

The Good Pantry

The secret healthy cooking in a flash is a well-stocked pantry. Keeping healthy foods on hand, whether it be in your fridge, freezer, or on your pantry shelf, keeps them right at your fingertips, ready to create a great meal, anytime. Remember that creating a healthy dish does not mean that it has to be gourmet. It should be simple, fresh, and tasty. To keep time to a minimum, and nutrition in the forefront, here are some great items to keep on hand in your kitchen:

In the Fridge/Freezer:

Bagged romaine or baby spinach

Fresh vegetables: Things like peppers, onions, carrots, celery, and potatoes are good staples to keep; other seasonal or special veggies for recipes purchase as needed.

Fresh fruits: Things like apples, grapes and oranges keep well; other seasonal or special fruits for recipes purchase as needed.

Fat free milk or milk alternative (soy, almond)

Unsalted butter

Eggs or egg substitute

Natural 2% milk cheeses, or strong flavored full fat cheeses (sharp cheddar)

Boneless, skinless chicken breast (freeze if not used right away)

Extra lean ground beef, turkey or chicken (93% lean; freeze if not used right away)

Lean cuts of beef or pork (look for "loin" cuts and freeze if not used right away)

Veggie burgers

Chicken, turkey, or vegetarian sausage (keep in freezer if not used quickly)

Assorted frozen vegetables without added salt or sauces

Assorted frozen fruits without added sugars

On the Shelf:

Canned beans- any kind, reduced sodium

Canned tomatoes without added salt: crushed, diced, pureed, sauce, paste, seasoned

Salsas, any variety

Assorted canned vegetables without added salt

Reduced or low sodium broths: chicken, beef, vegetable

Assorted canned fruits without added sugars

Solid pack pumpkin

Canned or pouches of tuna or salmon (boneless) in water

Canned tuna in extra virgin olive oil, even flavors if you like (roasted garlic, lemon dill)

Cream soups (mushroom, chicken, celery), reduced fat, reduced sodium

Low sodium V8 or tomato juice

Heart healthy oils: olive, canola, peanut

Creamy, natural peanut butter or other nut butters like almond, hazelnut or soy

Assorted nuts or seeds (plain/lightly salted): almonds, pecans, walnuts, pumpkin and sunflower seeds

Dried fruits, preferably unsweetened (raisins, cranberries, apples, apricots, etc)

Sun dried tomatoes

Whole wheat flour

Corn meal

Powdered milk and/or buttermilk mix

Bread crumbs: Italian and plain

Brown rice

Whole wheat pasta shapes

Whole wheat bread, wraps or pita

Vinegars: red wine, apple cider, balsamic

Dijon mustard, spicy brown mustard

Hot pepper sauce

Reduced or low sodium soy sauce or teriyaki sauce

Dried herbs and spices: simple pantry staples include garlic powder/salt, onion powder/salt, oregano, parsley, basil, rosemary, black pepper, salt free seasoning blend (like Mrs. Dash), cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, allspice and vanilla extract. See our herb and spice guide for many others.

*Remember, not all of these things need to be in your pantry, only the ones that you love and use frequently. Keeping favorites on hand will always ensure you have a way to make a fast and healthy meal, and can avoid the take out trap! Enjoy!