

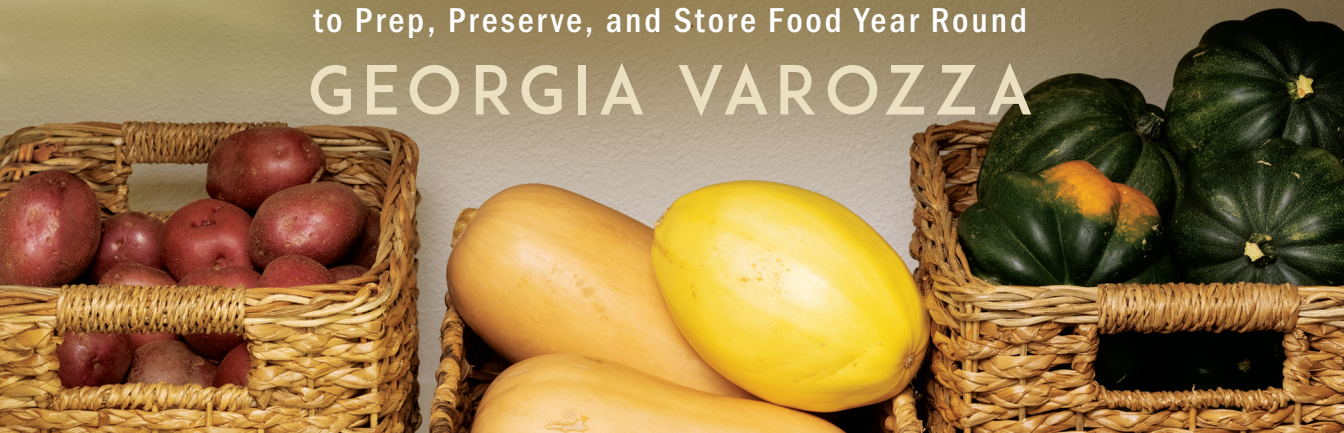


# THE HOMESTEAD WINTER PANTRY



Sustainable and Budget-Friendly Recipes  
to Prep, Preserve, and Store Food Year Round

GEORGIA VAROZZA





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*For Matthew—  
You loosed the surly bonds of earth far too soon. I miss you.*

*For Paula—  
Thank you for all your help.  
It's cliché, but I couldn't have done it without you!*

*For Walker and Sara—  
Your goodness to me is so appreciated.  
I love you guys!*









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## INTRODUCTION

# WHY A WINTER PANTRY?

**W**hen summer is upon us and the days are warm, it might be difficult to contemplate winter weather, but that's exactly when we should be thinking about such things. A bit of organizing and preparing now can save us worries in the future when a quick trip to the store for necessities might be impossible, so having the ability to "shop" at home makes good sense.

I continually maintain a storage of food supplies, water, nonelectric light, and a method to cook and heat that isn't tied to the power grid. I try to keep my vehicle at least half full of gas, and I make sure to put away extra food for my animals. We live in the country, and we are just about guaranteed to lose our power several times throughout the year, so being prepared is a way of life for us.

It's January as I'm writing this. If you could look outside my window, you'd see nothing but white—the result of a snowstorm immediately followed by an ice storm. For three days now, we have been forced to stay home because the roads are a deadly sheet of ice, and the forecast is calling for another ice storm to hit by tomorrow morning. The power is out. Schools and stores are closed, and there are no plans yet for anything to open in the next day or two. The only sounds we hear are the crack of tree limbs breaking (and sometimes whole trees by the sounds of it) under the weight of the ice. Keeping ourselves warm, our bodies fueled, and our livestock and pets fed and watered is a treacherous job.

This area has been my home for forty years, and I've never seen the weather bring us to such an abrupt and lengthy halt. It's weirdly serendipitous that I'm experiencing such an extraordinary weather event at the same time I'm writing a book about stocking your winter pantry. Thankfully, we're prepared.



The title of this book is *The Homestead Winter Pantry*, but the need for a stash of necessities can happen anytime and isn't necessarily weather related. My aim here isn't to write a "prepper" type tome, but rather a commonsense, easy-to-implement book that helps families think about the what ifs and confidently navigate unexpected disruptions to daily living. Do a bit of research to ascertain what risks are associated with your area and plan accordingly, but here is a list to help you start thinking about potential hazards:

- Weather—blizzards, flooding, hurricanes, etc.
- Power outages
- Wildfires
- Recession or loss of employment
- Earthquakes and tsunamis
- Chain-of-supply disruptions and transportation difficulties
- Pandemics
- Social unrest and riots
- Solar flares

Planning for our winter needs will provide confidence and peace because we'll know we can feed and care for our families when uncertain times hit. I know that's true for my family. And because we *are* prepared, we are getting through this current ice storm in relative comfort. Yes, it's quite a change from our normal routine, but we're making the best of the situation.

## **How the Book Is Organized**

The first part of the book will concentrate on the big picture and how to prepare for emergencies. Hopefully, it will bring awareness to any gaps in your ability to stay safe and carry on when misfortune hits.

The second part of the book will be the fun part—pantry essentials, bulk mixes, tasty recipes that take advantage of the season (and take advantage of our pantries that we've organized and filled with good things!), and a resource page to help you find the food and tools that will make life easier.

My hope is that you gain a clearer perspective on how to become a bit more self-reliant should disaster come knocking on your door...or even if it's just a wee detour from your daily schedule. It's nice to be prepared!





PART ONE

THE BIG  
PICTURE



**D**ay-to-day living keeps us busy. We work, take care of our loved ones, stay in touch with friends and family, maintain our homes and possessions, and pursue our interests and hobbies. We pay bills, go to the doctor, and worry about our jobs and taxes. At the end of most days we fall, exhausted, into bed, sleep less than we should, and then get up and do it all over again. There's just so much to do!

So why on earth would we voluntarily choose to add more to the mix by planning and preparing for lean times or emergencies? For me, the answer is easy: I love knowing that my family can navigate the unexpected and will be just fine. And even more, I love having an active hand in those preps. I garden, can, and dehydrate the produce, I buy meat and poultry in bulk to pressure can and freeze, and I keep chickens for eggs. It's a good life.

Over the years, I've given thought to what's important in life, and my answer varies depending on what I'm currently experiencing. But when I contemplate emergency situations, I hone in on the basics: heat, light, shelter, water, and food.

Now, since this is a book titled *The Homestead Winter Pantry*, I'll focus on what we need to store to comfortably see our families through a winter without the need to leave the home, and I'll offer up tasty recipes that will take advantage of the season.

But first, let's touch on those basics—heat, light, shelter, water, and food—because when an emergency hits, you don't want to be caught unaware. Hopefully, thinking about these basics will get you started on the road to wintertime (or anytime) self-reliance.

*One last thing:* Keep a notebook handy while you read, and jot down anything that you'd like to pursue. With this convenient list, you'll be able to budget items that you think will be useful given your particular circumstances.









# HEAT AND LIGHT

**W**e need some way to stay warm, have light, and cook our food. It's all fine until the power goes out, isn't it? Suddenly, you're without the ability to prepare a hot meal or keep warm. But a bit of foresight and preparation will see you through. Here are some possibilities:

## Heat

Obviously, if you have a generator, you'll hardly notice that the power is out. Make sure it has been properly installed and serviced and is ready to go well before winter sets in. Don't bring the generator indoors, and remember to have fuel to run it.

Here at the Varozza homestead, we use wood for heat (and for cooking when the power is off!). We go through a lot of wood, so we make sure to have about three cords of seasoned wood on hand at the beginning of winter. It's always smart to fill your woodpile before you need it.

And of course, there's solar heat and natural gas.

But what do you do if you're part of the 40 percent of people whose only source of heat comes from the power grid? You'll need some backup during an outage. First,



**Note: Always have a fire extinguisher and carbon monoxide monitor handy, especially when you are using alternative heat sources.**

wear layers. Layering clothing provides more warmth than wearing one thick layer. Top the layers with a heavy sweater, coat, or blanket. Clothing comprised of wool or silk will be more effective than most types of synthetics.

Keep everyone in one room with the door closed. Close your blinds and curtains, and cover doors and windows with blankets or clothing. Cover heating vents and pay special attention to any places where cold air can sneak inside. If the sun is out, you can open the curtains on south-facing windows to take advantage of solar gain. Just be sure it's making a warming difference in the house. If you have a tent, bring it inside and have the family sleep together to help retain body heat.

You can also purchase portable propane heaters that are safe to use indoors. I tried a popular brand and found that the initial cost wasn't prohibitive, but the cost of the propane canisters added up in a hurry. Still, during really cold weather, these types of heaters are useful. Even though they are rated as safe to use indoors, place the heater near a window that has been slightly cracked open when using.

If you have a way to heat water, fill a hot water bottle and place it on your stomach; be careful that you don't accidentally burn your skin. Most of our heat loss is through the skin that's exposed to the elements, so it makes sense to cover yourself completely. Wear socks, gloves or mittens, and a hat or scarf you can wrap around your head.

Maybe some of you have read about or heard of a DIY mini heater that pairs a terra-cotta flowerpot with a smaller flowerpot saucer? The saucer should be just big enough to hold about four tea lights, and the idea is that it can heat a very small area.

You place the saucer right side up on nonflammable material on the floor or other suitable surface. Next, stack one or two bricks (or some other fire-resistant block) on either side of the saucer so they are a bit higher than the top of the saucer sides. The goal is to invert



the pot over the saucer, resting the inverted pot on the bricks with several inches of space between the top of the saucer sides and the bottom edge of the pot. Essentially, you've made a domed chamber. Add about four tea light candles to the saucer and light them. The heat moves up, and the inverted terra-cotta pot "catches" the heat to warm the immediate area.

I decided to experiment and found that while it did throw out heat, it wasn't much, and I needed to stay very close to the pot. It certainly didn't heat even the small room I was in, but it did eventually raise the temperature several degrees in the immediate area. I also watched it like a hawk because it was an open flame, which made me nervous, and I concluded that I wouldn't be comfortable using this around kids or pets. But I've read that some folks have used it under extreme circumstances such that they feared they would freeze to death otherwise. My suggestion? Figure out another alternate heat source before the need arises. (I added the information here because it keeps showing up online, and I wanted to give you fair warning if you're contemplating this.)

## Cooking

Cooking during an outage might be problematic as well. If you have a barbeque grill or camp stove, you're set. Just make sure you have a good supply of propane or charcoal ready to go. You can also buy small emergency stoves that use canned fuel. I've seen them for sale for as low as ten dollars, so if the budget is tight, these are a great choice. Just keep in mind that these stoves are tiny, so you won't be cooking large amounts of food with them. But heating up a couple cans of soup or something similar is totally doable. I've used (with success) the Emergency Zone Fold Flat Aluminum Stove; it retails for closer to twenty-five dollars but comes with four fuel canisters. Again, you won't be cooking meals for a family with it, but you'll be able to take care of basic cooking needs.

Solar ovens are another great option, and they really do work

(although not on cloudy or rainy days, alas). When I use a solar oven, I make sure to be available during the cooking process because as the sun moves through the sky I need to periodically turn the oven so it directly faces the sun at all times. This ensures that the oven stays hot enough to thoroughly cook the food.

If you're cooking for a family (although it will work for one or two folks just as easily), the All-American Sun Oven can't be beat. The Sun Oven can bake biscuits, bread, and cookies, roast a whole chicken or small turkey, cook stews, casseroles, and vegetables, pasteurize water, and reach temperatures of up to 400° on a clear day. There is a self-leveling rack inside that holds your cooking pots upright, so you don't have to worry about tipping.

Other popular solar ovens are GoSun portable ovens, the Haines 2.0 SunUp Solar Cooker and Dutch Oven, and the SolCook All Season Solar Cooker.

## Light

I'm a devoted fan of lanterns and use them regularly. But during a power outage, their cachet rises considerably in my estimation. A couple of things to know:

***High-quality lanterns*** work far better than the cheap ones you can get at most local stores, and they give off more light and less smoke. In fact, high-quality lanterns can shine as bright as an electric bulb. For years I used Aladdin lamps and loved them. But there was one issue for me—they hiss when lit. My son loves Aladdin lamps, and the noise doesn't bother him. He appreciates the bright light and the ease of locating spare parts. I ended up giving him my Aladdins and have switched to lanterns that are made in the French Alps. Because it's *not* easy to get replacement parts, I keep extras on hand and treat them with care. Keep in mind that inexpensive oil lanterns work just fine if you're simply wanting to stave off total darkness. I should also note that there are lanterns made specifically for outdoor use, as they



don't blow out in breezy conditions. Dietz lanterns are great for barn work.

***Quality lamp oil*** is a must. You can burn all sorts of oils in your lanterns including olive and palm kernel oils, but the mainstays are kerosene and paraffin because they are clean burning. Some lamp oils add scent, but unless you're planning on using your lanterns outside and want added citronella to keep mosquitoes at bay, stay away from those types. Same with colored oils, as they can stain your lantern over time. Whatever you use, keep your supply tightly covered (paraffin especially tends to evaporate) and in a safe place away from food, kids, and animals.

***Candles*** are inexpensive, easily stored, and provide gentle light. Just make sure you have matches or lighters. The very cheapest candles have problems with smoke and soot buildup on the wicks, so spend an extra dollar or two and get decent candles. You'll be glad you did.

***Flashlights*** are probably the most common alternate light source, but I confess that I don't have one because it seems the battery is dead whenever I need to use it and I scramble to find fresh batteries. But if flashlights are your go-to, always have a supply of extra batteries and you'll be fine.