

MREs - The Real Story!



MREs are "Meals Ready to Eat" or U.S. military rations. These have not been for sale to the public since 1997. If you know someone in the military, they may be able to get some for you - but not large amounts! MREs come in a 22 lb. cardboard box holding 12 MRE packets and 12 heaters to heat them. A good 2013 price is \$4-\$5 per packet, with flameless ration heater, for MREs made in 2013. If you have them shipped to you, pay only actual UPS shipping costs.

We're talking about REAL U.S. military MREs, not "Mil-Spec" or "identical to military rations," etc. Most civilian copies don't have the ration heaters, and some claim their rations will last 25 years. If you're going to get MREs, get real ones.

Most people have never tasted an MRE, yet they want to store them for an emergency. Well, go buy one and EAT it! There are a dozen different varieties, and the box holds all 12. They have a lot of calories, and one MRE may be enough to last you a day. When I was eating them, MRE meant "Meals Refused by Ethiopians."

The next question is how long MREs last. How long depends on how hot it is where they are stored... the hotter the storage, the shorter they will last. It depends on where you live. Alaska, no problem. Arizona, problems. Where it's hot, don't store MREs in your garage. Under your bed works better.

50°F [10°C]	= 60 months	80°F [28°C]	= 36 months	110°F [43°C]	= 2 months
60°F [15.5°C]	= 48 months	90°F [32°C]	= 18 months	120°F [49°C]	= 1 month
70°F [21°C]	= 40 months	100°F [38°C]	= 6 months		

Military MREs have a Time-Temperature Indicator on the outside of the box. It's a dark circle with a light center. As long as the center of the circle is lighter than the outer ring, the MREs are supposed to be good to eat.

But how long will they really last - or put another way, when will you not dare to eat them? If the MRE packet is swelled up, punctured, or damaged, toss it. Look at the individual foods. Is the applesauce or the cheese light or dark? How dark?

If you store MREs, rotate them - buy new ones, toss the old ones. Be very cautious, as food poisoning is something you don't want to deal with in a real emergency. Test how many you can eat per day and base storage amounts on that.

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