

Food Storage in an RV

While at first, you may think that food storage in the RV is the same as in your house or apartment, it is not. There are various reasons for this but one of the main reasons is vibration. When any RV is attached to a vehicle (towables) or in any drivable unit (motorhomes) and the engine is running, the RV is vibrating to some degree. Vibration causes rubbing.

When moving (going down the highway), that vibration is increased based on the quality of the road and the RV itself (better quality RVs will absorb more vibration). Plus, bumpy roads may cause things in the RV to actually bounce around a bit. The bottom line... everything in the RV is moving to some degree.

Canned Goods

One common trick is to use lids from copy paper boxes to organize and store canned goods in cabinets. Go to your local printer or copy shop and ask them for a lid. Two of these will fit perfectly in a cabinet over a washer/dryer. They will act as drawers, too. Grab the box and simply pull it out to see what is in the back. If you don't like the looks of the box, put some decorative paper on it. Also, if you use your RV just occasionally (weekends, vacation, etc.) use the lids to carry canned goods to and from the house when packing/unpacking.



Plastic bins are great for separating dry foods in the cabinets. Use bins with holes in the sides to facilitate air circulation. The clear plastic tubs will work just fine, too, since you can read the labels through the side of the tub. Using these will save you from having to pull down the containers to see what they contain.

If you happen to be short or own one of those RVs with upper cabinets that are really high off the floor, you may need a small step stool. The folding stools are great, hold lots of weight, and fold flat.

Liquids

Various liquids are stored in either plastic or glass containers. Some you cook with and some you clean with. There is one consistency to all of these and that is they can eventually vibrate enough that they crack and leak. A cabinet full of syrup is not the challenge you want to find when you pull into your campsite for the night.

Store bottles of cooking liquids all together in a solid, plastic container (small tub). When driving, if one happens to crack, the spill will be contained. I know, the other bottles will be sitting in the mess but this is better than having the mess in your cabinets. Use an old hand towel to cushion them while driving. Some people use old socks (clean ones) over the bottles to cushion them while driving. The bottles can keep their socks on when you use them.



The Fridge

Since some food items must be stored in the fridge, you must take the same precautions inside the fridge. Glass bottles will still vibrate and can crack at some point. Here are a variety of easy hints and tips you can do instantly. No, there's no cost to this.

- Sometimes a shelf in an RV fridge is small enough so you can treat it like a plastic tub. Use the socks or hand towels to separate and cushion breakable items.
- Always open a refrigerator door carefully after driving and be prepared to catch any falling items.
- Place egg cartons on shelves longways, front to back—they will never fall out.
- As you use eggs, keep the empty part of the carton to the rear of the fridge. When you pick up the carton, you will grasp it at the "full" end and have better control of its weight. If you pick up the empty end, it may collapse from the weight of the eggs at the other end.

- Use some empty egg cartons as separators in your fridge. They will buffer and protect items.
- We cool bottles of wine by laying them down in one of the fridge drawers and rolling them in the non-skid material. Then, we often put an empty egg carton between the bottles.
- You can lay a bottle of wine (or other liquids) in the lid of an egg carton to control its movement.
- Small bungee cords will help stabilize items to your fridge shelves when driving.
- For a large dish in the fridge (like a leftover casserole), place a piece of the non-skid material over the fridge shelf to keep the dish from sliding.
- Don't crowd a lot of things on the shelf closest to the cooling fins in your refrigerator. Air needs to move over these fins to cool properly.

Storing Frozen Food

If we want to store leftovers for more than a few days or when we purchase some extra cooked foods to take with us, we use a Foodsaver® to vacuum-package the portions for future use. This works much better than the freezer-type plastic bags for longer-term storage.

When preparing to freeze bulk ground beef (or any food that you can shape), put the meat into, for example, gallon plastic bags. (Note... we do not use the Foodsaver for ground beef as we use it frequently so it is not a long-term freeze.) After dividing your packages, mash the meat into large, flat squares (the meat will fill the bag completely and be about one-inch thick). Seal the bags and freeze them. They will lay flat to freeze and store upright after frozen. Doing this will make very efficient use of your freezer space.

Bulk Buying

Don't buy in bulk. Whether it is food, laundry supplies, or oil for your car, stop buying in bulk and hauling it around with you. One could argue that what you save on

bulk purchases is lost in performance (fuel economy) since you then are forced to haul the extra weight until it is used up.

One trick to prevent overbuying is to make your grocery list and put amounts on it. For example, rather than just listing “chicken soup” on the grocery list, put “1 can chicken soup” on it. Doing so will help prevent you from overbuying—regardless of that great sale price! Additionally, overbuying when living in an RV causes unusual problems—where do you put it when you get back to the coach? We have seen RVers with food (canned goods) stored under the couch, over the bed, in the bathroom cabinets, in the shower, and even in their tow car! So the rule is: Don’t buy it if it’s not on the list.

Other Stuff

The stuff you need to live efficiently and comfortably in your RV is the same stuff you **used** in your house— but just **not as much of it!** For example, if you occasionally use flour in preparing one of your favorite recipes, then you will need flour in the RV. But instead of buying the 10-pound or 5-pound bag, consider the 2-pound or 1-pound bag. Although not specifically food, if you have a place-setting of dishes for eight or twelve people, you will not need that in the RV. We take with us a place setting for six. If we had to provide table service for more than that (and I can’t imagine when that could happen), we would provide the plastic utensils or tell them to bring their own.

This same thinking also applies to the variety of foods including canned goods, packaged foods, spices, etc. For example, you may use sage (the spice) in several recipes—if so, pack it in the RV assuming it is not the gallon-size container you got on sale. I use chicken broth frequently in my cooking (yes, I do nearly all our cooking). When we lived in our house, I would buy chicken broth in cartons, measure what I needed, and store the remainder in the fridge. Now, living in our motorhome, I still use chicken broth but buy it in the granule form. A very small jar will make a gallon of excellent broth, doesn’t need to be stored in the fridge, and takes up only a small space in the pantry.

Living with Less... Bulk

Simply stated, you will have to reduce the quantity of uncooked food you buy, the variety you typically stored at home, and the volume you occasionally prepare. You likely do not have room for lots of leftovers in an RV.

To fit what you need into the RV, we first sorted out those canned and packaged foods used for our favorite recipes. From that, we packed a minimum number in the RV. For example, we have a favorite recipe that calls for one can of cream of chicken soup and we have this meal maybe once per month. So, we took just one can with us.

When we cook that recipe, we put cream of chicken soup on our shopping list and replace the one we used. This works great. Note that we replace the can **on the next shopping trip after we use it**. We do not wait until we are ready to prepare that recipe again and then have to go get the can of soup. Replacing foods immediately gives us more flexibility in the variety of meals we can prepare with food stored on board. Doing this also provides us with the ability to stop more places since we are not dependent on having to be someplace where we can purchase groceries locally.

Don't forget... The stuff you need to live efficiently and comfortably in your RV is the same stuff you **used** in your house— but just **not as much of it!**