THE ANYWHERE HOMESTEAD SERIES

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# WHICH FOOD PRESERVATION METHOD IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

**EVERY METHOD HAS STRENGTHS. THE BEST ONE DEPENDS ON YOUR BUDGET, SPACE, GOALS, AND LIFESTYLE.**

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# GETTING STARTED

## THERE'S A COMMON BELIEF THAT IN ORDER TO PRESERVE FOOD, YOU HAVE TO LEARN **ALL** OF THE METHODS.

But in reality, this all-or-nothing mentality is incredibly limiting and a major deterrent in people taking the steps to learn a single food preservation method.

There are many reasons why someone might want to learn only one or two methods:

- *Time Limitations:* Certain preservation methods require a few hours of hands-on work and monitoring.
- *Budget Restrictions:* All methods require an investment, ranging from a few dollars to thousands for specialized equipment.
- *Storage Limitations:* Machines, equipment/supplies, and finished products all require storage space, so living in smaller spaces can impose limits on where items can be stored.
- *Lack of Interest:* Some methods simply don't appeal to everyone.

# GETTING STARTED

Each one of those reasons are valid, which is why we believe that taking the time to research and explore a single method is a perfect place to start.

This guide is intended to help you learn more about the four preservation methods we utilize on our homestead:

- Mylar Bagging
- Dehydrating
- Canning (Water Bath and Pressure)
- Freeze-Drying

Our goal is to help you understand what type of foods each method works best for and discover which method you can begin to implement in your home.

There is no need to learn every food preservation method. The most important factor is learning about the different methods, deciding what you would like to preserve, and using a method that meets your specific interests, needs, and lifestyle.

# ALL METHODS AT A GLANCE

This table is a basic overview of the different types of preservation methods we practice and teach. As you can see, there is a wide range of associated costs, difficulties, and food types that can be stored using these methods.

| METHOD | COST | SHELF-LIFE | STOAGE SPACE | DIFFICULTY | BEST FOR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mylar Bagging | Low | 2-30 years | Small | Beginner | Dry goods, bulk grains |
| Dehydrating | Low | 1-5 years | Small | Beginniner | Herbs, fruit, snacks |
| Water Bath Canning | Moderate | 1-2 years | Medium | Beginner | Jams, pickles, sauces |
| Pressure Canning | Moderate | 2-5 years | Medium | Moderate | Meats, soups, veggies |
| Freeze-Drying | High | 25-30 years | Medium | Moderate | All food types |

# MYLAR BAGGING

The first food storage method we learned was dry food storage using Mylar bags. It was beginner-friendly, didn't require specialized skills or pricey equipment, and was simple to do indoors.

Mylar bagging involves storing low-fat, low-moisture dry goods (like pasta, flour, etc.) in long-term storage bags. The term "Mylar" refers to a BPA-free, food-grade polyethylene film that coats an internal layer of aluminum to protect contents from light, moisture, and oxygen. When sealed properly, this method can keep food fresh anywhere from 2 years to indefinitely.

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| **Best For:**<br>Dry Goods<br>Long-Term Pantry Storage |
| **Advantages:**<br>Affordable<br>Signficantly Extends Shelf-Life |
| **Things to Consider:**<br>Requires Proper Sealing<br>Storage Conditions Matter |

Learn more with our Mylar Bag Storage Guide.

# DEHYDRATING

Dehydrating is the process of removing moisture from food by exposing it to low, steady heat. By reducing water content, the growth of bacteria, yeast, and mold is inhibited, which extends the food's shelf life. This method is simple, affordable, and effective for preserving fruits, vegetables, meats, and other high-moisture foods.

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| **Best For:**<br>Herbs & Fruit<br>Lightweight Storage |
| **Advantages:**<br>Affordable Equipment<br>Compact Storage |
| **Things to Consider:**<br>Shorter Shelf-Life than Freeze-Drying<br>Some Texture Changes |

Learn more with our Food Dehydrating Guide.

# CANNING

Canning is a method of food preservation where food is processed and sealed in glass Mason jars with metal lids and rings. Official guidelines state that properly canned food will last at least 12 to 18 months, but in practice, many people safely store canned goods for much longer, provided the seal is intact and the food shows no signs of spoilage.

We strongly recommend beginning with water bath canning. It's less technical, doesn't require a big investment up front, and gives you a chance to practice the basics of canning like sterilizing jars, checking for seals, and following recipes before moving on to pressure canning.

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| **Best For:**<br>Jams, Pickles, & Acidic Foods (Water Bath)<br>Meats, Vegetables, & Complete Meals (Pressure) |
| **Advantages:**<br>Shelf-Stable<br>Great for Preparedness |
| **Things to Consider:**<br>Lots of Hands-On Time<br>Initial Equipment Investment |

Learn more with our Canning Guide.

# FREEZE-DRYING

Freeze-drying is a method of preserving food using a specialized machine called a freeze dryer. The process involves first freezing the food, then applying a vacuum to remove moisture through sublimation. Compared to traditional dehydrating, freeze-drying retains up to 95% of a food's nutrients, making it one of the most effective methods for preserving the nutritional quality of fruits, vegetables, and even complete meals.

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| **Best For:**<br>Long-Term Storage<br>Texture & Nutrient Preservation |
| **Advantages:**<br>Extremely Long Shelf-Life<br>Excellent Quality |
| **Things to Consider:**<br>Expensive Equipment<br>Long-Cycle Times |

Learn more with our Freeze-Drying Guide.

# FINAL THOUGHTS

## THERE IS A WIDE VARIETY OF FOOD PRESERVATION METHODS FOR YOU TO CHOOSE FROM.

In this resource, we covered our four favorite food preservation methods that we learned as inexperienced beginners. We have chosen to learn and utilize a variety of methods because we want to have a variety of ingredients and complete meals available for emergencies or just for day-to-day use.

This approach works for us and our lifestyle. That is the key point when it comes to preserving food: recognizing what your specific needs are and adopting the method(s) that work best for you.

There is no one-size-fits-all method or requirement in food preservation and we hope this guide has provided clarity in a few of the different options available to you.

When you are ready to dig deeper into a preservation method, we have linked our beginner-friendly guides in each section. These guides include all you need to know to get started preserving food, no previous experience required.