

No-Fridge Meals for a Week

Being without a refrigerator doesn't have to mean eating nothing but canned chili and takeout! These meals can be made from ingredients that are shelf-stable, or at least, can last several days on the counter. While a few of the ingredients may be things you wouldn't normally purchase (canned chicken and dry milk, for example), I didn't include expensive specialty items like freeze-dried vegetables.

Breakfasts

Oatmeal

<p>For each serving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1/3-1/2c oatmeal (rolled oats)• ½-1 cup water	<p>Optional add-ins:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sugar or honey to taste• 2 Tbl instant dry milk• 1 scoop collagen protein• Dried fruit• Nuts• ¼ tsp cinnamon or other spices• Butter• Individual cup of apple sauce or other fruit
---	--

Stovetop: Heat all ingredients in a pan for 3-4 minutes. Exact time depends on the type of rolled oats.

Microwave: Combine all ingredients in a large soup bowl and microwave 90 seconds. Oatmeal expands a LOT in the microwave, so a big bowl will prevent overflows.

Cereal

They're now selling super-expensive single-serve "just add water" cereal bowls. You can replicate this with less waste:

- Your regular cereal
- 3-4 Tbl instant dry milk powder + 8 oz water to reconstitute milk (best if you mix the milk first)

Toast+

Use any type of bread to make toast, and top with:

- Nut butter
- Jam
- Avocado
- Pre-cooked shelf-stable bacon
- Tofu "ricotta"
- Hummus
- Canned baked beans

Tofu Ricotta

Crumble a package of tofu with a fork and stir in ½ tsp. salt, 1 Tbl. Vinegar, and sprinkles of garlic, pepper, and Italian herbs to taste.

Homemade Hummus

Blender a can of chickpeas with lemon juice, garlic, salt, and tahini or sesame seeds until smooth.

Apples and Peanut Butter

Dip apple slices into peanut butter or other nut or seed butter.

Scrambled Eggs

Powdered eggs don't taste as good as fresh, but you can still make decent scrambled eggs to add protein to a meal. Get creative with spices: hot sauce, curry powder, onions and garlic!

Quesadillas

Use corn or flour tortillas. Spread with toppings, and heat in a dry frying pan.

- Instant refried beans – mix 2 Tbl powder with 1/3 c. boiling water and let stand
- Cheese – blocks of aged cheeses can be left out at room temp for several days. The “drier” the cheese, the longer it will last. E.g. parmesan, aged cheddar
- Chili powder, fajita seasoning mix, or taco seasoning
- Avocado

Lunch and Dinner

Mix-and-match ingredients depending on what you like and what you have on hand! Sample combinations are listed below the table. And, while the USDA says cooked food should be eaten within 2 hours, it may be possible to eat lunch leftovers at dinner if you reheat them well.

Pick-4 Meal Matrix

Starch	Protein	Produce	Seasonings
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bread or bun• Corn or wheat tortillas• Tortilla chips or taco shells• Canned hominy• Noodles• Potatoes• Sweet potatoes• Rice• Quinoa• Couscous	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Canned chicken• Canned tuna or salmon• Shelf-stable tofu – crumbled, slice, as “ricotta”• Plain beans – canned or dry• Seasoned canned beans (e.g., baked beans, or Bush’s “Sidekicks”)• Loma brand meat substitutes (chorizo, taco, plain ground)• Pre-cooked, shelf-stable bacon• Pepperoni• Pressure-canned beef or pork (roasts or ground)• Canned chili (watch the sodium)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carrots• Cabbage• Broccoli (cut off end and keep in a vase of water)• Tomatoes (fresh or canned)• Bell peppers• Spaghetti sauce (buy a jar size you can finish in one sitting)• Acorn squash• Onions• Apples and other whole fruit• Canned vegetables• Dehydrated vegetables	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Salt, pepper, garlic• Chili powder or taco seasoning• Italian herbs and garlic• Curry powder• Jerk seasoning• Vinegar• Olives• Coconut milk• Lemons and limes• Dry bouillon powder• Boxed broth• Sauce packets (ketchup, mustard, mayo, salad dressing, etc.)• OK on counter: mustard, most vinaigrettes, hot sauce, soy sauce

Favorite Combos

- Chicken salad sandwich: Bread or bun with canned chicken + mayo
- BBQ chicken sandwich: Bun with a packet of BBQ-flavored chicken
- Pan noodles: Rice noodles with carrots, broccoli, tofu, and soy sauce
- Coconut curry: 1 can coconut milk, 1-2 Tbl. Curry powder, 1 can garbanzo beans (drained), plus any vegetables you have. Serve over rice or cook rice noodles in the broth.
- "Protein bowl": 1 can seasoned beans + 1 packet cooked chicken
- Spaghetti and sauce, with added protein (try chicken or white beans)
- Tuna casserole: Noodles, tuna, garlic powder, and either a can of cream of mushroom soup or a white sauce made with powdered milk
- Daal and rice: 1 c. split mung beans, curry powder, and 3c. water. Simmer until thick (30 mins). Add any available veg. Serve over rice.
- Canned lentil soup over rice
- Canned hominy + tomatoes + beans + taco seasoning
- Salmon burgers on a bun
- Grilled cheese and tomato soup (can use tofu ricotta instead of regular cheese)
- Crackers, carrots, bell peppers and hummus
- Fried rice with tofu, veg, and soy sauce

Produce Tips

Keeping fresh produce around is one of the hardest parts of being without refrigeration. Some options include:

- Buying produce more often
- Buying smaller sizes, possibly pre-cut, that can be used in one meal. My favorites for this are coleslaw mix and broccoli slaw – they are just shredded vegetables, but you can use a whole bag at once in anything from soup to pan noodles to frijoles, or just sauté in olive oil with salt and garlic.
- Visit a self-serve salad bar and get pre-cut veg, but skip the lettuce – great for stir-fry
- Some produce can keep for a week or more in a cool place: potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash, beets, turnips, onions, whole large carrots, avocados (even after they're cut – just let them dry out the cut surface), tomatoes, and hard fruit like apples and oranges.
- Some produce keeps very well if you treat it like flowers in a vase: cut off the ends and stand it up in a glass with a few inches of water. **Change the water daily.** Try with broccoli, asparagus, and fresh herbs. Submerging carrots in water can help, too.
- If you buy root vegetables with the leaves attached (e.g., beets), cut off the greens on the first day and eat them as their own vegetable. The root that's left will keep better, too.

Bonus: Pressure Canner Foods

If I were going to be without a fridge for a long time, I would definitely want to be able to pressure-can my own meat, beans, and stock. Buying shelf-stable meat is expensive and comes with a lot of packaging. There's also not a lot of variety, and sodium levels tend to be really high. The following are easy to can at home, and would allow you to repackage larger (cheaper!) cuts of meat into single-meal size containers. As a bonus, you're also pre-cooking the meat, so at meal-times, you just have to heat and serve!

- [Chicken with or without bones](#) – Put a couple legs and/or thighs in a jar (with bones and skin), add 1 tsp salt, top with water, and can. Yields perfectly tender chicken plus a couple cups of stock!
- [Beef or pork roast](#) – Put cubes in jar with a bit of salt and can – that's it!
- [Ground meat](#) – Brown meat, then put in jar plain or with tomato sauce