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Stocking the Pantry with Healthy, Shelf-Stable Food

What foods should I buy to stock my pantry?

With the recommendation to limit outings to protect yourself against COVID-19, you may wonder what foods to choose to stock your pantry. It is especially important at this time to eat healthy foods that assist your body's natural ability to fight against sickness. Be prepared to make healthy, nourishing meals by filling your pantry with a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds.

Stores restock at night and will generally have the most options available in the morning. If you don't feel comfortable leaving your home, many grocery stores will deliver your grocery list. Call your local grocery store or look online to see what they offer. Amazon also delivers some shelf-stable groceries.

Fruits

Fruits are rich in vitamins, antioxidants, and fiber. These whole foods are a good alternative to sweet treats for dessert.

- Some fruits, like apples and oranges, will stay fresh in the fridge for up to one month.
- Frozen fruit is a great choice. Berries are rich in antioxidants and can be added to your morning oatmeal.
- When choosing canned or jarred fruit, look for those canned in their own juice vs. syrup, or light syrup. Unsweetened applesauce or jarred peaches are a nice choice for dessert.

Vegetables

Vegetables are a great source of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber.

- Some vegetables like potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash, and onions will stay fresh when stored in a dark, cool space for about one month. Avoid refrigeration until after cooking.



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- Carrots, beets, and cabbage will stay fresh for a few weeks when stored in the fridge.
- Frozen vegetables are also a great choice. Go for leafy greens, cauliflower, broccoli, stir-fry vegetables, and California blends. Think color and variety. Look for options without added salt or sauces.
- When choosing canned vegetables, look for options labeled as “no-added-salt” or those that are low in sodium. Canned tomatoes, tomato paste, low-sodium pasta sauce, and no-added-salt peas and corn are all good choices.

Whole Grains

Whole grains are rich in fiber, filling, and shelf-stable. They make a great base for a hearty meal.

- Choose intact whole grains like oatmeal, brown rice, or quinoa.
- Look for 100% whole grain pasta, or bean-based pasta.
- Choose 100% whole wheat bread and tortillas, or corn tortillas. (These can all be frozen.)

Legumes

Beans, peas, and lentils are rich in fiber, and very satisfying. They are an inexpensive and shelf-stable source of plant-based protein.

- You can find dried beans in the bulk section, or in bags from the shelf. Cook a large batch and add them to tacos, soups, salads, or bowls.
- Dry lentils cook up in 20-25 minutes and do not require soaking. They work well in soups.
- When choosing canned beans, look for no-added-salt or low-sodium options. If you can't find any that are low-sodium, rinse them before adding them to your dish.
- Make your own [hummus](#) to use as a dip or sauce.

Unsalted Nuts/Seeds

Nuts and seeds are a heart-healthy source of fat and add a nice texture to the meal.

- Add nuts or seeds to morning oatmeal or to salads. Or, enjoy as a snack.
- Enjoy a slice of peanut butter toast.

For healthy weight loss, limit your serving size to ¼ cup per day of whole nuts, or 2 tablespoons peanut butter. Store in the fridge or freezer to extend their shelf life.



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Other Pantry Items

Consider purchasing low-sodium vegetable stock, no-added-salt spice blends, low-sodium salsa, non-dairy milk, canned tuna or salmon, and hummus.

Turning Pantry Staples into Meals

Breakfast

Any cooked, whole-grain cereal or muesli, fruit, seeds or nuts.

- Oatmeal with berries, banana or raisins, and nuts or seeds (see attached recipe).
- 100% whole wheat bread with nut butter and smashed berries.

Lunch/Dinner

Any beans, vegetables, starchy vegetables or whole grains, and fruit.

- **Soup** – Combine canned tomatoes, chopped potatoes, fresh or frozen vegetables, beans or lentils, vegetable broth, no-added-salt spice blends.
- **Bowl** – Combine grains, fresh or frozen vegetables, leafy greens, and canned beans. Top with hummus, salsa or vinaigrette style salad dressings. Add nuts or seeds for garnish. Try stir-fry veggies, brown rice, and edamame topped with sesame seeds.
- **Pasta** – Start with 100% whole wheat or bean-based pasta, top with fresh or frozen California style veggies, white beans, low-sodium pasta sauce.
- **Salad** – Combine fresh greens, colorful vegetables, canned beans, nuts/seeds, vinaigrette style dressing.
- **Potato Bar** – Baked potato or sweet potato topped with black beans, corn, salsa or hummus. Serve with a side of heated vegetables.
- **Tacos/Wraps** – Use flour or corn tortillas as a base. Heat vegetables like cauliflower, spinach and drained canned tomatoes. Add pinto beans, black beans, or low-sodium refried beans and cabbage. Garnish with salsa or hummus.

Snacks

Fruit, carrots and hummus, leftovers, unsalted nuts, peanut butter toast, small bean burrito, unsweetened apple sauce, small bowl of oatmeal with fruit.



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Need a few recipes to get you started? Try these hearty, batch-style meals.

Recipes

Triple Berry Oat Bowl (1-3 servings)

Ingredients

- 1½ cups rolled oats
- 1 tbsp flax seed meal or nuts
- 1½ cups unsweetened milk alternative (almond, soy, etc.)
- ¼ cup raisins or 1 banana
- 1½ cups triple berry, frozen
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp powdered ginger, optional

Method

Thaw berries. Mix all ingredients together in a large bowl. Eat immediately or chill for at least 30 minutes. Eat cold or hot. Can be divided into smaller containers. Store for up to one week in airtight containers. Make at least 4 or more at a time for an easy breakfast option.

Chili Baked Potato (3-4 servings)

Ingredients

- 4 large potatoes (any variety)
- 2 cups pinto beans
- 1 cup salsa
- 2 cups corn, frozen, thawed
- ¼ cup hummus, optional
- ¼ cup sunflower seeds, optional

Method

Scrub potatoes thoroughly and rinse with water. Prick the potatoes in a few places with a fork to allow steam to escape during the baking process. Bake potatoes in microwave for 10-15 minutes (depending on size of potatoes). You can use a conventional oven if desired (bake for 60 minutes at 425 degrees). Potatoes are done when the insides feel completely soft when pierced. Remove from microwave and set aside to cool (be CAREFUL they are HOT). When cool enough to touch, slice in half.



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In a medium saucepan over medium heat, combine beans, salsa, and corn. Cook for 10 minutes or until hot. When chili is ready scoop ½ cup onto each baked potato. Dollop 1 tablespoon of hummus and sprinkle 1 tablespoon sunflower seeds over the top. If desired, garnish potatoes with chili powder or smoked paprika. Serve hot with a side of steamed vegetables or salad.

Lentil Lemon Soup (6-8 servings)

Ingredients

- 1 lb dry lentils
- 8 cups water or low-sodium vegetable broth
- 1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
- 1 tbsp salt, optional
- 2 tsp garlic powder (or 2 cloves raw)
- 2 tbsp dried onion flakes
- 3 bay leaves
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ½ tbsp red pepper flakes
- 2 cups carrots, washed and chopped
- 1 package frozen greens
- 3 medium potatoes

Method

Wash carrots and potatoes, chop set aside. In a medium saucepan, combine all ingredients (except frozen greens). Cover partially and cook over moderately low heat until the lentils are tender, about 25 minutes. Add frozen greens and continue cooking until they are heated through. Pour soup into bowls, serve hot with brown rice, quinoa, or slices of fresh or toasted bread on the side. Freeze leftovers.

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