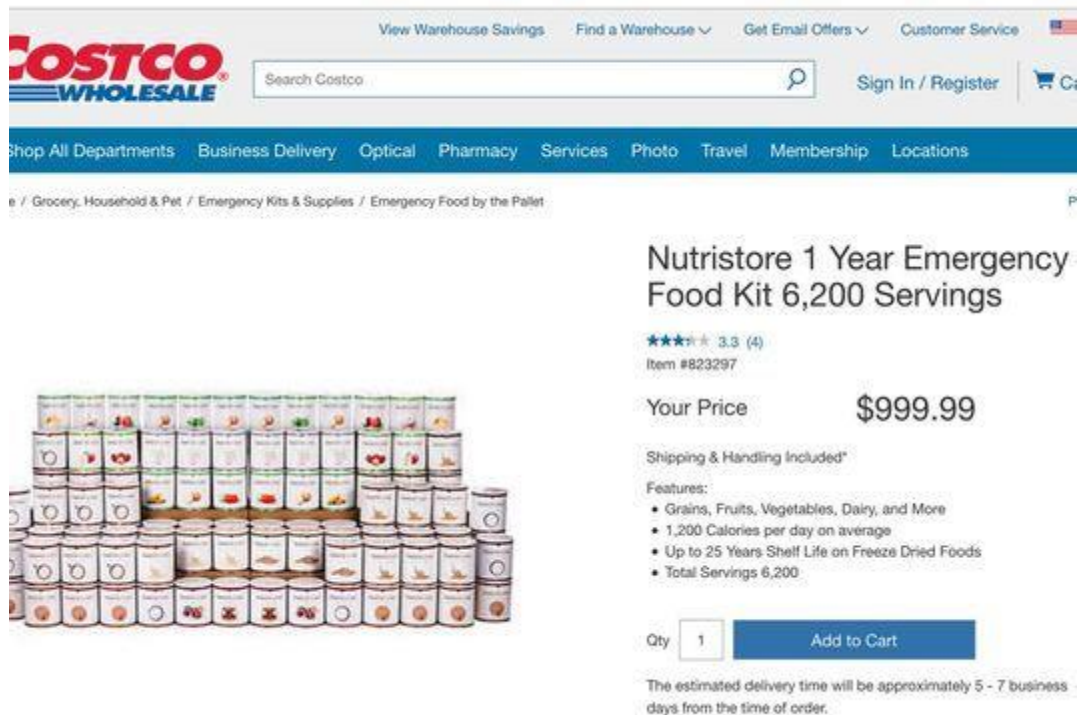


Detroit Free Press

Seeking to survive a disaster? Costco sells a \$1,000 food kit that lasts 25 years

[Frank Witsil](#), Detroit Free Press Published 6:00 a.m. ET Oct. 1, 2017 | Updated 10:20 a.m. ET Oct. 1, 2017



The screenshot shows the Costco website interface. At the top, there are navigation links: "View Warehouse Savings", "Find a Warehouse", "Get Email Offers", and "Customer Service". Below this is the Costco logo and a search bar. A blue navigation bar contains links for "Shop All Departments", "Business Delivery", "Optical", "Pharmacy", "Services", "Photo", "Travel", "Membership", and "Locations". The breadcrumb trail indicates the product is in "Grocery, Household & Pet / Emergency Kits & Supplies / Emergency Food by the Pallet".

The product is titled "Nutrystore 1 Year Emergency Food Kit 6,200 Servings". It has a rating of 3.3 stars from 4 reviews and item number #823297. The price is listed as "Your Price \$999.99". Shipping and handling is included. Features include: Grains, Fruits, Vegetables, Dairy, and More; 1,200 Calories per day on average; Up to 25 Years Shelf Life on Freeze Dried Foods; and Total Servings 6,200. A quantity selector is set to 1, and there is an "Add to Cart" button. A note at the bottom states: "The estimated delivery time will be approximately 5 - 7 business days from the time of order."

(Photo: Costco.com)

Capitalists have a solution to everything, even surviving the end of the world.

Take Costco's 1-year emergency food kit for \$999.99, including shipping.

It is made up of nearly 100 cans — 1-gallon each and making 6,200 servings of food — of wheat, rice, granola, apples, bananas, peaches, strawberries, potatoes, carrots, beans, onions, corn, beef, chicken, milk, sugar and salt.

The cans, the company said, will last up to 25 years.

The Issaquah, Wash.-based warehouse club declined to offer much more about the items — or on how many people are buying the kit.

"We don't normally give out sales data," the company said in an e-mail to the Free Press. "The idea came about making a great starter kit for a family who wanted to prepare for any kind of disaster. This is a great value with shipping included."

Obviously, the disaster would have to be catastrophic for someone to need that much food.

The end is nigh

Entrepreneurs have long found ways to profit from people's fears, especially when they involve an apocalyptic scenario: being wiped out by a massive hurricane, getting caught in clashes among groups with fanatical beliefs and facing fallout from a nuclear war.

How much of a market is there for these emergency kits?

"Right now, it's too small of a trend to track," said Jeff Gelski, associate editor of [Food Business News](#) in Kansas City who has been writing about the food industry for more than a decade. "But, if Costco's in it, it might be something that's about to pop."

There are smaller and larger emergency food kits for sale, too.

In addition to a variety of online sellers, Walmart offers emergency food storage kits with enough food for two days, three days, a month, and a year that sell for \$25.88, \$58.99, \$134.99, and 1,290.99, respectively.

Costco is offering even bigger food kits, too, for \$3,999.99 and \$5,999.99.

The customers are "working people who fear for their lives," said Ken Dalto, a retail expert with Kenneth J. Dalto in Bingham Farms. He added that it's too soon to know how well these emergency kits are selling, but that with a nation of 320 million, there are plenty of people who are nervous about the future.



A Costco store in North Miami Beach, Fla. (Photo: Wilfredo Lee, AP)

"You have hurricanes. You saw what that did," he said, referring to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, which battered Texas, Louisiana, Florida and Puerto Rico. "You add to that climate change, and terrorism, and the idea of nuclear war, which is very much in the news with North Korea, and they can develop a missile that might be able to hit California — even Seattle."

In August, a month after North Korea tested an intercontinental ballistic missile, three-quarters of Americans said that North Korea's nuclear program is a critical threat facing the U.S., according to a Chicago Council on Global Affairs survey.

Last year, the survey showed 60% of Americans feared North Korea. It was 55% in 2015.

Dalto said people feel they can't prevent these disasters, so they do what they can: They shop.

Peace of mind

Profiting from things that make people feel more secure is not new.

Remember businesses that marketed backyard bomb shelters during the Cold War? Or all the computer software upgrades aimed at preventing the end of the world in a Y2K meltdown at the turn of the millennium?

"There's always that flip side that during tragedy, there's someone that's going to come out on top," said Adam Lovett, a salesman at Harry's Army Surplus in Dearborn. "You're in the business of: The worse it gets, the more you make. It's sad, but true."

How scared are folks now?

"There's a lot of people coming in now who are quite worried," he said, adding that most of them seem to be most troubled by political discord. "It's not at panic status or anything like that, but there are heightened concerns."

Mostly, he said, people are seeking to buy fire-starters, such as flint and steel strikers or waterproof matches; water purifiers, such as filters and chemical tablets, and simple outdoor shelters such as tents and lean-to devices.

Some people, he added, are even seeking survival kits in backpacks in case they have to leave their homes a hurry. Those run less than \$100.



Activists wearing masks to look like President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un pose next to a Styrofoam effigy of a nuclear bomb in front of the American embassy on Sept.13, 2017 in Berlin, Germany. (Photo: Omer Messinger, Getty Images)

Still, academics say no matter how convincing businesses are, sometimes it makes sense to invest more in information than in stuff.

"There's a new fear all the time," said Brian Bierley, director of media relations at Oakland University. "The people in Florida are living off the hurricane fear, and if they don't get hit, there's always something. On Twitter, there's a new threat every day."

To help address one of those fears, OU, in cooperation with three other educational institutions, is holding a student and community forum, Nukes and Your Future, from 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, in Room 1050 of the Human Health Building.

The free forum, which is open to the public, is set to include professors from OU, the University of Detroit-Mercy, Wayne State University and Henry Ford College and will examine the threats of nuclear weapons.

"Instead of buying a backyard bunker, we're talking through the realities," Bierley said. "Instead of buying these meals ready to eat that can be put in storage for 25 years, I'd arm myself with education and knowledge."