real test of a survival prepper comes when there's a shortage of water or you no longer have access to your water supply due to a crisis or emergency. It's situations like this that separate the real preppers from the rest because, after all, preppers save to have tomorrow.

And to save water against such days, you need efficient storage systems that are long-lasting and will help your water stay clean, safe, and fresh. Some of the best options for this include stackable water bricks, food-grade plastic barrels, stainless steel barrels, and water tanks.

Stackable water bricks are the best choice for preppers who have limited storage space. Each brick can hold about 3.5 gallons of water, and they're also modular and can be stored under your bed if need be. Since

the water bricks come with handles and can be lifted separately, they're the more convenient option for the road.

Food-grade plastic barrels are the most common water storage option, especially since they are quite safe and do not contain chemicals that can potentially contaminate your stored water. They're also an eco-friendly option and how long they last depends on how well you use them. If you're going for one of these, choose the barrels that come with fitting lids, gaskets, or airtight seals to keep your water from getting contaminated.

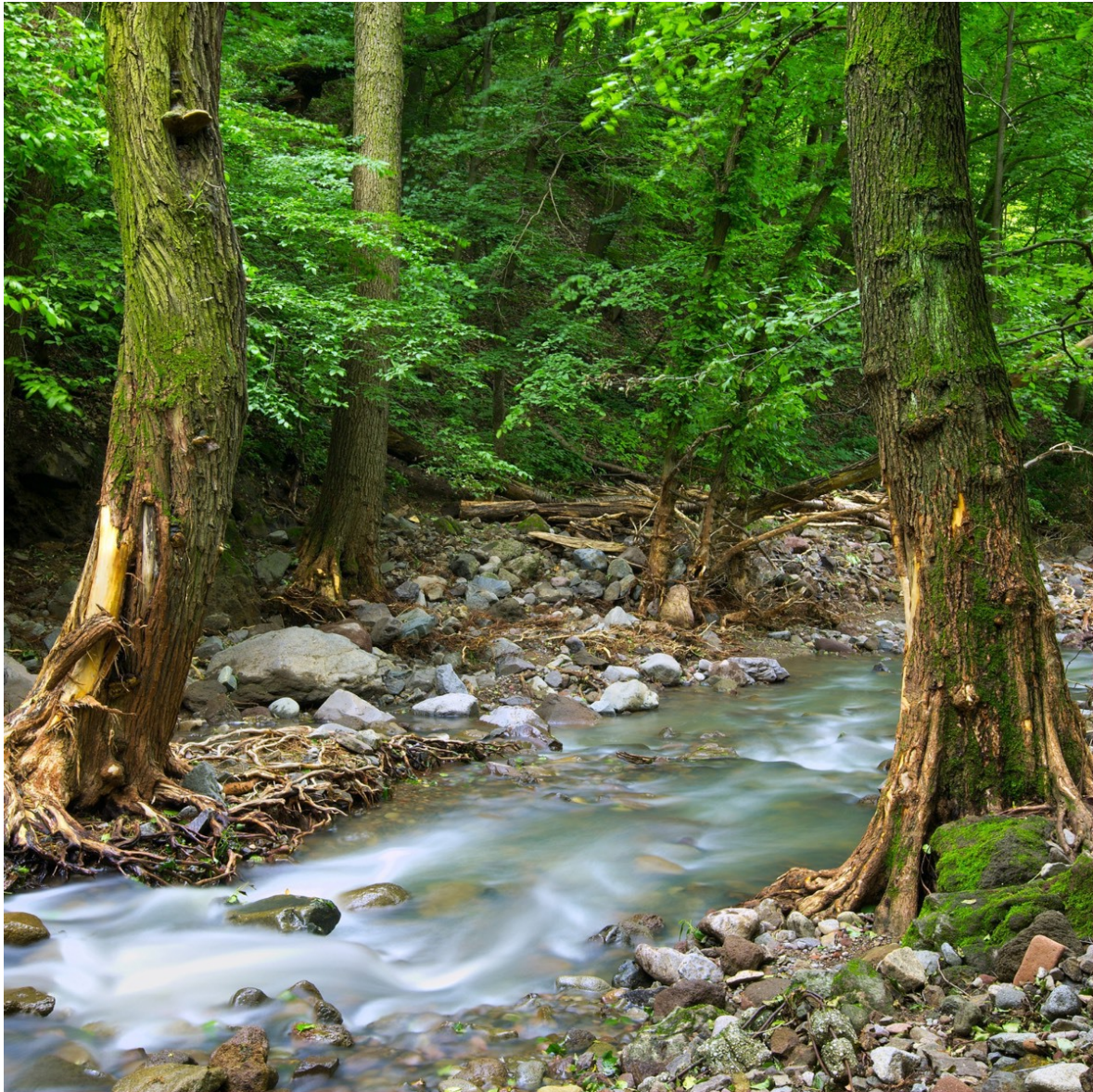
Stainless steel barrels are the most durable options and can weather any storm. They are also resistant to corrosion and rust, which makes them perfect for storing water over a long period.

Water tanks are available in various sizes, ranging from the small ones you can keep indoors to the large ones that can be used outdoors. Water tanks can either be plastic, metal, or concrete and how long one lasts depends on the material it is made of.

The four are obviously great choices, but the one you go for depends on your storage space, storage needs, and the conditions in which you'll store the water. You can also merge two options if that's what works best for you.

Storing your water alone is not enough. You need to purify your water before storing it and replace it regularly as needed to preserve freshness and prevent stagnation. Labeling each container with its storage date will help with this, as then you'll be able to effectively rotate your water supply. The conditions in which you store your water also matter, so try to avoid areas with direct sunlight or extreme temperatures, as they can affect the quality of your water. You should also check the container regularly for signs of leakage or damage.

FINDING AND TREATING NATURAL WATER SOURCES



Besides rainwater, there are other natural sources of water out there, and having two or more water supply sources does not harm anyone. It is like having a backup for your backup, and you can agree that that's a logical thing to do.

Springs and Seeps

These two options are nature's gift to preppers, or anyone in search of clean water. A spring is a result of groundwater bubbling up from the earth and flowing to the surface, and a seep is also similar to a spring, although it lacks the consistent flow a spring has. To find either of these two, you have to be observant of your surroundings. Look for low-lying areas, spots with lush vegetation, or signs of moisture, like wet rocks or soil. If you dig the base of the seep, it's possible to find a steady flow of

clean water. However, you'll need containers such as buckets or tarps to collect water from the springs.

Rivers and Stream Water

This is another valuable water source, although rivers and streams don't offer the assurance of clean water that we can always get from springs. Flowing water is the best option. Stagnant pools should be used only in the most desperate conditions. To find them, you have to head downhill since water naturally flows to lower elevations. You must first filter water obtained from this water source and afterward boil it for at least one minute, or you could use purification tablets.

Lakes and Ponds

They also are a sizable water supply source but are stagnant, and stagnant water can host a lot of parasites and bacteria, so filtration is important. The best method of filtration you can employ onsite and in a survival scenario is the DIY charcoal filtration system, after which you boil the water or use purification tablets to make it safe for drinking.

Wells

They're one of the most reliable and safest sources of water available. You can find them by observing wellheads in yards or calling a drilling company to drill one in your yard. They're naturally pure, although you have to properly maintain the well and test it regularly.

You can treat water from any of these sources using any of the purification and filtration methods we've already discussed. Or, you can sterilize your water using UV devices. You can easily get a portable UV pen or device that is lightweight and easy to carry around. Just make sure to follow the manufacturer's guideline for exposure time. Also, if you're living along the coastline, you will need to desalinate your water supply before use, which means you need to invest in a desalination device and familiarize yourself with how it operates.

HYDRATION AND WATER RATIONING

Preppers abide by the Rule of Three for survival: three minutes without air, three hours without shelter, three days without water, and three weeks without food. These rules simply mean you need air for survival,

you need to be protected from the elements, you can only survive without water for about three days, and, as essential as food is, with constant hydration, you can survive without food for three weeks. Air is always guaranteed—I hope. You'll always be able to hide from harsh weather or from the hot sun under the shade of a tree and even find a place to sleep if you already have tents, tarps, or sleeping bags in your backpack. This brings us to water again. If you have a limited supply of water in your backpack, which you are bound to have, then hydration and water rationing skills are essential weapons in your survival-prepping arsenal.

Staying hydrated is vital for your well-being. It helps sustain your physical energy and endurance, which are very important and needed during emergencies or strenuous activities. Being dehydrated clouds one's thinking and decision-making abilities. You've probably also experienced times when you can't proceed with what you're doing because you're too tired to think, and then a gulp of water rejuvenates you. Well, that's because staying hydrated sharpens your cognitive skills. Another thing being hydrated does is help regulate your body temperature, especially during harsh weather conditions. Lastly, every single organ in your body needs water to thrive, so staying hydrated is one way to ensure that each of your organs functions optimally.

The first step toward staying hydrated is having a secure water supply, and we've tackled the many ways for you to do that. Ensure you have a water storage system that contains clean, safe water. Although FEMA recommends a minimum of one gallon of water per person per day, store more if you have the space and resources. The second step to staying hydrated is understanding and using water purification techniques; always carry a water purification tool in your survival kit.

Rationing Water

In the case of limited water supply, especially if it's an emergency scenario that has you and your family out of the house where you obviously can't carry your large water storage with you, you'll need to learn how to ration your water.

To start with, prioritize and allocate water to essential functions like drinking, cooking, and personal hygiene, and suspend non-essential uses in the meantime. Even though personal hygiene is essential, it should be carried out efficiently. Use moist towelettes or wipes, if they're available,

or minimal water to wash your hands. Also opt for foods that require minimal water to cook. Munch on dehydrated and freeze-dried foods now and then, and you'll still get some of your essential nutrients from them. Then measure and ration water usage. You can use measuring cups or bottles to ensure everyone gets their fair share. If possible, create a community-based water management system and cooperate with your neighbors to distribute water resources effectively.

WATER CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

Developing a thrifty mindset toward water usage is necessary if you're going to be self-sufficient, and conserving water will decrease your environmental footprint and ensure you have a reliable source of water. The water you save today can save you tomorrow, which means you must maximize your water supply.

Greywater recycling is one of the ways to conserve water, especially when living off the grid, and it involves recycling relatively clean wastewater from sinks, showers, and laundry. To do this, you'll need to reroute your home's plumbing to direct the greywater your household uses to a filtration and storage system. The plumbing will, of course, be done by a professional plumber. Now, when we talk about greywater, we are talking about water that contains soap and small debris. An inline filter system integrated into your greywater system helps remove impurities, after which you can store the water and use it for non-potable uses like irrigating your garden. If you're going to implement this system, then only use environmentally friendly soaps and detergents, and separate the greywater system from your potable water system to avoid cross-contamination.

To use environmentally friendly soaps for cleaning, you can make your own homemade cleaning solutions. Besides being the best option if you're implementing a greywater system, these eco-friendly options use less water compared to commercial cleaning products. You can create effective cleaning solutions using ingredients as simple as vinegar, baking soda, and lemon juice, and these solutions clean well with minimal water usage; just use a spritz here and there. You can also employ waterless cleaning methods like steam cleaning or dry dusting for various surfaces.

Installing low-flow fixtures, including low-flow showerheads, faucets, and toilets, is another way to reduce water consumption without sacrificing functionality. Low-flow showerheads restrict the flow of water, reducing the amount of water used during showers, and the change in pressure is barely noticeable. Encouraging timed showers in your household is also another way to reduce water waste while maintaining personal hygiene. Set a timer or duration: 10-15 minutes is enough, no need to spend half an hour or more in the bathroom, like my daughter does. For the faucets, you'll install low-flow aerators on your faucets. These aerators will then mix air with water to reduce the flow rate, and they are also very easy to install. Replacing older, water-guzzling toilets with low-flow or dual-flush models will allow you to choose a low-volume flush for liquid waste and a higher volume for solid waste. All you need to do is ensure that they're not leaking and fix immediately if you notice any leaks.

On this note, another effective water conservation system is leak detection. Even the smallest leak can still waste a considerable amount of water, so periodically check all water fixtures and plumbing. You can even install detection devices that can quickly alert you to leaks. If you do detect a leak, repair it promptly, and don't wait until it escalates.

You can also opt for native landscaping using native, drought-tolerant plants since they are adapted to local conditions and often require less water, and drought-tolerant plants are bred to withstand arid conditions and need little to no water. Or maybe try xeriscaping, a landscaping approach where you plan your landscape design to minimize water use through the use of native plants, mulch, and efficient irrigation systems.

Implementing efficient irrigation methods for your plants will also help minimize evaporation and runoff. For example, drip irrigation delivers water directly to the plant's root zone. You can also use automatic timers to schedule your irrigation system to early mornings or later evenings when evaporation times are low. As well, you can install soil moisture sensors that detect the soil moisture level and activate irrigation only when necessary, which prevents overwatering. Mulching also prevents evaporation, moderates soil temperature, and suppresses weed growth. You can apply organic mulch such as bark, compost, and leaves or inorganic material such as stone or gravel. You can apply the mulch layer to be two to four inches thick. Organic mulch breaks down over time, so you will need to replenish it as necessary to maintain the desired depth.

These water conservation strategies will help you save for the rainy day, or better put, save water for the dry day.

WATER-RELATED HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

I've reiterated over and over again that our health is very important and you shouldn't take clean water for granted. While water is essential for us to stay hydrated, drinking water is not all about staying hydrated. Having access to clean water helps you maintain your overall well-being. Drinking unsafe water, on the other hand, can cause many health complications like waterborne diseases, malnutrition, and even impairment in children's physical and cognitive development. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), unsafe water and poor hygiene and sanitation contribute to the world's disease burden.

This is why throughout this chapter, we've explored the several ways you can treat and purify your water supply. It's also important to regularly test your water supply for contaminants and treat them as soon as possible if they are present. I also mentioned safe water storage options, and the water storage option you decide to invest in must be one of those. You need to understand water-related diseases so that you can do your best to eliminate health risks associated with your water source.

The first and most common water-borne disease that spreads through contaminated water sources is cholera, which is an acute diarrheal infection caused by the *Vibrio cholerae* bacterium. Cholera's key symptoms include intense diarrhea and vomiting, which often result in dehydration and sometimes even death. To prevent this, you can take oral cholera vaccines. Also, ensure safe water sources, always purify your water supply, and practice good hygiene.

Another waterborne disease caused by contaminated water and food sources is dysentery. This is also quite common and is caused by the bacteria *shigella*. It often results in severe diarrhea with blood or mucus. You can prevent this by purifying your water supply.

Then we have typhoid fever, which is caused by the *Salmonella typhi* bacteria and spreads through water or food contaminated by feces, especially in rivers and ponds. Its symptoms include high fever, abdominal pain, and weakness, and you can prevent this by maintaining sanitary conditions for water sources.

Then there is the *Escherichia coli* (E. coli) infection that results from ingesting water or food contaminated with E. coli and its symptoms can range from mild diarrhea to severe kidney problems. To avoid this, properly treat the water and make sure you implement proper hygiene and sanitation practices in food preparation.

There's also cryptosporidiosis caused by the *Cryptosporidium* parasite and it also spreads through water contaminated by feces. Its symptoms also include diarrhea, stomach cramps, and fever. You can remove the parasite with the help of filtration systems with a pore size of less than or equal to 1 micron; you can also treat your water by boiling or using chemical tablets.

Schistosomiasis, quite common in rural areas, is caused by the parasitic worm schistosomes and transmitted through contaminated water. Common symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhea, and blood in urine. It's advisable to avoid contact with potentially contaminated water sources. However, if you live in an endemic region and can't avoid contact with it, you can consider water filtration.

Hepatitis A can also be waterborne and its symptoms include jaundice, fever, and abdominal pain. Vaccination against hepatitis is important, but aside from that, safe water sources are also essential.

These are some of the most common water-related health issues. Don't forget that you have the knowledge and power to protect yourself and your family by implementing water treatment and purification methods. Understanding the connection between clean water and your health will help you be more confident in your self-sufficient living.

WORKBOOK SEVEN

1. Do you think you need a new purification plan in place for your current water source/system?
2. If yes, which of these purification methods do you prefer, and how do you plan to implement it?

TAKEAWAY SEVEN

Looking at the health issues that come with unsafe water, and the hydrating benefits water gives us, I'm sure you can agree that having a clean and safe constant water supply is more important than having a constant source of water. This is why throughout this chapter you've been equipped with how to source water and make it safe for drinking.

NAVIGATING FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS

It's normal to experience financial constraints, but that shouldn't stop you from prepping for the future. Throughout the book, I've mentioned options that you should consider to avoid stretching your budget too thin, but in this chapter, I'll bring my point home with a few more tips that can make the journey easier. Prepping doesn't have to be an all-or-nothing endeavor. It is more about being prepared, adaptable, and self-sufficient within your financial means.

PRIORITIZING ESSENTIAL PREPPING SUPPLIES

At this point, I know you're invested in being a survival prepper, but you don't have the financial means to purchase everything I've mentioned so far. Not having everything doesn't make you less of a survival prepper, and you can still make what you have work for you. Although you don't have to get everything, some essentials are a must.

The first essential is water and water purification measures; remember the Rule of Three that I mentioned? Yes, water and portable filters or purification tablets are a must. In no particular order, another important item from the Rule of Three is food. Stock up on non-perishable, long-lasting, and nutritious food like the very important four grains, freeze-dried meals, and canned goods. Then the third member of the Rule of Three is shelter. Tents, sleeping bags, and warm clothing are very important. You can also invest in emergency blankets or even a wood-burning stove; you know what to get based on your climate. Fire-making

tools are also important since fire is needed for cooking and warmth and, if the case arises, to signal for help. Pack fire-starters, and learn fire-making techniques.

Moving on from the Rule of Three to health, you need a comprehensive first aid kit that includes bandages, antiseptics, over-the-counter medications, as well as necessary prescriptions that any of your family members might be on. Also, don't forget hygiene supplies like soap, toothpaste, toilet paper, and some tampons, as well as a portable toilet for sanitation kits.

Self-defense tools are also important. Even if we hope to never use them, we don't want to be caught off guard if we end up needing them. Consider lethal or non-lethal options, whatever works for you. You also need lighting sources like flashlights, headlamps, and lanterns with extra batteries.

If your budget allows, you can also invest in energy sources like solar panels, portable power stations, or other alternative energy sources, as they can provide power for cooking, lighting, and charging devices during power outages. If long-term survival is your goal, you can also invest in seeds and gardening tools.

Knowledge is your most valuable tool as a survival prepper so invest in books and invest in skills. First aid and self-defense skills, among others, are going to serve you when SHTF.

Prioritizing these supplies will help you gradually build your prepping inventory without putting a strain on your finances. You can start with the basics (the Rule of Three) and then gradually expand based on family needs and the imminent threats in your region.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY DIY PROJECTS

There are a few DIY projects scattered throughout the book, but let's look at a few more that can help you be self-sufficient and resourceful on a tight budget.

Homemade Solar Oven

This is quite easy to make. All you need are a cardboard box, aluminum foil, adhesive, a piece of glass or a clear oven bag, black paint, and a

reflector (aluminum foil-covered cardboard).

Steps:

1. Choose a large cardboard box, ideally with a lid or flap.
2. Cut out a flap on the top of the box to create a lid.
3. Line the inside of the box with aluminum foil to reflect sunlight.
4. Paint the interior of the box black to absorb heat.
5. Attach a piece of glass or clear oven bag to the top (inside) as a window.
6. Create a reflector using cardboard covered in aluminum foil and attach it to the box, angling it to direct sunlight into the box.
7. On a sunny day, place your food or container in the box, close the lid, and position it to capture direct sunlight. It can reach temperatures suitable for cooking.

Recycled Garden Containers

For this, you need old buckets, crates, and containers.

Steps:

1. Find suitable containers around your home or from thrift stores, ensuring they have proper drainage.
2. Drill holes in the bottom for drainage if needed.
3. Add potting soil or compost to the container.
4. Plant your desired vegetables, herbs, or flowers.
5. Water as needed and watch your repurposed container garden thrive.

DIY Solar Water Heater

You'll be using pipes or containers painted black and insulating materials.

Steps:

1. Select pipes or containers (like plastic bottles) and paint them black.
2. Connect these black containers to a water supply and a collection tank.

3. Ensure the setup is exposed to direct sunlight.
4. The painted black surface absorbs heat, warming the water as it passes through.
5. Insulate the pipes or containers to retain heat, and circulate the heated water back into your home for various uses.

Repurpose Furniture

Give old or thrifted furniture a new life using paint, brushes, and sandpaper (if refinishing).

Steps:

1. Assess the furniture's condition and decide on the desired outcome.
2. Sand and prep the surface if refinishing or clean thoroughly if repainting.
3. Apply fresh coats of paint or stain for a new look.
4. Reuse furniture in different ways (e.g., repurpose a dresser into a kitchen island).

Handmade Soaps and Candles

You'll need soap or candle-making kits, essential oils, molds, wax, wicks, and dyes (for candles).

Steps:

1. Follow instructions from a soap- or candle-making kit.
2. Add essential oils or scents of your choice.
3. Pour into molds and let them set.
4. Once set, remove the soaps or candles and enjoy your custom creations.

Reusable Cloth Products

To do this, you should have a sewing machine, fabric, thread, and scissors.

Steps:

1. Cut fabric into the desired size and shape (e.g., squares for napkins).
2. Sew around the edges to prevent fraying.
3. Use and wash these cloth products instead of using disposable alternatives.

These DIY projects are not only budget-friendly but also foster self-reliance, resourcefulness, and frugality, reducing your reliance on store-bought solutions.

BARTERING AND TRADE SKILLS

Bartering is a skill that often gets overlooked in our modern economy; however, it's a precious skill to us survival preppers and will most likely be the skill to get normies (who have goods, services, or cash to barter with) going when SHTF. When money loses its value or becomes scarce, it is the goods and services you have that will help you thrive, and it is bartering these goods and services that will help a community thrive as well.

Bartering is a skill as old as human civilization, and it simply involves exchanging goods or services without money being involved. It has a lot of advantages: lets you discover the true value of the items you possess, allows you to acquire things you need but don't have, helps you foster relationships with people and even a sense of community, and it can be the lifeline you need in times of financial constraints.

Before you can barter successfully, you need to know the principles involved; otherwise it might not be a profitable venture for you. Before you barter the goods you have or the services you can render, you have to understand the value of what you have and know which of your goods or services is attractive to others. You also need to identify your needs and prioritize your necessities to be sure you're not exchanging goods or services just for the sake of it, but you're getting something you really need in return. Also, find people who have what you need and possibly want what you have. Communication is very important as well, so that you can negotiate with respect and openness and convince people to make the trade. And lastly, like every trader, you need to be trustworthy, so try to build a good reputation within your community.

Many of the essentials I mentioned that are a must if you're working on a small budget, are universally valuable in self-sufficiency, and are often referred to as "bartering currency." Although there are others besides the survival preppers' must-haves, these bartering currencies include food, water, heirloom seeds, quality tools, medical supplies, fuel, ammunition (for those who own firearms), clothing and blankets, soap and hygiene products, and, very importantly, your skills and knowledge.

These skills are sometimes more valuable than goods because they allow you to offer services that might be irreplaceable in a self-sufficient community. Take medical skills, for instance. Sometimes the basics are all you need to save lives. Gardening and farming skills are valuable as well since they can help ensure a sustainable food source. Or perhaps you're good at carpentry and repair; everybody needs a fixer or builder, eventually. Also, if you're good at hunting or fishing, the protein source you bring home is something a lot of people will definitely be interested in. If you're good at DIY projects, you can produce basic necessities like soap and light that people need. You can also educate and tutor people, and you'll be surprised at what you can exchange for when sharing your wealth of knowledge.

The trading process starts with identifying someone who has what you need and then discussing to agree on the terms of the trade. After that, you and the person you're trading with can check or inspect the items or services before you hand over the goods or services you're trading, and make sure that you're both satisfied with the exchange. Once you're done trading, remember to keep a record of trades for future reference. And there you have it, that's the simple way to create a self-reliant lifestyle for yourself—one that many only dream of.

THRIFT STORE AND SECONDHAND FINDS

My wife loves going to the secondhand store and views secondhand things as objects waiting to find new owners that will love them just as much as, or even more than, their previous owners—and maybe to be altered to be better. She's really sentimental about giving things, people, and animals second chances at love and opportunities. Secondhand stores not only offer their objects a new opportunity, but they offer us preppers a world of opportunity as well. In these stores, you'll find affordable, sustainable, and even the most unpredictable things. Thanks to them,

self-sufficiency doesn't have to be costly, and you can find every essential prepper item, from survival gear to homesteading tools, at reasonable prices.

The terms thrift and secondhand stores are often used interchangeably, but they're not the same. Thrift stores are often charity-based and most items you find in them are donated, so they often support community causes. Secondhand stores, on the other hand, are profit-driven businesses, and their main goal is to make a profit from selling used items.

While being a survival prepper can be an expensive endeavor, these stores provide a cost-effective solution that helps you equip yourself with essential supplies without emptying your wallet. Thrift and secondhand stores are also advocates for sustainable practices, and when you thrift, you're repurposing items and reducing the demand for new production. Then, as I already said, they offer unpredictability: you never know what you will find, but you're sure to see some pretty unique things, unlike at the predictable chain retailers. If you're a collector of all things vintage, then you will like secondhand stores because there you'll find vintage and older tools and equipment that have stood the test of time. A lot of old items were made from really good materials, unlike products out there in this period, so vintage items are always more durable than their modern counterparts.

However, with secondhand stores also comes impulsive buying, especially if you're somewhat of a collector, so you need to compile a list of your essential prepping needs before you go shopping as this will help you stay focused. You need to be patient too; you might not get what you're looking for on the first visit, and it might take multiple visits before experiencing the thrill of discovery, but I can assure you that you will surely find that exact thing you're looking for. Once you find the item you're looking for, before you do the dance or get too excited, check that it is still functional and durable and that it will serve its purpose. Imagine going home with a prepper's knife that's not only blunt but is already starting to rust. Even if you can sharpen it, how do you get rid of the rust? When buying secondhand goods, don't hesitate to beat down the prices, especially if you feel it's warranted. You might need to do a little research on how much a new one of the tools you're getting costs, so you can estimate how much the secondhand one should cost. You shouldn't always have to shuffle from store to store. Once you find a

store that has a good deal of prepper items with a wide selection range that allows you to pick your choice at reasonable prices, with a friendly staff as well, you might make that store your shopping spot.

In these stores, you can find unconventional items like camping gear, including tents, sleeping bags, stoves, and camping utensils. You can also find different tools, from gardening to power tools, which will help you if you're considering homesteading. You can also find sturdy, rugged, and weather-resistant outdoor clothes that will keep you comfortable when working outdoors. You can find canning supplies here, even canners, and also cooking utensils like cast-iron skillets and stainless-steel pots. These stores also have books and building materials like lumber, screws, and nails that will help with your construction projects. You can also find storage containers like plastic bins and other containers that can help you organize your prepping supplies. The list is endless, and you're only limited by your shopping list.

If you're not that financially buoyant, these stores are your allies, and if you approach thrifting with an open mind, you'll be amazed at the treasures you can uncover.

PREPPING ON A SHOESTRING BUDGET

Don't let a limited budget be a roadblock on the way to achieving your prepping goals. Prepping on a budget is both possible and exciting, and it might awaken the resourceful side of you that you never knew you had.

First, you have to distinguish between the essentials and non-essentials, and list the most crucial items you need for survival. That should be pretty easy since it was what I first discussed at the beginning of this chapter—the Rule of Three—your health and hygiene, and then every other thing comes after. After doing this, you'll set a realistic and clear budget to determine how much you can allocate to your prepping endeavors. Look for areas where you can cut unnecessary costs; thrift items and DIY projects also count. You already learned how to create a realistic budget in chapter 1, so this shouldn't be much of a hassle. Then embrace trade and bartering, as you can always use what you have (goods and skills) to get what you need (goods and skills).

Be as frugal as possible when getting the essential items, stockpile affordable food, buy in bulk so you can benefit from discounts, use

coupons, and then use proper storage measures to extend their shelf life. Buy cheap yet quality food-grade water storage containers and purify your water supply with methods you can make or do yourself. You can also make your own soaps and cleaning supplies for hygiene. Learn how to identify edible plants and possibly try your hand at foraging. If your local area allows it, try hunting and fishing as well. There are ways to also reduce your energy bills: you can opt for solar-powered appliances, save on electricity using efficient LED lighting, insulate your home, and seal drafts. Engaging with your local prepping and homesteading community can be a valuable resource, as you'll have access to group buys, seed exchanges, and shared knowledge.

In short, approaching prepping with a thrifty mindset will help you navigate financial constraints while living self-sufficiently, so tighten your shoelaces and embrace the challenge of prepping without splurging.

NETWORKING WITH PREPPER COMMUNITIES

Your network is your net worth and it is the connections you build with other preppers that will enhance your preparedness journey. As much as you like your privacy, as we all do, you can't deny that there is a strength in numbers. A community combines the knowledge of several people, their skills, and their resources. Joining one means you're deepening the depth of knowledge, skills, and resources you have access to, which will greatly benefit your self-sufficiency efforts. The concept of mutual aid is very strong in prepper communities; you're not alone, and you don't have to be as others watch your back in time of need.

I have made some mistakes in my prepping journey, and some of these mistakes I've shared with you. However, you can't compare the few mistakes I've made to the ones a prepping community would have made collectively, ones that you don't even think of as mistakes until you have to deal with the consequences. Learning from your community's experiences and mistakes will help you make informed decisions. You've learned the bartering and trading process but this practice is more effective if you are a member of a community. It's a cost-effective way to acquire what you need and reduce your reliance on financial transactions. You can also engage in community projects like bulk purchasing, communal gardens, or group training, and this reduces individual costs. Being a prepper can be challenging at the beginning and

you will need emotional support to make it through; emotional support which you can sometimes only get from a group of like-minded people.

You can join reputable and established prepper organizations like the American Preppers Network. You can join online forums; there are also communities across Reddit and Facebook, so joining one whose goals align with yours is a cost-effective way to get started. You can also search for local prepper meetups in your area for face-to-face interactions and resource sharing. When joining these groups, be aware that preppers come from all walks of life, so you have to embrace diversity and respect different perspectives. You should also be able to add value to your community, share your skills and knowledge, and offer help when needed. Join hands in community projects and attend training and workshops. A culture of mutual support strengthens your network. Connecting with a prepper network strengthens your survival plan and helps you build a web of resilience around you that benefits everyone involved.

GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

I know that as a survival prepper, you're after a self-sufficient life, one that is totally independent. However, when you experience financial worries that pose a challenge to meet your prepping goals, you can take advantage of these programs and use the extra cash to stockpile more supplies.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Formerly known as food stamps, SNAP can supplement supplies during challenging times as they give eligible families funds to purchase food.

Medicaid: Health is wealth, and as I've said, we can't compromise on quality health as preppers and this program will help you address any medical emergencies you might encounter. Only low-income individuals and families are eligible for this health coverage.

Section 8 Housing Voucher Program: We can all agree that housing takes up a huge part of our budget, and by participating in this program that offers rental assistance to low-income families, making housing more affordable, you can allocate all that free money taken off your housing costs to other prepping essentials.

Child Nutrition Programs: The National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program offer free or reduced-price meals for eligible children. And you can agree that with this program, the problem of ensuring your kids receive nutritious meals is half settled.

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): LIHEAP assists low-income families with covering their energy bills. You can take advantage of this, especially if you're living off the grid to maintain your setup efficiently and offset the costs of heating, cooling, and electricity, freeing up funds for other prepping essentials.

Emergency Assistance Programs: In the aftermath of emergencies, programs like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and state agencies provide emergency assistance for temporary housing, food, and other critical supplies, to help people get back on their feet.

Apart from these ones that cut across all states, you can also research the state-based ones for a program that you're eligible for as well.

FINANCIAL PLANNING FOR LONG-TERM PREPAREDNESS

The one final thing that can help you prepare for the long term is whether you're under a tight budget or not is making a financial plan. Financial planning will help you build a solid foundation for your self-sufficient lifestyle and help you make your money work for you in your long-term preparedness.

Financial planning for us preppers is more than just planning, it's about setting goals. Remember the goals you set in chapter 1? I believe you've written them somewhere, but, if not, write them out from the workbook you used; those goals are realistic enough so let's work with them. I do hope you put much thought into setting your preparedness goals in that section. If you didn't, I'm sorry to inform you that you're going to have to scrap that one and do it again.

Now that that's settled, assess your current financial status, income, savings, expenses, and debts. How healthy are you financially? I hope your income is more than your expenses and not the other way around. The next thing to do after that is to set a realistic budget. The budget you're going to create here is going to cover prepping-related costs as

well as your daily expenses. This will help you be more frugal with how you spend money. Then identify the most critical prepping essentials you need in your budget, from short-term needs to long-term goals. The goals you set at the start of making your financial plan should help with this.

Then you're going to start an emergency fund, so include this as well in your budget. As preppers, we always prepare ahead for the rainy day, and this should reflect in your finances too. You should have set aside enough for three to six months of living expenses that can act as your safety net during an unforeseen crisis. Then explore investment options, especially ones that align with your prepping lifestyle. You can diversify your portfolio into assets like precious metals that retain their value even during economic instability or renewable energy sources. Just make sure you do enough research before dipping your foot into the investment pool; you can even consult with a financial advisor. Then allocate a portion of your income to saving regularly. You can't just put your money all at once into long-term prepping projects or investments. It's saving toward them that will help you embark on these projects and finish them too.

A part of your savings should also go to paying off your debts. Start with high-interest debts first, as paying them off will leave extra money that can be targeted toward buying prepping essentials.

Also be prepared to make some changes in certain circumstances, whether to your budget or your investment strategy. As a prepper, you must not be rigid about these things. Periodically review your financial plan and adjust it as circumstances change or as you fulfill some of your goals.

Maintain accurate records: keep receipts, monitor your budget, and track your investments. These records will help you make informed financial decisions. And continue educating yourself both financially and preparedness-wise. The more knowledgeable you are, the better you will be able to navigate financial constraints.

A financial plan is an ongoing process, not a static one, so as you evolve, let your financial plan evolve.

WORKBOOK 8

Assessing Your Financial Plan

| | Monthly Income (source and amount) | Monthly Expenses (amount spent and what it is spent on) | Monthly Savings (amount regularly saved) | Debt (total debt and how much goes into it per month) |
|--------------|---|--|---|--|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| Total | | | | |

Expenses + debt > income (no savings) = financially unhealthy

Expenses + debt < income (no savings) = financially unhealthy

Expenses + debt > income (with savings) = financially unhealthy

Expenses + debt < income (with savings) = financially healthy

Investments and long-term prepping goals

| Investment options | The amount it will cost | Amount to save per month for each |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Long-term prepping projects | The amount it will cost | Amount to save per month for each |
| | | |
| | | |
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Drawing your budget

You've assessed your financial health and your financial goals, so now is the time to choose a healthier financial lifestyle.

You've already stated how much your monthly income is, so let's divide your income and set achievable goals.

First, you'll list the important expenses you can't skip on monthly (only important things), make sure to add miscellaneous expenses; then take the total amount out of your monthly income. We have four boxes left, and you can divide what's left of your income into 4. Or save $\frac{1}{3}$ of what's left in your emergency fund and divide the money that's left into the three remaining boxes. The amount you get from that division will be going into the remaining four boxes.

For instance, you earn \$7,000 per month (taxes removed). Then you allocate \$4,000 to your total expenses plus miscellaneous, that's \$3,000 left. If you divide \$3,000 into 4, that's \$750. That means you allocate

TAKEAWAY EIGHT

Finances can hold a person back from achieving their preparedness goals, but your finances don't have to hold you back. In this chapter, we've explored how to thrive as a survival prepper while making do with the little you have. I hope these tips on frugality will guide you on your journey to self-reliance.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING



Preppers are not stagnant people; we thrive, we grow, and we seek knowledge. You shouldn't just be content with the knowledge and skills you have, as the world keeps evolving, new ideas keep coming out that can make life easier for us, and you should be up to date. Growing in all areas of your life will help you commit to this preparedness journey. If not, you'll easily get bored and probably end up opting out of this lifestyle. Going back to being a normie after living as a survival prepper is not something you want to do, as moving from independent living to dependent living can be quite frustrating—take it from the old people who live in care homes.

MENTAL RESILIENCE AND ADAPTABILITY

Since being a prepper is an ongoing journey, you'll come across challenges and uncertainties along the way that will require not only your physical preparedness but mental resilience as well.

This mental resilience is the ability to bounce back from setbacks or challenges and hold your ground through them. It's the ability to grow stronger through life's trials instead of letting them weigh you down.

Mental resilience is not all about having a positive outlook on life, although this is a crucial part of it, but it is also the ability to embrace change. While a positive outlook boosts your morale and motivates you, you also have to accept that change is the only constant. As a prepper, you're no stranger to adapting, and you should see change as the opportunity to grow, learn new skills, and evolve yourself.

To be more resilient, you have to view failure as an opportunity to grow, be ready to analyze what went wrong, and make adjustments based on this info. You also need to be more flexible, as inflexibility is one of the things that make challenges hit some people harder than others (even when it is the same challenge). When you are aware that your first plan may not always be the best and are ready to switch your strategies when necessary, then you'll be able to survive anything.

Another way to be resilient is to develop healthy coping mechanisms. What do you do when difficulty hits you? Do you hit the bar or do you meditate? Find ways to alleviate your stress and stay resilient, maybe through mindfulness and meditation practices, being creative, walking through your garden, visiting a friend, physical fitness or self-care

activities, anything that makes you feel calm. Resilience also means being resourceful and finding creative alternatives when things don't go your way.

Mental resilience also goes hand in hand with adaptability. It is being adaptable that helps you deal with challenges better. Instead of sitting still and waiting sadly for the situation to be over, you take charge, and modify your approach and strategies in response instead.

To be adaptable, you have to be a learner. Don't just stop at what you know, don't stop at this book, but continue updating your skills and knowledge and be open to new information and ideas. It might be what you recently learned, rather than what you've always known, that will help you deal with challenges. That way, challenges will look to you more like opportunities to practice your skills, rather than things that want to (pardon the dramatics) ruin your life. Networking with other preppers will also introduce you to new ideas and knowledge that might be more efficient than the older ones.

Also, learn how to manage stress and make sound decisions in unpredictable circumstances. Simulating different scenarios and practicing drills will help you test your adaptability and even anticipate problems and come up with solutions before things get out of hand.

Also, a healthy mind and body are crucial in both your mental resilience and adaptability, so try to stay physically and mentally fit. You can take care of both your physical and mental health through physical activities, getting enough sleep, good nutrition, self-care practices, and meditation. No matter how challenging being a prepper is, it is a strong mind and the ability to adapt that will empower you to thrive.

TRAINING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Skills are sometimes what make the difference between thriving and surviving in a crisis, which is why as a prepper, you have to adopt the mindset of a perpetual learner. You will experience a variety of situations, each needing its own set of skills, so learn as many as you can. I can assure you that no survival skill ever goes to waste. Be open to new knowledge and experiences.

Before you get started, establish clear objectives for your skill development. What skills do you think are the most necessary for your self-sufficiency goals? Create a roadmap, starting from the basics to the advanced ones. This roadmap will help you keep on track. Although it is good to specialize, it is much better to be versatile, as versatility is the sign of a well-rounded prepper. After you're done learning skills within your goals, learn diverse skills that will serve you in different scenarios.

While theory is good, hands-on training is better, so practice all that you learn. If that's not enough, you can attend workshops or join local prepper training groups. If you don't practice, you can't claim to have learned a skill. So don't just try once but practice regularly; practice makes perfect. Tend to that garden regularly, go to the shooting range regularly, go fishing regularly. Just make sure to practice. And remember to create drills and real-life simulations to test your skills and your preparedness.

Then keep a log of your skill development. Document all that you've learned, your achievements, areas that still need adjustment, and work toward getting better in those areas. Keeping a log will give you a picture of your progress and guide you in further training.

Adaptability is very important for survival, so be open to updating or modifying your skills to meet technological advancements and challenges that might come your way.

You can learn basic survival skills like fire-making, shelter-building, navigation, and water purification. If your goal is health-wise, you can learn basic first aid and CPR, and then maybe advance to wilderness first aid. If self-defense is your concern, go for firearms training or hand-to-hand combat, and also learn how to use non-lethal weapons.

For food production, you can learn gardening, fishing, hunting, foraging, and raising animals. You can also learn how to can food as well as other food preservation methods. Then understand how to find water sources and purify your water supply.

If your goal is to be self-sufficient, you can learn homesteading skills like cooking from scratch, making soap, and generally making things from scratch.

Acquiring repair and maintenance skills like repairing tools, equipment, and structures will help you extend the life of your resources.

Leadership, team-building, and conflict-resolution skills will help you in community building. And within that community, you'll need communication skills that will help you communicate with your group, as well as bartering and trading skills to obtain what you need in a post-disaster economy.

Navigation skills like using maps, GPS, and compasses will also help you navigate unfamiliar terrain.

Embracing lifelong learning with clear goals and hands-on training will help you become more resilient in the face of adversity.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPAREDNESS

A lot of preppers prepare physically but don't prepare their minds and emotions to handle when SHTF. And most times, if you're not prepared psychologically, your physical preparations will go to waste, as you might not be able to make rational decisions.

Being psychologically prepared means you're mentally and emotionally ready to face adversity and that you can stay resilient in any situation whatsoever. To be a psychologically-prepared prepper means that you don't shy away from the reality that crises can happen. It also means you have the emotional resilience to bounce back when this crisis happens without getting hit by long-term psychological trauma. It means you have great stress management skills and that you're able to maintain a positive outlook and adapt to new circumstances that a crisis might cause.

Being psychologically prepared is a plus to you because it is only when you're mentally prepared that you won't be impulsive. Instead, you'll be able to think clearly and make rational decisions under pressure. And since your mind isn't all over the place or overwhelmed with stress, fear, or anxiety, you'll be able to function properly, and even offer creative solutions to problems.

Before you can be mentally prepared, you need to learn about how disasters and emergencies affect our psychological health. Ignorance is not bliss in this case, and knowing means you won't be surprised when it happens. You need to be aware of your mental state too; know and validate your emotions and feelings, and don't try to pretend you're fine

when you're clearly emotionally distressed. Start practicing positive self-talk now. We can be our own greatest friend, or sometimes our greatest enemy, and what you say to yourself can either make things worse or make you view things more objectively.

You should also have stress management strategies in place for when you're stressed: do you take a walk or go to sleep? Do you meditate or engage in one of the things you're passionate about, like gardening? Social self-care is also a thing, so having a group of like-minded friends you can talk to when you're anxious or worried, and discussing your worries and fears with them, is good for your mental health.

Drills are the one constant thing in both physical preparedness and psychological preparedness. Not only do they help you get better at handling these kinds of situations, but they help you become more confident in yourself and familiarize your mind with such high-pressure situations.

Most of all, embrace hope. Hoping that things will be better, that you will not only survive but thrive, will help you stay mentally and emotionally strong in adverse scenarios.

EVACUATION AND BUG-OUT PLANS

In preparing for the worst-case scenarios, you shouldn't only have supplies and skills, though those are crucial. You should also have a well-thought-out evacuation or bug-out plan for when SHTF and you have to leave your home. For example, if natural disasters or civil unrest occur and make staying at home a dangerous prospect or if you live in a fire-prone area—or whatever other scenario comes to your mind—having a bug-out plan becomes a matter of life and death. In these cases, not having a bug-out plan is a grave mistake you don't want to make.

To build your bug-out plan, you need to assess the potential risks in your region, like a hurricane or flood, and then tailor your plan accordingly. Then if you're bugging out, you should be moving in somewhere. Wandering around should only happen in extreme cases. In short, you should have a secure destination in mind, whether a friend or family member's house, a remote cabin, or a pre-established bug-out location.

Most times, bugging out is done hurriedly, and a few lapses, like going back to pick up a member of the family or something else, can be dire. To avoid this, ensure every member of your bug-out team or family knows the plan. You can practice drills beforehand so everyone knows what to do and what routes to take. Also, plan for the evacuation of your pets and livestock, including their food and shelter.

Also, plan different bug-out routes in case any of the routes become compromised, and you'll have another to take and avoid being trapped. Also, consider backroads and alternate paths, as major highways can become congested. If possible, stash supplies along these routes to resupply in case your supply is finished, or create a temporary shelter.

Don't forget your bug-out bag as it's very important if you don't want to end up hungry, thirsty, tired, and unsheltered from the harsh weather. Make sure your bug-out bag contains the essentials: food, water, clothing, first-aid supplies, etc., including your important documents (especially if it's a fire or flood issue). Then check your bug-out bag and refresh it regularly, making sure all equipment in it is functional.

You can also have a bug-out vehicle ready. No matter what kind of vehicle it is, it must be able to carry you, your family (or bug-out team), and supplies. And you and every member of your group should have a list of important contacts, including emergency services. Also, make sure you have reliable communication tools so you can keep up-to-date with local news and emergency alerts.

When making a bug-out plan, keep your location and plan discreet to avoid potential threats, and determine how you'll handle encounters with people during the evacuation process.

A bug-out plan isn't static, so prepare for unforeseen circumstances, regularly reassess your plan, and make necessary adjustments based on current circumstances and local risks.



STAYING INFORMED AND UPDATED

Another important part of preparedness that should become your habit is staying informed and updated on the latest events and news. Staying informed will give you enough knowledge to make well-informed decisions during a crisis.

Staying updated means you get early warnings about potential threats, which will help you decide when to stay put, bug out, or take other protective actions. That way, you'll also be able to manage your resources efficiently and ration your supplies based on how long it seems the crisis will last.

However, try to avoid echo chambers that only reinforce existing beliefs instead of sharing new information, and also don't rely on a single news outlet but diversify your information sources. That way you'll be able to separate legit information from false. You can get quick updates if you follow the social media accounts of local government agencies, credible news outlets, and emergency services. Or you can install news apps on your phone and set up notifications for breaking news.

If your local area is at risk of natural disasters like hurricanes, storms, or floods, then you need to stay informed about weather conditions so you won't be caught off guard. You can also choose to join or create a community of like-minded preppers and share and verify information.

However, when it comes to staying updated, there's such a thing as information overload, which can end up in misinformation and paranoia. Think of the story of Chicken Little who kept shouting "The sky is falling." Don't be an alarmist like Chicken Little, and always verify the information before you disseminate it or before you take action so that you don't panic and make bad decisions. Lastly, base your fear on real facts, not mere speculation.

As you stay updated, use the information to react to threats effectively and to protect your safety and that of your loved ones.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY

Most times, we're focused on doing things all by ourselves. Many of us are even attracted to the idea of self-sufficiency because it suggests independence. But prepping for survival as a community is the best, and although you might not know it now, having people around you who think like you will help you do much better than you'd do on your own.

Individual preparedness is great, but prepping as a community is much better. Sometimes you might experience emergencies unique to you alone and you'll need your community to fall back on. You'll gain a lot more knowledge and resources from being a part of a close-knit community, and you'll even have access to people with skills that you might not have yourself. And you might also be able to learn new skills that you'd have had to pay to learn if you were on your own.

No matter how resilient you might be, there are times when you'll still need to rely on emotional support to get back on your feet. When someone tells you they understand and that they love what you're doing, you will have new motivation to move forward. Individual resilience is great, but as a community, you can withstand challenges together, ensuring that no one is left behind. Having neighbors you can rely on and a sense of togetherness will strengthen the resolve of every single member.

Whatever benefits you can think of that are associated with survival prepping, you'll experience them multiple-fold as a member of a close-knit prepping community. Coupled with support, resilience, knowledge, and a sense of belonging, your neighbors can be your best allies.

STAYING COMMITTED TO PREPAREDNESS

You've started your self-reliant journey, and you've acquired the knowledge that will help you thrive on this journey, but when the going gets tough, will you be among the tough that gets going?

Many challenges come with being a prepper. When the going gets tough, it is also what got you started that will motivate you to carry on. You didn't start survival prepping just because others were doing it. You most likely decided to be a prepper because you want a self-reliant and free lifestyle, or you want the ability to protect yourself and your family, or you want to face challenges that come your way.

No matter what, you still want to fulfill that goal, so instead of being worried about what you're facing at the moment, why don't you focus on what the future holds for you, and how happy you will be if a challenge comes your way and you find that it can't overwhelm you? Now hold on to that happy thought.

To stay committed, you should also regularly put what you've learned into practice. As you practice regularly and get better, your progress will motivate you to stay committed. Also, you won't want to give up, as you won't want all the time and practice to go to waste.

Most times, when we feel tempted to give up, it is the people around us who will hold us up and offer us the strength and fortitude to bear things to the end. This is another reason why you need a community of like-

minded preppers. They will motivate you to stay committed to the journey.

Challenges are an integral part of life, but you're not just anybody, you're a prepper. You're ready for whatever comes your way; you don't let your challenges become stumbling blocks. Instead, you turn them into steppingstones because that's who you are. Stay committed to survival prepping, and you'll not only be a survivor, you'll thrive, living life on your own terms.

WORKBOOK NINE

| Survival Preparedness Goal | Skills Needed for the Goal | Learning Duration |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
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If your goal is self-defense, then you know you probably need skills in using firearms, hand-to-hand combat, and the like. Determine how long it will take you to master the skill(s) you choose.

Weekly schedule for learning each skill

You already know how long it will take you to master each skill. Now, include it in your schedule so you can meet your targeted duration.

TAKEAWAY NINE

Starting the survival prepping journey is important, but staying committed is equally important. From this chapter, you can see that the ways to stay committed are to continue your learning process, be resilient and adaptable, gain more skills, prepare psychologically, stay informed, and embrace the support of a community. You've also learned how to bug out in the direst of circumstances. At this point, here's to you thriving as a survival prepper.

CONCLUSION

Disaster doesn't just come all of a sudden; there are warning signs, a whirlwind here, a quiet rumbling in the distance there. Life is unpredictable and disasters are normal. What makes us different is that we don't sit still and watch things happen to us. We take charge of our lives and face these challenges head-on. We're no damsels in distress waiting for Prince Charming to save us, we are Princess Merida fighting our own battles ourselves. We prepare for everything and anything.

If you've learned one thing from this book, it's that being prepared is a superpower that can help you when SHTF. If you've always wanted to be a survival prepper but are on a tight budget, this book has made you realize that you can make the most of the little you have.

We've gone through physical preparedness and emotional preparedness, and now you have the tools to survive any scenario that comes your way. What's left to do now is to use these tools. Remember, I said you should always put what you've learned into practice because it's only by doing that that you can be confident in your skills as a survival prepper.

You've learned about the prepper's mindset, so embrace it. You've set goals and drawn a plan. Now is the time to act.

If you've enjoyed this book and it has offered valuable insight that you believe will help you prep for survival successfully, kindly leave a review and share your thoughts with others. Let's start a community of like-minded preppers together and amplify the whispers of preparation

so that we can all be ready to face whatever challenges may come our way.

THANK YOU

Thank you so much for purchasing my book.

You could have picked from dozens of other books, but you took a chance and chose this one.

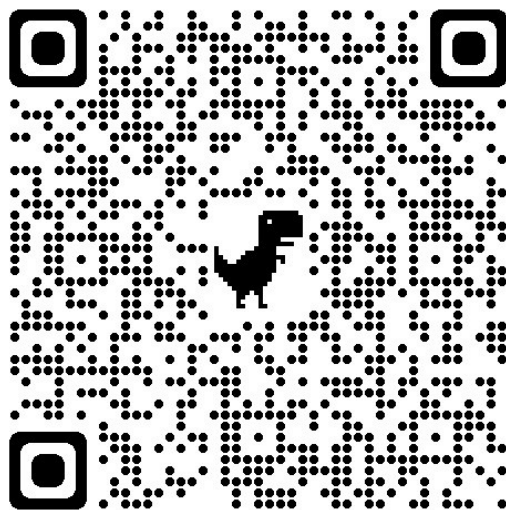
So THANK YOU for getting this book and for making it all the way to the end and letting us be part of your preparedness arsenal.

Before you gear up for your next endeavor, could I ask for a favor? Your review on this platform is like a beacon for fellow preppers, guiding them to valuable resources. Plus it helps small independent authors like me.

In the survival community, every bit of support matters. Your feedback not only helps my work but contributes to the collective knowledge that empowers individuals like you. Your voice is crucial in this journey and I will be honored to hear your thoughts.

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