



Secrets of a Well-Stocked Pantry

With a well-stocked pantry, you can put together healthy, last-minute meals, even when you walk in the door at 5 pm and wonder, “What’s for dinner tonight?” In addition to the basics—things like extra virgin olive and canola oils, flour (whole wheat too!), sugar, oatmeal, 1% milk, salt, pepper, and spices—here are a dozen pantry staples that will make dinners quick and easy (and delicious and healthy!):



1. **Pasta** – Dry pasta or frozen ravioli cooks up in minutes. Pasta meals are a great way to get your family to eat more vegetables, beans, and fish, too! Look for whole wheat or other whole grain choices.
2. **Canned Beans** – Add them to salads and soups to make every meal more filling. Or mash with a little garlic and oil and cook briefly to make delicious refried beans. Choose low-sodium beans, and rinse thoroughly.
3. **Ready-to-Eat Veggies** – Baby carrots, pre-washed greens, sliced mushrooms and other already-prepped fresh vegetables save time. Frozen vegetables are handy too.
4. **Eggs** – They’re not just for breakfast. Make a veggie omelet or frittata for dinner!
5. **Soups** – Freeze a batch of homemade soup in small containers, or add extra veggies and whole grains to store-bought soups for a hearty meal in minutes.
6. **Pita Bread or Tortillas (whole wheat)** – Either one can be used as a base for homemade pizza; tortillas also can be made into fajitas and quesadillas in no time.
7. **Canned or Pouched Fish** – The perfect heart-healthy pantry staple, with a three-year shelf life both for cans and for the new pouches, which keep tuna and salmon especially firm and fresh.
8. **Pasta Sauce** – Great for pasta, but also for homemade pita pizza and dozens of other quick dishes. Choose varieties low in sodium and sugar.
9. **Cheese** – A small amount of a grated full-flavored cheese like Parmesan or pecorino goes a long way; shredded part-skim mozzarella is also a great choice.
10. **Whole Grains** – Make a big batch of brown rice, wheat berries, or another grain on the weekend, then freeze in small plastic bags for your own “instant” grains.
11. **Chicken, Turkey or Vegetable Sausage** – Chop and brown all-natural pre-cooked sausage, then freeze it so you can easily add a little meaty flavor and texture to soups, omelets, and pasta meals.
12. **Nuts and Seeds** – With a selection of nuts and seeds (such as sunflower or pumpkin) in your pantry, it’s easy to toast a few and add as a crunchy garnish on salads, vegetables or stir-fries.