



NATIONAL GUARD  
**FMAP**

Financial Management Awareness Program

# Financial Frontline

[www.JointServicesSupport.org/FMAP](http://www.JointServicesSupport.org/FMAP)

Hello! Below is the weekly Financial Frontline Information for the week of 9 November 2012. This information is to provide you – the Soldier, airman, veteran, retiree, family member or supporter of our armed forces with financial readiness information. It does not replace the advice of your chain of command, your legal counsel or financial consultant. It does however, supplement issues the National Guard Bureau finds important.

## Thanksgiving Day.

It is hard to believe that in two weeks, Thanksgiving Day will have come and went. The Redskins, Detroit and Patriots all will have lost and the Bears will prepare to hand the Vikings another loss that upcoming Sunday and most of us will be at some overcrowded shopping center looking for a black Friday deal. But did you know? Families across America waste nearly 25% of all food prepared on Thanksgiving. I am by far the most frugal person in the world. And quite honestly, we all "thank" Norman Rockwell. It was his vision that Thanksgiving should involve turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce, and green beans, it doesn't mean you're obligated to make any of those dishes—especially if they've gone uneaten before. Cranberry sauce. That is my favorite. Seriously. Have you ever had a Thanksgiving Day without a can of cranberry sauce with all those ridges sitting on your table? I haven't. My mother was an excellent cook. Maybe not Betty Crocker but if she would have spent hours making fresh cranberries, no one would have eaten them and for .99 cents, eat the can. Here are some financial tips to consider to scale back to save money, and prevent food from being wasted unnecessarily.

While Thanksgiving meals are traditionally about abundance, in tough economic times focusing on a couple of side dishes to go along with the turkey is a surefire way to reduce your grocery bill. Pick recipes that require just a few common ingredients that you probably already have in the house. Avoid complicated casserole and side dishes that call for expensive, exotic spices like saffron. What is that stuff anyway?

Now, let's talk turkey, probably the single most expensive item on your holiday menu. Despite the hype surrounding "fresh" turkey, a frozen bird tastes the same and saves you a lot of money. Now my boyfriend will tell you differently. He is a hunter. Or at least he claims to be. It's been 3 years since a kill and still nothing. Zero. I guess he wants to become a vegetarian.

I know, you are looking at your "fine bone china" thinking it's only use on holidays. Did you ever think because of the size of some dinner plates, people often take more than they can—or should—eat. By using smaller dinner plates, guests will finish all of their food, and can easily go back for seconds. It's a good way to cut down on food waste, and an especially good idea for kids, who may take two bites of stuffing before abandoning the dinner table to go play with their cousins or watching Dallas beat the Redskins.

As for your fruits and vegetables, go to the nearest farmer's market to stock up on tasty seasonal and local produce for your feast.



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As for the decorations, it's easy to make Thanksgiving decorations cheap and easy without looking like you've spent your entire life shopping at your neighbor's garage sale. Look no further than your supermarket or backyard. For centerpieces and table settings, gather natural materials such as branches, gourds, pinecones and beautiful autumn leaves. Not only will it create less waste, but you'll also have fewer items to store, since everything is disposable and biodegradable. I'm not a tree hugger, but I too went to Kindergarten and at one time in my life made decorations with leaves and pine cones.

Skipping appetizers is a good penny-pinching strategy, too. Since it's a given that diners will stuff themselves on the main course, avoid the effort and expense of preparing costly canapés.

If you are one of those families that has 40 aunts, uncles and cousins spreading the work out makes it easier and cheaper for the host family without lessening the food to share. Besides, you'll have the added benefit of oohing and aahing over each other's dishes and learning new recipes. Asking guests to bring dessert or wine not only eases your financial burden but also makes your guests feel like they're contributing to the success of the holiday gathering. After three days of turkey sandwiches, it's easy to let leftovers linger in the fridge too long while you decide on a novel way to use them. Before you know it, they've spoiled, and you have to throw them out—a waste of food and money. Look up some Thanksgiving leftover recipes before the feast, and plan out a whole week's worth of meals in advance to use up every last bit of your leftovers.

With the oven full of turkey and a house full of guests, there's plenty of warmth to go around—so turn down your thermostat a few degrees for the Thanksgiving meal. Conserve energy and create ambiance by turning off the lights and setting out candles.

For the last word, remember, Thanksgiving is all about celebrating with friends and family and being grateful for all the blessings in your life. It shouldn't be about cooking "the perfect meal" or having "the perfect house" when everyone comes over. Doing that does nothing but run you ragged! Relax and have fun with Thanksgiving this year. It doesn't have to be perfect! And the more you plan in advance, the more you're going to end up saving.

## **Emergency Preparedness**

As I write this, I am thoughtful of those in New Jersey and New York. As of today, some people have been without electricity for over 8 days. The days are shorter, and colder. Please keep our service men and women in these areas, and those responders - our National Guard Soldiers, police, fire and rescue and electric company workers in your thoughts. Preparedness is an important investment against natural and man-made disasters. It buys the humanitarian community valuable time to respond more effectively and gives vulnerable people a buffer against the repeated crises which strip away their resilience and push them deeper into poverty. What is most troubling, I am not talking about a refugee camp in Sudan. I am talking about our own country. While many of our National Guard Service members have been activated at one point or another in their career, many support natural disasters. Although we cannot dictate when a natural disaster can and will occur, we can at least be financially and emotionally prepared for one. It means we can use our limited resources as wisely and effectively as possible to stop a bad situation from becoming worse. As our changing climate means more frequent extreme weather, it is ever more important that we can both raise a warning flag and be ready to respond to it. Otherwise, the threat of hunger, disease, poverty and conflict is multiplied. With good information, strategic thinking and careful planning we can work together to save lives and livelihoods.



We have been counseled for many years to be prepared for adversity. Preparation, both temporally and emotionally, individuals and families should prepare to be self-reliant in times of personal or widespread emergency. We are encouraged to prepare a simple emergency plan. Items to consider may include:

- Three-month supply of food that is part of your normal daily diet.
- Drinking water.
- Financial reserves.
- Longer-term supply of basic food items.
- Medication and first aid supplies.
- Clothing and bedding.
- Important documents.
- Ways to communicate with family following a disaster.

I encourage you wherever you may live in the world to prepare for adversity by looking to the condition of your finances. I urge you to be modest in your expenditures; discipline yourselves in your purchases to avoid debt. ... If you have paid your debts and have a financial reserve, even though it be small, you and your family will feel more secure. Spending less money than you make is essential to your financial security. Avoid debt, with the exception of buying a modest home or paying for education or other vital needs. If you are in debt, pay it off as quickly as possible. Some useful tools in becoming debt free are a debt-elimination calendar and a family budget worksheet. Distinguish between your needs and wants. We must learn to distinguish between wants and needs. We should be modest in our wants. It takes self-discipline to avoid the "buy now, pay later" philosophy and to adopt the "save now and buy later" practice. All too often a family's spending is governed more by their yearning than by their earning. They somehow believe that their life will be better if they surround themselves with an abundance of things. All too often all they are left with is avoidable anxiety and distress. We should avoid debt. There is nothing that will cause greater tensions in life than grinding debt, which will make the debtor a slave to creditors. A specific goal, careful planning, and determined self-discipline are required to accomplish this. I hate doing this. It is making a budget. It is much easier said than done. Keep a record of your expenditures. Record and review monthly income and expenses. Determine how to reduce what you spend for nonessentials. Use this information to establish a family budget. Plan what you will save, and what you will spend for food, housing, utilities, transportation, clothing, insurance, and so on. Discipline yourself to stay within your budget plan. A budget worksheet is a useful tool to help you with your plan. Gradually build a financial reserve, and use it for emergencies only. If you save a little money regularly, you will be surprised how much accumulates over time. Teach family members the principles of financial management. Involve them in creating a budget and setting family financial goals. Teach the principles of hard work, frugality, and saving. Stress the importance of obtaining as much education as possible.

One of the most frugal things we can do to lessen expenditures during a crisis is our food supply. We live in complex and perilous times. Whether it is a natural disaster, a national disaster, or a neighborhood disaster, our food supply could be disrupted. In any scenario, it is up to us to take care of our needs and those of our families--we should not count on the government. We buy insurance for our home, our car, and our lives but something as essential as food--we often leave overlooked.

There are other crises as well--personal crises. The loss of a job, a loved one, or one's health might strain personal finances and make a supply of food look very attractive. Whether it is a personal crisis or a community one, we should be able to feed our family and feed them with food that is healthy and that they enjoy eating. In a crisis, our food supply should be a point of comfort and refuge.

There's a certain confidence that goes along with being self-reliant, with preparedness. If we know we have provided for our family--if we know they are safe--we perform better. We're happier and they're happier. We're better parents, citizens, and neighbors and we perform better outside the home.



We hope that you are never faced with a emergency but food storage is not new and it seems that most people who have had long-term food storage have utilized it at least once in the past. Usually, it wasn't because of a public emergency but a personal difficulty of some kind--an economic setback brought about by illness, the loss of a job, or an accident. But times have changed. We expect that community crises--from terrorists to computer failures--will make food storage an even more important issue in the future.

In the Washington DC area during the 2002 sniper shootings, people were running and dodging, taking evasive action between their car and the grocery store. Authorities advised people to make themselves difficult targets. Why would anyone go to the grocery store if they believed they might be shot? People had no choice; they had no food. If people had just a few weeks supply of food on hand, they could have stayed safely at home.

Food storage programs that work are built around one simple principle: Store what you eat and eat what you store. Store what you like, what you know how to fix, and what your bodies are accustomed to. When an emergency comes, we will want to disrupt our eating patterns as little as possible. Most of what we eat today, from main dishes, to breads, to desserts, can be accommodated with storage items. Store them.

Eat what you store. All foods deteriorate over time. They become less palatable and the vitamin content decreases. If you don't use your food, you will throw it out. Surveys have shown that people regularly overestimate how long food lasts. Governmental and university experts publish shelf lives much shorter than what some manufacturers and individuals suggest. The best way to assure that you will have a good supply of food in an emergency is to regularly eat what you store, using it before it becomes marginal, and replace it. Eating what you store is not a challenge if you store what you like to eat.

#### Five Easy Steps to a Food Storage Program that Works

1. Determine what you like to eat. Make a list of what you are eating now. Start with your grocery list or grocery receipts. Look in your pantry. These foods are what you want to store. Storing foods that your family likes to eat--not trying to persuade your family to like what you store--is the key to practical food storage. Fundamentally changing what your family likes to eat is not a realistic expectation. While it may be true that "if our kids get hungry enough, they'll eat anything," who wants to put their children through that kind of misery? In a hardship, we want to maintain our routines and habits as much as possible and not stress family members with foods that they do not like or that their bodies are unaccustomed to.

2. Determine how much of what you like to eat is storable. Build your storage program around these items. For those items that are not storable, look for ready substitutes that your family will enjoy. Fresh fruits and vegetables can be complemented with frozen and canned produce. Meats can be purchased on sale or in bulk and frozen. Mixes will readily substitute for the breads, desserts, and snacks you currently buy.

3. Purchase storable foods regularly. Keep your plan simple and affordable but buy storable foods regularly. Every week, every pay period, or every month buy something that you can store. You will be surprised how fast your stocks build. Buy items on sale and buy in quantity so that you save money. Think in terms of stocking up, not storing. Replace what you use.

4. Eat what you store. As a general rule, even storable foods need to be used within two years. The FDA suggests that canned goods be consumed within two years. Using your stocks regularly will keep your food fresher, tastier, and more nutritious.



5. Take inventory. From time to time, take inventory. You will be reminded of what you have and surprised at what you don't have. You can then purchase those items you need and use older items while they are still sound.

A personal food storage program saves money in three ways:

1. Stocking up leads to buying in quantity or on sale--often with substantial savings. If we store what we eat and use those foods regularly, we save on everyday food.

2. Foods suitable for storage tend to be less expensive than prepared foods. As we gradually rely more and more on our stocks, we use less prepared food and the average cost of our meals is reduced.

3. Habits and attitudes change with a food storage program. Those that have a personal food storage program tend to be more careful with their food purchases and better utilize the foods they purchase.

Many families find that when they adopt a program of purchasing and using storable foods, their food bill drops substantially--as much as 25%.

We believe that most foods--including the products that we provide--should be used within two years for both palatability and nutritional reasons. Foods stored longer than that, though they may be safe to eat, are less appealing and less nutritious. The only way to build a food storage program that ensures that you will have safe, palatable, nutritious food on hand in an emergency is to continuously rotate stocks.

Our bodies need fat--good fat--and yet most fats are fragile and don't store well. Oil oxidizes and becomes rancid as it ages--a process that is accelerated by heat, light, and oxygen. So store your oil in a cool, dark location and rotate it often.

Assuming that you have stored your valuable food where bugs and water can't reach it, can it still go bad? Well, that depends on your definition of "bad". As stated elsewhere, properly canned or dried foods (if fat free or nearly so) usually do not become unsafe when stored longer than recommended, but palatability and nutrient value are diminished. So while it probably won't go "bad" as in unsafe, it will become less nutritious or less appealing.

All, or nearly all foods, deteriorate over time. Living organisms are designed with self-preservation mechanisms but when they die or are harvested, naturally occurring enzymes cause discoloration, loss of nutrients, textural changes, or flavor changes. We can slow these changes; we can't stop them. Americans (and many other cultures) serve bread with nearly every meal. Meals don't seem complete without some form of bread. No wonder it's called the "staff of life". We believe that bread is a key consideration in any food storage program.

How do you store bread? Some rely on wheat as their source of bread in the event of an emergency. If you are into grinding wheat and baking bread regularly--bravo! The rest of us need a better answer. We don't have time to grind wheat and bake bread, or we haven't acquired those skills, or our families don't like the heavy, dense bread that usually comes from ground wheat. We need a better answer. If the bread that we eat is going to be a key component of our food storage program, then making bread should be quick and convenient. Mixes help. Not only do they save time when time may be a premium, but all the ingredients are available and assembled.

Stored foods often are boring or dry. Boring foods don't work well in a food storage program because they don't get used and eventually become stale. One of your preparedness missions should always be to provide food that you will use and enjoy.





## Did you know?

This weekend we celebrate one of the most important holidays in my book, "Veterans Day". I read some time ago, "If you can read this than thank a teacher. If you can read this in English and not German, thank a Veteran". To all my brothers and sisters in arms, all the families that endured many days, weeks and months of their call to service to defend this great nation – we thank you.

Veterans Day is an official United States holiday honoring armed service veterans. It is a federal holiday that is observed on November 11th. It coincides with other holidays such as Armistice Day or Remembrance Day, which are celebrated in other parts of the world and also mark the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice that ended World War I. (Major hostilities of World War I were formally ended at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 with the German signing of the Armistice.)

Veterans Day is not to be confused with Memorial Day; Veterans Day celebrates the service of all U.S. military veterans, while Memorial Day is a day of remembering the men and women who *died* while serving.

Have you thanked a Veteran today?

## New Useless General Trivia: Are you smarter than a 5<sup>th</sup> Grader?

1. What is the history of the "Ruptured Duck?"
2. How many war veterans are in the United States?
3. What is Armistice Day?
4. Veterans Day is celebrated on 11 November. Why?
5. Who proposed Armistice Day be called Veterans Day?
6. Veterans Day officially acquired its current name in what year?
7. What flower is a symbol of Veterans Day?
8. The motto of the Department of Veterans Affairs is "To care for him who shall have borne the battle." Who originally wrote these words?

**You must answer at least 5 of them correctly to receive a booklet "A Salute to Smart Investing" and some sort of National Guard memorabilia.**

For questions, comments or complaints, don't hesitate to write us here at the National Guard Bureau. I strive to answer everyone timely - I'm human. Until next time...

Respectfully,  
Jennifer

Jennifer Armstrong  
National Guard Bureau  
[Jennifer.armstrong2@us.army.mil](mailto:Jennifer.armstrong2@us.army.mil)

