

## Food Storage: Packing Buckets with Wendy Mae

In planning to take care of my friends and loved ones during turbulent times I have been putting away food for long term storage in food grade 5 and 6 gallon buckets. In times of plenty I've been preparing for times of need, similar to putting away the harvest from the summer months to help carry me through the winter.

Here is a list of what I use to pack food:

- Food items to put into buckets
- Food grade buckets with lids
- Rubber Mallet
- Mylar Bags
- Oxygen Absorbers
- Bay Leaves
- Vacuum Sealer & Bags
- Ziploc Bags
- Notebook & Pen
- Labels & Marker
- Scale
- Scissors
- Scoop
- Funnel



The first bucket I'm going to fill with Corn Berries, which, among other uses, can be ground up to make cornmeal. I set my mylar bag into the bucket and open it up around the sides of the bucket. I then drop into the bottom of the mylar one oxygen absorber with 2 to 3 bay leaves.



For each bucket I pack I will be using 5 - 300cc oxygen absorbers and a small handful of bay leaves. The bay leaves are used to repel bugs and insects from invading my buckets, but will not affect the taste of the food.



Once I open a new package of oxygen absorbers they immediately begin to do their job: absorb oxygen. So, I keep them in a glass jar with a screw on lid to keep them as fresh as possible for use in my buckets.



Now I can start adding my corn. Once I have the bucket about half full, I add my second oxygen absorber and more bay leaves. As I am filling the bucket I occasionally pull up gently on the sides of the mylar bag to allow the food to settle more evenly. I continue to fill the bucket until the corn is about 1 inch from the top. Then I add the third oxygen absorber and some more bay leaves.





At this point I seal the open end of the mylar bag. Most of the time I simply use my vacuum sealer, but I have also used a rolling heat sealer or clamshell heat sealer. The vacuum sealer will not remove the oxygen from the bag, but it works well as a sealer.

In order to get the seal completely across the top of the mylar bag, I have found it works well to seal the corners at an angle with one straight seal at the top. Cutting the excess bag off the corners helps me fit the last seal on the top of the bag. I also try to keep the mylar bag as flat as possible on the heat sealer strip to get a good seal. And before I seal up the bag completely I remove as much of the air that builds up inside it, leaving whatever remains for the oxygen absorbers to take care of.



Now I will simply fold the top of the mylar bag down into my bucket.



Once this is complete I add two more oxygen absorbers and about 6 bay leaves to the bucket before I hammer my lid on. The extra absorbers and bay leaves will remove any remaining air in the bucket and keep away those pesky insects. This step is also precautionary in case my mylar bag does not seal properly or gets punctured.



I use my rubber mallet to hammer the lid on, which I find to be the most fun part of packing a bucket. Then, I weigh the contents of the bucket and record it in a notebook to be added to my [Food Storage Planner](#) at a later time. The last thing I do is write this information down on two sets of labels, along with the date that I packed this bucket. I stick one set on the top of the lid as well as one set on the side of the bucket for easy viewing.





Now my bucket is complete and should last for many years stored this way.

Sometimes I pack a bucket with a variety of items instead of just one item. This gives me the option of opening one bucket, which I can potentially prepare a meal out of. I have even made theme buckets for things like baking, cooking, children, and sweet things.

To keep items separated in my bucket I put them in Ziploc bags and then vacuum seal them. I still use the mylar bag and the same amount of oxygen absorbers in my bucket, but I add the bay leaves to each Ziploc bagged item as well. I have packed items like wheat, beans, lentils, dried pasta, sugar, and flour. I have also made smaller packages using spices, hard candies, and tea bags.

I make up a bunch of both sized bags ahead of time and then arrange them into my buckets when I have a good variety. To keep track of what I have and how much I have I will weigh it and record the contents of each bag on the bag itself, and once they have been placed into the bucket I record it in my notebook. When I start packing my bucket I use the gallon sized bags first and fill in the gaps with the smaller items.



**This bucket was packed with the following items:**

6 lb Corn Berries  
10 lb Great Northern Beans  
6 lb White Kidney Beans  
8 oz. Chili Powder  
6 oz. Caraway Seeds  
5 oz. Cloves  
4 oz Parsley  
1 New Testament

When the bucket is full I seal the mylar bag, add my extra absorbers and bay leaves, and hammer down my lid. Once the labels have been written and placed on the bucket I have once again completed another bucket for storage. Don't forget to have a bucket lid lifter or some other tool available to open your buckets should an emergency arise.

It is a satisfying feeling to put away a bucket of food for my family and me for times of need.

Have fun with your preps!