



Happy Valentine's Day

The month of February has a tradition of being the month of romance. Based primarily on the legend of Bishop Valentine's martyrdom, this tradition has morphed over the centuries. The Roman Emperor, Claudius II, believed that marriage inhibited soldier's focus on defending their nation. So he issued an edict forbidding marriages. Bishop Valentine secretly performed the marriage sacrament for many young lovers. When Claudius learned of this, he had Valentine arrested. During his time in prison, he miraculously restored vision to the jailor's daughter. Their friendship resulted in a farewell note he wrote prior to his execution, signed "from Your Valentine." The 14th of February, his execution date, became a day for all lovers to express their commitment and Valentine became its Patron Saint.

There are other versions of the source of this holiday, including its connection to the mid-February pagan fertility festival. Valentine greetings were popular as far back as the Middle Ages, with written ones appearing in the 1400's. Fast forward to the 1840's when Esther A. Howland began selling the first mass-produced valentines in America. Today, according to the Greeting Card Association, an estimated 1 billion Valentine's Day cards are sent each year, making Valentine's Day the second largest card-sending holiday of the year.

The overall story is about loving one another and expressing those feelings. How much more can you love someone than to encourage them to be self sufficient? Consider sharing your preparedness information and maybe even a meal prepared off the grid. Sun Ovens work on sunny winter days. *Share Your Love*

Ask Billie

Our Question and Answer column, covering topics of interest to our readers.

Liz from VA

Asks: Have you heard the theory that placing a cut onion next to your bed will keep you from getting a cold by absorbing bacteria?

Answer: Dr. Ruth MacDonald as quoted on BestFoodFacts.org says, "No, onions do not absorb bacteria. Since there are bacteria on all things, if left out of refrigeration, an onion would eventually rot from both cell breakdown and bacterial contamination, not because it absorbs germs. Onions do have anti-oxidants that can have health benefits when eaten."

What is your Most Burning Question about Food Storage or Emergency Preparedness? Send your questions to editor@sunoven.com



Billie
Nicholson



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Winter Window Garden

Billie Nicholson

Are you missing green plants this winter? We were and were wondering how we could solve this, when we saw a photo of green onions growing on a window sill. Since onions have been being used for years for health benefits, growing some seemed to be a win-win. Early American settlers, Chinese medicine practitioners, and even the World Health Organization have used onions to treat colds, coughs, and asthma, and to repel insects and maybe a few people, too. Recently, they have been noted to keep blood free of clots and to [kill tumor cells](#). Starting with a recycled plastic juice jug, we cut off the top and drilled drainage holes in the bottom. The plastic was tough, so we started holes with the drill. From the starter holes we used kitchen shears and trimmed out circles less than 1" in diameter. We made three rows, shifting positions so they were not all in a vertical line. A few pebbles went in first followed by planting soil, filling to the first holes. Onion sets (we used Snowball variety) were positioned with tips protruding out the holes. On top we planted a starter pot of thyme. After a good soaking, the jug took it's place on the kitchen window sill. The last photo was taken 1 week later. Onions are sprouting and thyme is much happier, too.



5 Food Storage Lies to Watch Out For

Jeff at LPC Survival

I have noticed a trend over the last few years when it comes to food storage, A lot of companies are claiming anything in order to get your business. I wanted to expose these things as food storage lies, whether intentional or not. At the very least, they are misleading claims, but having received many calls and emails from food storage companies, I had to share this list of what I see as food storage lies or misleading statements when it comes to purchasing long term food storage.

Lie #1: “Our dehydrated pouched Food Storage meals last 25 years.”

The most prolific of all the lies, this one doesn't reveal the fact that the food must be stored at 55 degrees or less at all times. The chances of you storing it at 55 degrees is extremely rare. They don't even put this on their web sites, and won't even tell you on the phone. Once you get the bucket, you will see the fine print. Some may not even have this fact on the bucket when you get it. Also, one Food Storage company who claims a 25 year shelf life has even admitted to me that they use the claim just to be “competitive.” Integrity should be the



first thing a company stands by. I have seen reputable companies offer Freeze dried food in pouches and only claim 10-12 year shelf life. That is what I look for.

Lie #2: “Our Food Storage is Non-GMO.”

If any company says that, I would specifically ask them for what certifications they have. Then have them email you the certifications. Don't let them say I will get back to you, demand to see them before placing your order. If they have a USDA Organic Certification or another reputable GMO testing certification, then they have something to back up the claim. Buyer Beware on this Claim, be sure to see the evidence.

Lie #3: “Our Food Storage is Gluten Free.”

This is mostly done over the phone, but I have seen it on some of their web sites. This claim goes a long with the Non-GMO claim, ask for certifications and make sure they are from organizations that you find reputable. Ask for certifications before thinking about purchasing any of their food storage. I also recommend calling the certification companies, and talking with them about the process. Your health could be at stake, I recommend being extremely cautious of any food storage company that claims Gluten Free. Making Gluten Free food can be pricy, so if the prices are low or comparable to their regular meals, I would look elsewhere.

Lie #4: “Our Pouches are nitrogen flushed and have an oxygen absorber in them, which helps them last 25 years.”

While the first part of this claim is true, the 2nd part is not. They can also say they double or triple nitrogen flush the pouches, its all marketing. Also, check Lie #1 for their claim of 25 years.

LPC Survival have helped thousands of people get better prepared. Visit them at LPC Survival

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5 Food Storage Lies to Watch Out For

[Jeff at LPC Survival](#)

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(If you are unfamiliar with nitrogen flushing, here is a basic description of what it is:

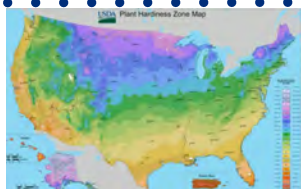
Nitrogen flushing is a type of preservation method used with packaged foods such as coffee beans, nuts, rice cakes, snack crackers and chips. When you go to the grocery store to buy a bag of chips, you'll probably notice the bag is puffed and filled with 'air.' But it's not exactly like the air we breathe because the package doesn't contain oxygen. When processed food is exposed to oxygen, it deteriorates – oils go rancid, discoloration occurs and the food spoils. Oxygen can be removed from the packaging by removing all of the air with a vacuum, which will increase the shelf life of the food packed inside.)

Lie #5: "We have Celebrity and Radio personalities that endorse our products"

These are paid endorsements and some of them are very costly endorsements. I wonder if these people have even tried the meals which they endorse, as they seem to mimic each other when the ads run. Don't fall for the marketing, if there is a high profile endorsement, I personally won't buy it.

Lastly, there are reputable food storage companies and organizations to buy food storage from. The ones I personally purchase are either 100% freeze dried, USDA Organic, or minimally processed. I avoid dehydrated Meals because I have seen that they are highly processed.

Be sure to check the list above before falling for what I call: "Food Storage Lies". -Jeff



Growing Your Own Food

Jason Matyas with Rob Wokaty

This is the time to begin planning your spring garden. Beyond Off Grid presented a webinar filled with answers to many questions you might have about growing your own food. There are four major constraints: planning factors, how much can you grow, how much can you expect to produce, and how to handle preserving the harvest. These things need to be considered before the first shovel of soil has been turned over.

Here are some things to consider:

- Get a soil test to determine the pH (acidity) and the organic matter content.
- Which way does the space face? Southwest facing beds get the most sun, warm earlier in the season and stay warm longer during the day.
- What is around the growing space? Is there shade? Is there nutrient competition?
- What about availability of water? How will you get it to your plants?

- The space available will determine the style of gardening you do: rows, square foot, vertical towers.
- What is the growing season length? The difference between the date of the last spring frost and the first fall frost is your growing season. This varies with elevation and latitude, and will determine which plant varieties you should grow.
- Do you know how to extend the growing season in your area? Cold frames help.
- How much harvest can you expect? Some plants are one timers, and others are multi-bearing. Does what you plant have more than one edible part? Did you know that sweet potato greens are edible?

This information packed webinar can be accessed at the website: BeyondOffGrid.com There are many others scheduled. Feel free to sign up to attend.

Electricity – Our Constant Companion or Our Worst Enemy

Robert Nicholson

We are slaves of electricity. It might appear that Edison wrangled electricity into submission — giving us usable *power*. Almost every facet of contemporary society is dictated by the properties of electricity. Ever since the first commercial light bulb and the telegraph, electricity has ruled the lives of men.

The reach of electric-powered devices and machines is unbelievably vast. With modern robots, there is almost nothing that electricity can't do. The amount of *work* performed by electricity is beyond belief. From growing crops to preparing food, from making computer chips to manufacturing cars, electrical powered machines do much work that would otherwise have to be done by humans.

Just for a moment, suspend your scientific beliefs and imagine that electricity suddenly ceased to exist. Waking up, your alarm wouldn't work. Unless you have a gas grill, you can say goodbye to your morning toast. Your car wouldn't start. Trains and busses would be useless. Automatic doors at the entrance to your office, school, or favorite coffee shop would remain shut. Prison cells would spring open. Elevators would not operate. Your PC, your wireless router, your digital camera, your smartphone — all computers everywhere would be dead. No telephone, radio or TV. Forget cable. No batteries either. The list is endless.

Enter the “Electromagnetic Pulse” or EMP. An EMP event can be either natural, such as solar flares and lightning strikes, or an EMP can be man-made by the detonation of a bomb. Whatever the cause of an EMP, it can disrupt electrical communications and electric power. Also all people wearing pacemakers will be affected. Modern vehicles, full of electronics, will stop working. In the past, EMP events have ruined telegraph equipment, disrupted radio signals, and taken down the internet for short periods of time. Military EMP events can be used to disable enemy electronics causing power outages, water systems to fail, and communications to fail. An EMP may well be the method employed as a future attack on America.

How would you prepare to overcome an EMP? There is a simple way to do this. Buy or build a Faraday box, named after Michael Faraday, who discovered electromagnetic induction in 1831. The Faraday box is a metal enclosure, like a galvanized trash can, with a tight fitting lid. This shields the contents from an EMP event. You need to line the interior of the enclosure with insulation, such as styrofoam, cardboard, or the like. You can also wrap each piece inside your Faraday box with bubble wrap. During an EMP the electromagnetic waves are absorbed by the metal case and not transmitted to the interior because of the installed insulation.

We have a surplus metal cabinet with tight fitting doors. We store a set of two-way radios, with batteries, a few solar battery chargers, a world band radio, a solar radio, radiation monitor and the like in our Faraday box. If I had a motor scooter, or old car, I would also store an extra condenser for the motor in my Faraday box. We also have outfitted a 15 gallon galvanized feed can as a Faraday box. You can get one at the local hardware store for around \$20.00. Follow the same procedure, wrapping and insulating each piece of electronics you store. Be ready.





What is Extra Virgin Olive Oil?

Not long ago, the media was all a buzz with the finding that 73 percent of the five best-selling, imported brands of extra virgin olive oil failed to meet the standards of taste and smell established for that grade of olive oil. Some media reported that oil purported to be pure, actually was mixed with other nut oils, some were mixed with soybean oil. Confused and concerned, I went to Shoreline Food Store and International Deli in Pensacola, FL, home of our local extra virgin olive oil importer. Here are the answers Steve Vatsolakis, olive grove owner, gave to my questions.

Billie: Tell us about your olive oil.

Steve: Olive oil is harvested only once a year during the winter. Our olives come from my family and part of my own groves, located on the west side of the island of Crete. Being my own I feel so much better bringing it here. It's always fresh. I want to have only the most pure and natural products in my store. I travel to Greece every year in March to oversee the quality of olive oil being processed to assure that it is the finest available on the market today. The olives are picked fresh from the trees, not picked up off the ground. Then the olives are crushed and pressed. We mix our mash with warm water to enhance the oil recovery. Warm water does not destroy the health benefits. Some olive oil processors use hot water to obtain extra oil from the press. We don't.

Billie: What makes olive oil extra virgin?

Steve: Olive oil is made from the fruit of the olive tree. It is green when it first comes out. When you squeeze the olives, if they are a little greenish, the oil is a little bit bitter and very low acidity. With time that acidity increases. It becomes a heavier oil. With age, it gets a little sweeter and the acidity rises. Before long though, it begins to get rancid. Many companies import olive oils. If they have room in the price, they can bring good quality oils, otherwise they blend the oils. Then it is not extra virgin like the labels say. Our oil is first press, cold press. Acidity should be less than 0.7%. That means it has virtually no acidity. If the acidity is less than 0.8% it is extra virgin, if it is more than 0.8% it is virgin olive oil. Because acidity is one of the most important qualities and because it rises over time, it's important to check the expiration date. Olive oil should be used within two years of production. After that it is not so good.

Billie: What are the uses of extra virgin olive oil?

Steve: As we said it is cold pressed, that means no heat involved, so it has the maximum health benefits. If you can use it in your food without heating that is the best way to use it. Make a salad, mix a little vinegar with some olive oil and a little sea salt, to bring out the flavor. If you cook vegetables, you can steam or boil them, put them in your plate and pour the olive oil over it. It has no cholesterol so it is healthy for you. Squeeze a little bit of lemon juice and sea salt on top as needed and enjoy the flavor. If you have soups, you can add olive oil at the end, too. You will get the most health benefits this way. Or if you are cooking some onions and fresh herbs as part of your meal preparation, simmer them with olive oil. It smells so good. It gets a better flavor into your food. I cook everything with this oil. I fry potatoes, I fry fish, I cook everything with this oil. The smoke point on this oil is 425° F, canola oil is 400° F, so you have room to cook it. Keep the temperature at 350° to 375°. The good point about this oil is it has never been cooked. It's not already old. You can reuse it many times. I can cook potatoes two or three times. If I want to fry fish, I can cook fish in the same oil. Now, I will not go back to potatoes after that.

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What is Extra Virgin Olive Oil?

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Steve Vatsolakis at Shoreline Deli

Billie: How can a person obtain this olive oil?

Steve: Any one in town can come in, I am always happy to see them, to show them the product and answer any questions. They can even taste it. We also sell it on [Ebay](#) and through my website at [ShorelineDeli](#). Look for the green cans. We ship it in a flat rate box. It is very affordable for such a good value.

Billie: One of my favorite ways to have olive oil is with fresh baked bread.

Steve: There you go, add some fresh squeezed lemon juice and a little sea salt. That brings the flavor out and makes it so good.

Sun Oven Video Lessons

All American **SUN OVEN**® Video



SUN OVEN® cooking is user-friendly and very forgiving ... **Never Burn Dinner Again!** Some people learn by reading instructions and others by watching demonstrations. Visit our website to download your instruction booklets or to learn by watching our videos here. Have you baked eggs in your sun oven? Have you ever dehydrated fruit, veggies or made jerky with your **SUN OVEN**®? Learn how here.

Red Velvet Classic Cupcakes from our Solar Chef



Ingredients

For the cupcakes:

- 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 (8 1/4-ounce) can whole beets, drained and pureed in a blender
- 1/2 cup low-fat butter milk
- 1/4 cup canola oil
- 2 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar

For the frosting:

- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar, sifted
- 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest

In celebration of the month of Love, make these classic Red Velvet Cupcakes. Don't tell anyone, but these cupcakes get their reddish tint from healthy beets instead of food coloring.

If you have the new All American Sun Oven, two muffin pans will fit side by side on the leveling rack. Otherwise, the pans will need to be cross stacked and the bottom cupcakes will take a little longer.

Preparation

Set Sun Oven out to preheat. Line 2 6-cup muffin tins with paper liners.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the beet puree, buttermilk, oil, eggs, and vinegar. Stir buttermilk mixture into the dry ingredients until just blended.

Pour the batter into the prepared muffin cups, filling them about two-thirds full.

Bake until a toothpick inserted into the center of a cupcake comes out clean, 30 to 45 minutes. Set the pans on a wire rack to cool.

To make the frosting, beat the cream cheese and confectioners' sugar with an electric mixer until smooth. Beat in the lemon zest.

Remove the cupcakes from the muffin pans and spread about 1 tablespoon of frosting over each one.