



CHEAT SHEET

Clean Food Pantry Staples

Flexible everyday cooking requires that you keep your dry goods pantry well supplied with high-quality basics. Following is a list of the top ten foods you should stock on a regular basis for making tasty and nutritious meals and snacks quickly. If you keep these items on hand at all times, they will provide a base for building easy meals from the fresh, seasonal perishables you purchase each week –animal foods, fruit and vegetables.

How well does your current pantry stack up? Copy this list and take it with you to your grocery and natural food stores to lay the foundation for your clean food kitchen.

Beans: dried or canned (additive and salt-free, organic): black, kidney, garbanzo, navy, adzuki, split pea, lentils, etc.

Beans are a cheap, shelf-stable staple that you should always keep on hand for a high-fiber meal or side in a pinch. Dried beans are the least expensive, but good quality canned beans are also reasonable, super quick and easy, and they retain much of their nutritional value. Chick peas can become a simple hummus in minutes, and black bean can turn a green salad into a Mexican entrée. Keep a good selection on your pantry shelves.

Broth or stock, organic: free-range chicken, vegetable, beef

Most canned soups are of pretty poor quality. They have usually lost much of their nutritional potency and, unless they are of the tasteless, low-sodium variety, are always too high in salt. You

can still have soup in a hurry if you use the broth/stock to make it yourself from quick proteins (such as frozen shrimp or pre-cooked chicken or beef), and a selection of veggies. Homemade soup is always the superior nutritional choice.

Fish and Shellfish, canned, jarred or tinned: chunk light or skipjack tuna in water, Alaskan wild-caught boneless, skinless salmon in water, mackerel, sardines, anchovies, lump blue crab meat, etc.

Shelf-stable seafood is my favorite pantry protein staple. It tastes great and can be converted into a meal or snack in minutes. Try rolling sardines up in lettuce leaves with red pepper strips and a squeeze of lemon, or make a tuna fish salad with a mix of mayo and Dijon, chopped avocado and celery, and sprinkling of toasted pine

nuts. Bonus nutritional points for the rich, hard-to-find, omega 3 fatty acids in salmon, mackerel and sardines.

Kudzu: a starchy root (powdered) found in the ethnic or macrobiotic sections of natural foods stores

Kudzu is used as a thickener for sauces, stews and gravies. It's more nutritious than cornstarch and yields a smoother texture with no "starchy" taste. It is also soothing to the digestive system. To use it, dissolve it in cold water or other thin liquid before adding to foods (1 part kudzu to 2 parts water). Simmer the mixture for a minute or two for maximum thickening. You can add it to fruit to thicken pie filling, or stir it into hot liquids like gravy. Use the same measurements as cornstarch.

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Clean Food Pantry Staples, continued

Nuts and Seeds, raw and roasted: walnuts, almonds, sunflower, pumpkin, sesame, etc.

Nuts and seeds are nutritious, filling and very versatile. In addition to all their well-known uses as snacks and salad additions, you can grind them up and mix with shredded coconut and a drizzle of oil to make a starch-and-flour-free pie crust. You can process a small handful (raw) with two cups of water in a high-speed blender to make instant, high-fiber nut milk, or use half the amount of water to make a dairy-free “cream” (the cream works best with cashews or pine nuts, especially when they are soaked for an hour prior to blending).

Oils: first cold-pressed olive, raw, unrefined coconut, avocado, walnut, sesame, chili, peanut, etc

Keep a good selection on hand and to use for safe cooking at different temperatures and to make a variety of different salad dressings.

Soy Sauce: wheat-free, low-sodium tamari or shoyu (traditional fermented soy sauce made with wheat – fermentation breaks down the soy to make it more digestible)

Small amounts of high quality soy sauce such as tamari or shoyu instantly

give almost any dish an Asian flair. It works equally well in marinades, in salad dressings, dips, sauces, soups and stews.

Safer Sweeteners: NuNaturals Vanilla Stevia, erythritol or xylitol, and/or palm sugar, coconut nectar, and brown rice syrup

Keep regular sugars out of your pantry and use lower-glycemic-load choices such as stevia or the sugar alcohols erythritol or xylitol. Both of the sugar alcohols are a little less sweet than sugar, but you can use comparable amounts in most recipes, including baked goods. Xylitol is sweeter, but erythritol causes less digestive distress than xylitol in people who are sensitive to that harmless but not-so-pleasant side effect. If your body can handle actual sugars, palm sugar, coconut nectar (both made from coconut) and rice syrup have the lowest glycemic loads of all the natural sweeteners, including raw honey, pure maple syrup, blackstrap molasses and agave nectar (which you should not eat because it's nearly pure fructose).

Tomatoes: canned, paste, sundried

With different kinds of shelf-stable tomatoes on hand

you can make a wide variety of multi-cultural dishes. Fire-roasted diced tomatoes make a delicious, easy chili. Tomato paste enlivens everything from meatloaf to Bolognese sauce. And sundried tomatoes can turn a simple hummus into something special, or be combined with fresh summer tomatoes and fresh basil to create an instant raw red sauce.

Vinegars: apple cider, balsamic, red wine, white wine, unseasoned rice or Japanese umeboshi plum (salty and sour, light citrusy flavor, unfermented – no acetic acid), etc.

Stocking a variety of different vinegars allows you to add flare to simply prepared whole foods. Vinegar is also a foundational ingredient in great home-prepared vinaigrettes –superior in every way to the poor quality bottled options. Homemade vinaigrettes are less expensive, more flavorful and much more nutritious than anything you can find at the store.