



Holiday time is approaching and it's time to buy the food. Food planning and preparation will mean that you have more time to relax and enjoy the things you really want to do as opposed to spending time in the kitchen.

Start with your menu

Begin with a rough menu of everything you will need for your trip, which can then be broken down into the nitty gritty staple items such as oil, tomato sauce, and other basic ingredients.



Plan out your menu, and break it down into basics and fresh food to buy.

Shop from your own pantry first

Armed with your list, the first stop should be your kitchen - there is no point in buying double. If you plan to stay in the same place for a few weeks then it might pay to go with a list and shop in the closest town to your destination for the perishable items.

Consider the fact that finding a local butcher on your trip can often mean fresher and cheaper meat while you're on the road, and locally caught fish may even be an option for you.



You will likely have a lot of things in your pantry already.

Don't buy too much food

Shopping time, and don't make the mistake I did initially, I bought so much food (just in case!) that we must have exceeded the weight limit and after 3 months we still bought some of the tinned food home. I learnt a valuable lesson on that trip.



Consider your weight limit when you purchase your food.

There will almost always be local shops along the way

Not only is it really good to support the smaller local towns en route but ultimately, you'll have more room in the kitchen area. The chances are there will always be shops on the way or at your destination (unless you're heading into the depths of the outback).

Be savvy when you shop

Be a savvy shopper. Check dates on produce, particularly fridge items, you will often find fresher items at the back of the shelf. Think about the size of the fridge and shape of the item as well.



Before you shop, think about how much space your travelling kitchen has.



Why baskets are essential for packing your fridge

We're lucky enough to have an [82-litre fridge/freezer](#) plus the good old Engels in the car. I have also found a great plastic basket that rests in the top of the fridge. Firstly this ensures that the smaller items are handy and don't get lost in the bottom.

Secondly, it can also be used to carry anything that's susceptible to being frozen easily - it has made a big difference to the packing of our fridge when we travel.



A vacuum sealer is helpful before or after your trip.

Why a vacuum sealer is a good investment

[Vacuum sealers](#) are certainly worth their weight in gold and easy to pack. You'll be able to seal and freeze freshly caught fish, and other local produce that you buy along the way. You can also vacuum seal fresh meat, fruit and veg and store it in your fridge or freezer before you leave. This extends food life, prevents freezer burn and saves using bulky plastic containers.

Coffee beans from your favourite supplier can be sealed and stored in a cool area. Instead of packing a huge variety of your favourite exotic spice, just pre-mix your own and label it so you know exactly what it is before sealing it.



Storing non-perishable is easy, it's fruit and veggies that can be trickier.

Storing and choosing fresh fruits and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are often a challenge to store. I take care in ensuring the bought items are firm and fresh. Paper towel is our saviour. Most fruit and veg can be stored in a bag or container using paper towel to absorb any moisture.

Travelling for several months often means being away from shops for a few weeks so eating a salad or enjoying fresh strawberries is so important. It is an art in buying and storing fresh produce and is something I have learnt from experience.

I now buy specific items that I know will store well and last. I have listed a few examples below.



When travelling for longer periods, fresh food makes a huge difference to your meals.

Best vegetables and fruits for touring:

1. Salad leaves

Cos lettuce lasts if a damp kitchen towel is wrapped around the cut end, and then stored in a plastic bag with another bag loosely around the top.

We have terrible memories of battling with a round Tupperware container of lettuce that always seemed to freeze and was a nightmare to pack.



2. Celery

Celery is amazing and can last for weeks if stored properly – buy celery heart and once opened leave it in a bag and place another bag around the top to stop it losing its crunch.



If you like a fresh salad on the road, cos lettuce will go the distance.

3. Berries

Strawberries and blueberries can be transferred into a flat container again with a kitchen towel – don't wash them until you need them as moisture stays in the pores and will go mouldy quickly.

4. Melons

Watermelon is a no-no for us unless eaten immediately – it's too big and takes up too much valuable fridge space. But if you have a big family and plan to eat it within a couple of days then buy a whole one and store it in an esky bag with an ice pack. Rockmelon, on the other hand, stores easily for a long time.



Berries are a fruit that can keep for a while if stored unwashed.

5. Oranges and apples

Oranges are a good option they can keep for a couple of weeks when properly refrigerated. We also take apples and store them loosely in the collapsible small esky bag with a towel underneath and over the top to stop them bouncing on dirt roads.

6. Pumpkin, onion, potatoes and garlic

Butternut pumpkin, onions, potatoes and garlic are all great options as they can keep for longer periods.

Choose fruits that are still green

Bananas, avocados and pears should be kept in the dark and I buy half of them green so they can ripen over time. Don't forget to check on your fruit and veg regularly to prevent spoilage.



Capsicum is another ideal vegetable for travel.

Packing and travelling with food



Have a soft ice pack on hand

A soft ice pack takes up minimal room in the freezer and can be used both as a food/drink cooler or to soothe the inevitable bruises/strains.

Choose food storage containers with corners

The general rule for containers is to make sure they have corners - round containers make for wasted space.



Square or rectangular containers are a must for travelling with food.

If you have a freezer - pre-cook your meals

If you're fortunate enough to have a freezer then pre-cooking a couple of rainy day meals such as bolognese or chicken curry can make your life so much easier. After all, you want a holiday as well.

Slip a few icy poles in for the hot days too - they can be a welcome relief in the heat, and importantly they save you money in the long run.



Pre-cooked meals and a couple of ice creams are luxuries you'll thank yourself for.

Managing storage as you consume your food

The obvious problem when packing is that it all fits perfectly, but as soon as you use an item it leaves a hole that can result in movement when travelling. There are a few options for filling up space, one way is to turn a larger item sideways or use a tea towel. Or, if it's only a small gap I always have small pieces of cork or old yoga mat cut up and wedge them into the spot.



Fillers and protective padding ensure that things don't rattle around.

Don't forget the nibbles and beverages

Last but not least, don't forget to take your favourite nibbles to snack on with a relaxing drink at the end of the day with friends.

Good preparation in advance always pays off when you're away, and will ultimately make your holiday less of a chore and far more relaxing. See you out there!

What are your best recipes for taking food on the road with you?