



# Provisioning tips and tricks

Two growing sons and a continuously hungry husband have forced **Dini Martinez** to become a provisioning specialist, she shares her tips and tricks to help make provisioning a success.



While cruising Greece, we found that prices for butter, milk, fruit and vegetables often more than quadrupled on the islands compared to mainland markets.

In Chile, prepared meals handy for crossings and bad weather are almost impossible to get.

The Pacific islands welcome you with coconuts and pineapples but if your meat stock is running low, do not expect to top it up there, except for subsidised frozen chicken.

People all around the world eat and so, ocean crossings aside, you are unlikely to go hungry anywhere you decide to cruise. Nevertheless, a strategic approach to stocking up, coupled with a few provisioning tips and tricks and a bit of creativity will make your crew happier and food budget last longer.

Considering that a hungry crew is more likely to make mistakes and that

dehydration is a real and dangerous risk, good provisioning is not only an enjoyment, but also a safety issue.

## Water

Without potable water, humans cannot survive for more than a few days.

The average Australian uses 280 litres of water per day. This comes close to what many boats in the 40' range can carry in the tanks. The average long-term cruiser uses about six litres per day. At sea a little water goes a long way. See table one.

Sussing out the amount of drinking water each person needs for the duration of a cruise is a good place to start your provisioning.

The recommended daily minimum of three litres will increase in hot climates. Add water for cooking, washing dishes, clothes and the crew and you quickly come up with a minimum of 360 litres for a couple on a 30-day passage.

CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Sprout Salad – Boat-grown sprouts in action, here in a delicious beetroot and feta salad with lentil sprouts and sweet balsamic dressing. Growing your own greens on board is an easy way to boost your diet and stay healthy on board; Collecting rainwater – supplementing our drinking water supply by topping up with fresh rainwater; Minimarkets – In villages and remote towns, supermarket signs often don't live up to its word but can be as small as a little room filled with a few random tins and pasta. Here is one we found in Delphi.



Water-savvy coastal cruising usually requires less water-awareness than passage making. Nevertheless, you will experience more freedom cruising if you limit your fresh water use for instance by installing a seawater tap in the galley to rinse your dishes. Sailors' showers can use as little as two litres of water to rinse off the salt after a swim, just use a spray bottle at your stern.

Without a water-maker or reliable rain, your passage plan has to include places where you can take in water. This can come in the form of taps on the quay or trucks that bring water to you upon request and for a price. In many remote islands, dinghy rides with filled plastic containers are the only way to get water to your boat.

Before refilling, ask other cruisers in the area whether the tap water comes from a contaminated island run-off or cistern full of mosquito larvae or whether it is relatively safe to drink coming from a desal plant, well or spring.

Once on board, you need to keep it potable and adequate filters go a long way. To clean the inevitable sludgy residue off the bottom of your tanks, many people use bleach. Organic folk swear on vinegar and some even shock treat their tanks with fresh water, decreasing the corrosion risk.

#### Contingency plan

We, a family of four, have used as little as 20 and as much as 80 litres a day.

We tend to keep our tanks full and have installed a way to separate them in case one gets contaminated.

Especially when on passage, we carry plenty of backup bottles prepared for a water-maker failure or a longer than expected passage.

On board *Happy Dancer*, rainwater is used to both wash down the deck and top up the tanks, unless we are near big cities, sandy deserts or sugar cane plantations. The latter are frequently burnt after the harvest and rain can be contaminated with ash.

No matter what your water situation aboard, it is handy to have different systems at hand to collect rain water. Ranging from innovative deck-fill mounted flushes, over biminis with rain catchers, to canvas catchers under the mainsail boom funnelled into your water tanks or big jerry jugs.

Obviously you need to make sure that your collection medium, e.g. the deck or your main sail, is clean.

#### Food provisioning

Availability and prices of food and other essentials varies a lot from big towns and cities to small villages and remote islands.

TABLE ONE

Activity	Litres pp
Drinking	3
Cooking	1
Shower	1
Dishes	0.5
Laundry	0.5
Boat washing	Usually only when fresh water is freely available

It always works out cheaper to provision up in big regional centres like duty-free Gibraltar in the Med, Panama in the Caribbean, Singapore in South-East Asia, Fiji and Samoa in the Pacific or one of Australia's or New Zealand's bigger cities. In less touristy or less populated areas staples are more expensive, the variety of fresh produce potentially limited and luxuries like exotic spices, snacks, and prepared meals often unavailable or costly.

However, there are very few islands where coconuts and crabs are all you can find. In most places you can top up your boat's staples with locally grown fruit and vegetables and freshly baked bread.

It is not only wise to know where you can fill up on provisions, but it also pays to know where better to arrive with an empty boat.

“When provisioning your boat, it pays enormously to go the extra mile and source your fresh produce from local farmers or farmers' markets.”

TABLE TWO

Category	Product	Quantity pp/day	Approximate quantities for a couple on a 30 day cruise	Category	Product	Quantity pp/day	Approximate quantities for a couple on a 30 day cruise
Fruit & Veg	As much as you'd consume at home within about a week, more for the longer produce like cabbage, potatoes, onions, garlic, oranges, lemons and apples. famous banana tree of the stern is not such a good idea as they will all ripen same day or two.				Tomatoes	¼ can	10 cans
				Dried	Chickpeas	50 g	3 kg
Dairy	UHT Milk	200 ml	12 litres		Lentils	50 g	3 kg
	Yoghurt	30 g	2 kg		Other dried legumes	25g	1.5 kg
	Cheese	16 g	4 x 250g pack		Mung- and other beans for sprouting	16 g	1 kg
	Butter (tinned butter)	16 g	1 kg		Fruit		
Bread	Fresh loaves for the first few days. If stopping on the way, some places have a bakery with fresh bread available. If not, below are other options for either making your own, or using long-shelf substitutes.			Meat & Fish	Fresh and vacuum packed as much as you usually eat within a week, more if you have a freezer on your boat.		
	Rye Pumpernickel or commercially packaged bread	1/5 pack	12 packs		Smoked Salmon	A treat within the first few days, unless you smoke your own from fresh fish caught on board.	
	Flour	130 g	16 x 500 g (approx.)		Canned tuna Canned meat Canned chicken		1.5 kg 3.0 kg 3.0kg
	Yeast	1/10 <sup>th</sup> package	8 packages of active	Condiments	Olive Oil		6 L
	Enough water, olive oil, sugar and salt (although bread lasts longer without salt)				Balsamic Vinegar		1 L
	Vacuum packed part-baked bread, croissants and brioche	1 or less	6 multi item packs		Apple Cider Vinegar		1 L (Aboard Happy Dancer we carry more as we also use it as medicine when needed)
	Wraps for rolls, quesadillas, pizzas etc.	1.5 rolls	10 packs with 10 rolls each		Salt & pepper		2 containers each
Staples	Cereals	1/5 pack	12 packs, oats and a few varieties		Cayenne, Oregano, Italian herbs, basil, dill, coriander, cinnamon, turmeric, masala...		
	Pasta	80 g	5 kg pasta		Mayonnaise		3 containers
	Rice	80 g	5 kg		Mustard		1 container
	Couscous	40 g	2.5 kg		Jams		6 glasses
						Honey	8 g
Prepared meals	Soups	1/10 can	6 cans	Eggs	eggs	0.6	40
	Baked beans	1/4 can	15 cans	Snacks	Chocolate, biscuits, crisps, muesli bars, nuts and nut mixes, crackers, olives, crystallized ginger, etc.		
	Spaghetti	1/8 can	8 cans	Beverages	Fruit juices, ice teas, sodas etc.	0.5	30
Canned	Various vegetables, including corn, asparagus, bamboo shoots, peas etc.	1/4 can	15 cans – more if the opportunity on the way		Coffee and tea	2 cups per day	2 kg ground coffee beans, 50 English Breakfast tea bags, 50 herbal tea bags of different varieties
	Various fruits (also for baking and deserts)	¼ can	15 cans – less if you pick up on fresh fruit regularly		Alcoholic beverages	Very individual choice. During passages, Happy Dancer is an alcohol-free boat. For some this makes up a substantial part of their provisioning budget.	

Australia and New Zealand have some of the strictest quarantine laws. Therefore, arriving with a beautiful stock of lentils ready to sprout, meat ready to roast and pineapple leftovers from the Pacific will turn out expensive as you have to hand it all in and potentially even pay fines.

Be sure to know the quarantine rules of the countries you plan to visit before finalising your big shopping list.

Depending on the length of your cruise, a meal-plan shopping list and strategic storage will prove invaluable. Some short term cruisers even bundle particular meals' ingredients together and stock them in order of planned consumption. Many long term cruisers tend to prepare several meals before a long passage and store them in the fridge or freezer. All this means more work during preparation, but less galley-time while at sea.

If you provision a completely empty boat for a long journey, you most likely will have to do several runs: Cans first, then other durable items, then refrigerated food and lastly fresh produce the day before leaving.

RIGHT: Bread alternatives – durable substitutes for bread, for when the real thing runs out away from bakeries and supermarkets.

We keep some of everything within easy access in the galley and store the rest in harder to get to places. A storage list has saved us from searching the boat as there is no way of remembering what you put exactly where down the track.

For several weeks, note down the quantities of the various food items you consume at home, this will then help you calculate weekly averages per crew. Your eating habits are unlikely to change much just because you will live aboard a boat. Do not forget to cater for special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, land-ahoy parties etc.

While contingency plans for potential refrigeration break-downs should be in place, many live-aboards admit to having over-provisioned at the beginning and



still have unopened cans left from years ago when they first left home.

Buying in bulk is generally cheaper. However, try a small portion first before going for big quantities. Split the pasta, flour, oats etc. into smaller zip lock bags or air-tight containers on board. This avoids half of the content going bad before you can use it.

Every crew is different. The table provided here is a guide that provides an estimate of typical products and the quantities used per person per day. A 30-day cruise is assumed with little or no opportunity to restock. Canned and prepared products like tinned

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Cans are best stored dry and regularly checked for rust.

## practical: families

vegetables and fruit would be introduced when there is no more fresh ones available. See table two.

For more durable food items, unless you have got a specific recipe in mind, buying plain keeps your galley options open. In other words, buy plain porridge instead of flavoured; simple tinned tomatoes instead of chilli-flavoured; plain yoghurt instead of strawberry flavoured, etc. With a basic array of spices on board, you can always add the desired taste later.

Most fruit and vegetables from supermarkets have been stored for a long time before landing in your shopping trolley. This not only halves its lifespan but also reduces the taste and nutritional value.

When provisioning your boat, it pays enormously to go the extra mile and source your fresh produce from local farmers or farmers' markets. You want to aim for food which has never been refrigerated nor washed. The layer of soil around potatoes keeps them from sprouting. Some feathers or chicken manure on the eggs is a good sign that the natural protective layer that keeps them fresh is still there.

When it comes to perishable items, your fridge/freezer situation or the lack thereof, as well as the temperatures of the cruising area you choose to go to, play a big role when provisioning. In colder latitudes, your bilge can act as an energy efficient permanent cold box. Also, a few tricks will help keep your fresh produce longer.

### Hot tips

- potatoes and the like keep best in dark places. Onions will make it sprout quicker, whereas apples will prolong its edible life
- citrus and bananas ripen other fruit, so keep them separate
- avocados keep best by themselves
- fruit and vegetables which keep well include: citrus, melons, green apples, green pineapples, potatoes, onions, white cabbage, green tomatoes, hard avocados, courgettes and squash
- peppers sliced in olive oil preserves them up to 3 weeks in a cool place
- unrefrigerated fruits and vegetables keep mould-free for longer when air can circulate around them. Also keep them from bruising for instance by storing them in overhead nettings
- turning eggs over every couple of days will keep the air bag from sticking to the skin which will, in turn, keep oxygen from entering the eggs and keep them from rotting. If ever in doubt about an egg, put it in a pot of water, if it floats without having been shock treated or boiled beforehand, there is gas inside so discard it
- bread keeps fresh for up to a week in a clay pot without going soggy, mouldy or hard. It needs to be secured
- wrap your greens in moist kitchen towels to double edible time
- the saying of "one bad apple can spoil the whole barrel" does not only apply to apples. Rotate your fruit and vegetables daily, you will notice any culprits which need consuming.

### TABLE THREE

Category	Product	Approximate quantities for a couple on a 30 day cruise
Toiletries	Sunscreen SPF 30 or more	4 litres
	Organic Shampoo & Conditioner (2in1)	500 ml
	Toothpaste	1 tube
	Dental Floss	1 pack
	Soap (biodegradable if possible)	4
	Deodorant	1
	Razor blades (disposables as they rust)	10
	Toilet Paper	15 rolls
Cleaning Products	Biodegradable dishwashing liquid	1 litre
	Rust remover	250 ml
	Bottled lemon juice for polishing stainless	100 ml
	Vinegar (disinfectant, glass cleaner and keeps the heads running)	3 litres
	Tea tree oil (disinfectant and mosquito repellent)	10 ml
	Citronella oil (mosquito repellent)	10 ml
	Bicarb soda (best all-purpose cleaner!)	500 g or more
	Disposable rubber gloves	5 pairs
	Scrub brushes	6
	Sponges	10
	Wipes	8
	Paper kitchen towel	4 rolls
	Mosquito coils	6
Cockroach traps (just in case)	4	
Other	Zip-lock bags (different sizes)	A couple of packs
	Batteries (all sizes)	We mainly use rechargeable batteries, but still keep a back-up for the whole battery inventory. Good quality alkaline batteries last longer.
	Bulbs	We keep a back-up of our inventory.
	Pot holders for the stove	On off



Netting – keeping air flow around fruit and avoid bruising keeps it fresh for longer.

Inspecting your non-perishable stock at least once a week will reduce the chance of unpleasant surprises like weevil infested flour bags or a whole compartment full of rusting cans. It also provides an opportunity to consume items before they run passed the use-by date and clean. Inspection also makes you disinfect the cupboards regularly. This in turn, reduces the risk of bug infestations.

#### More hot tips

- use big dry bags for wet dinghy rides to keep tins and flour bags dry
- dipping cans' seams in wax or using a vacuum seal will delay rust.
- on all tins write with a permanent marker what is inside as the paper wrapping label might disintegrate
- cardboard is a breeding ground for bugs. Repackage produce into zip-bags and air-tight containers as it reduces rubbish and helps keep bugs away
- keep a bay leaf with flour, grains and cereals to keep weevils away
- a vacuum sealer is useful for keeping foods longer. Considering the food saved, it will most likely pay for itself
- rinsing rubbish before discarding it, having a dedicated place for it on board and throwing organic waste overboard when more than 12 nautical miles from land further reduces the risk of bug plagues
- before bringing it on board, dip everything possible in ocean water to reduce the risk of bringing unwanted bugs on board. Be wary of jumping scorpions during this!

#### Sprouts

For long passages greens will eventually run out. To supplement your tinned, dried and possibly frozen produce, or cabbage which can last for weeks, start sprouting. In brief, this means soaking your mung-beans, lentils or other legumes for up to 12 hours in water then placing them into a jar, closing it off with a cloth and elastic band, turning it upside down and rinsing it every 12 hours.

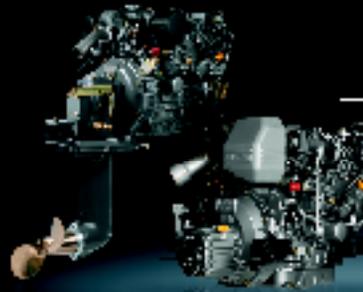
Most varieties take between one and three days and sprout best in a light place out of direct sunlight. When refrigerated most sprouts will keep for just under a week.

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ABOVE: Pacific markets, such as this one in Port Vila, host a large variety of local and imported fruit and vegetables.

RIGHT: Snacks – Some of our favourite non-perishable snacks on board *Happy Dancer*.



### Meat

Apart from chicken, meat can be hard to come across in more remote areas.

When provisioning, purchasing the freshest produce and getting it vacuum-packed will prolong its life on board significantly, especially if you cannot count on reliable refrigeration. Vacuum packed and deep frozen meat will last for up to a week with some ice in a cool bag.

Also stock up on canned chicken to enhance your pasta meals and curry dishes, or canned ham to adorn your pizzas. Dried meat, like the salami which hangs off the deli counter, is another great way to satisfy your meat cravings when the fresh stock runs out.

### Fish

Whether or not you can rely on fishing to supplement your diet depends on your gear, experience and your cruising area.

The Mediterranean and parts of Indonesia have sadly been so over-fished that you can go weeks on end with a line out and no bite whatsoever. In most other areas, you may be luckier or get offered something by local fishermen.

Be aware of ciguatera, a naturally occurring toxin concentrated in reef fish.

Canned tuna is probably one of the easiest and most popular lunch time snacks amongst cruisers. If possible, buy sustainably sourced tuna and, if eaten in large quantities, watch your mercury levels.

### Snacks

Many boats keep a snack box available with an allocated daily quantity of goodies from the bigger storage spaces. Once it is empty, snackers have to wait until the next day. This is especially handy for night-sails and passages.

### Non-food items

When provisioning, don't forget non-food items which can be hard to find and expensive in remote locations.

Table three gives an idea of things we stock up on when we can and approximate quantities for a couple on a 30-day cruise. Most liquids on board will end up in the ocean, so use natural products where possible. See table three.

In addition to the list above, you need to make sure you have adequate spares for all your major systems on board, maintenance liquids and tools, charts and sufficient gas bottles.

Given that gas is the predominant fuel for cooking, it is relatively easy to get in most parts of the world, although it may require different connections and in some countries like the US even relevant safety certificates.

### Think out of the box

No matter whether it is galley stuff, toiletries or engine spares, it's compulsory to stay flexible and creative.

Substituting creamed avocado mixed with cocoa and honey for an ordinary chocolate mousse is just one example of using what you have, where and when you have it. Making your own fizzy drinks with kombucha or kefir, or even your own ginger beer and wine is not that unusual amongst long-term cruisers.

Even without a fridge, making your own yoghurt is relatively easy using powdered milk. For dehydrating food a zero-energy option is a deck-mounting which can sun-dry anything from fish, to fruit and tomatoes or even meat. (See *CH* October 2013).

Solar ovens work wonders for some. Thermal cookers once heated, claim to contain the heat for a minimum of seven hours without using an amp of energy.

Growing your own fruit and vegetables in hydro-ponds on deck takes your provisioning journey to a whole different level.

The only boundary to the possibilities available to self-sufficiency and independence in the galley and beyond is your own imagination.

So stock up on the basics and the things you can't do without and learn, add, improve and share your provisioning skills as you go along. 

### cruisinghelmsman Dini Martinez



Dini Martinez lives on her *Moody 425* with her husband and two little boys. They left settled life in Sydney in July 2013 and are cruising the Med at the moment, slowly making their way back to Australia over the next few years. Updates on their journey and yoga retreats Dini teaches on the way can be found on [yogicsailingfamily.wordpress.com](http://yogicsailingfamily.wordpress.com).