

Emergency Cooking

There are many situations where a family would need to prepare food without the availability of common utilities.

These include:

1. Getting stranded while traveling due to a vehicle breakdown, severe weather, road closure, etc.
2. During a short-term emergency where either an evacuation occurs or shelter in place is required while there is a power outage.
3. During a longer-term emergency after a major disaster where significant time passes before utilities are restored.

The first consideration is what will be cooked?

- In a short-term emergency, this should be food in a family's 72-hour kit.
 - You could choose to store food for your 72-hour kit that does not require cooking or is relatively easy to cook such as freeze-dried food that only requires boiling water or MRE food which can be warmed with chemical cookers.
 - For short-term cooking, camping stoves using alcohol, propane, or white gas could be used. Alternately, Dutch ovens could be used with charcoal or wood as fuel or propane barbecue grill. Emergency food and an alcohol or backpacking stove could be carried in the trunk of your car for roadside emergencies and even used to feed your family when traveling and you want to save money.
 - The LDS church advises in a handout titled "All is Safely Gathered In" to store a 3 month' supply of food that is part of your normal daily diet. This would include canned and packaged goods, as well as items with a longer shelf-life like flour, wheat, rice and beans.
- For longer term emergencies procuring fuel is problematic. If your home has a wood stove, firewood can be stored. Cooking over an open fire is inefficient and dangerous both from the risk of starting a fire as well as from the smoke. A better option is a rocket stove where fuel is burned in a simple combustion chamber containing an insulated vertical chimney, which ensures almost complete combustion prior to the flames' reaching the cooking surface. Another option is a biomass stove, either a forced air or gasifier stove that increases efficiency and reduces smoke and fuel consumption. Some stoves have thermoelectric generators that power a fan and provide electricity for powering other devices.
 - Other options are thermal stoves where a pot containing food to be cooked is initially heated then insulated to retain its heat and while continuing to cook without more fuel. This works like a crock pot or slow cooker. Another viable alternative in this area is solar cooking which does not require any fuel.
- Relatively easy things to store and cook include: canned food, pancakes, rolled oats, pasta, and rice. Wheat can be boiled to make wheat berries which requires much less fuel and skill than baking bread. Dry beans store well but require a long time to cook and correspondingly more fuel.

Provident living and being prepared requires thoughtful planning, preparation and practice. There are many viable options and what works best for you depends on your skill, experience and family preferences. During an extended emergency, families experience stress and hardship from living without the comforts derived from our utilities and appliances. Having familiar food well cooked and nutritious can go a long way to provide comfort and a feeling of well-being amidst tragedy.