

Good Food Column – April 2017

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When thinking about food and disasters the first thing that comes to my mind is the coverage in the first days of the Kaikoura earthquake, of how residents and tourists alike were consuming meals of paua and crayfish. Clearly their stores of canned food and other emergency supplies had been totally ignored – or had they?

In a major emergency like that experienced in Kaikoura, you can expect there to be a period of several days where you might be reliant on your own resources to get you by. To prepare your own supply of bottled water, keep your empty water, juice and fizzy drink bottles. Give them a good clean and fill them with water – you need three litres of water for each person for each day that you are without water. Don't forget to store water for babies and pets too. You can keep stored drinking water for up to a year if you add non-scented household bleach (half a teaspoon for every ten litres of water and don't drink for at least half an hour after mixing).

If your food supply is disrupted, plan to use fresh food first, then refrigerated and frozen foods. Use tinned and dry foods last. Keep the fridge and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. The fridge will keep food cold for about four hours if it is unopened, and a full freezer will keep cold for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.

How do you know if it is safe to eat? Once food reaches the temperature of five degrees Celsius or above for more than two hours it greatly increases the risk of growth by microorganisms that can cause illness. Do not use frozen food that has thawed and warmed up or refrigerated food that has warmed up. The only exceptions to this are butter/margarine, hard cheeses, raw eggs (still in eggshells), fruit and vegetables. If in doubt, throw it out.

Another great way to strengthen your preparedness is to become involved in your local community garden or orchard if you have one; check out this resource to see what's close to you goo.gl/5LtUoN. If you would like to find out about starting one, contact info@goodfooddunedin.com.

More information on emergency planning is available at www.otagocdem.govt.nz, and there is more on protecting your health in an emergency to be found at <https://www.healthed.govt.nz/resource/protecting-your-health-emergency>.

Good Food Dunedin is a Dunedin City Council-led initiative, supported by individuals, communities, organisations and businesses who share a vision to transform Dunedin into a thriving, food-resilient city.