

MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES: WEEK 27

Stock your pantry

Staple pantry items might be different for each family but generally the types of food and products are the same. These include herbs and spices, grains and grain products such as rice and pasta, and canned foods such as tuna, beans and other vegetables.

A good way to start building your pantry is to know what ingredients your family uses most often. Keep a calendar or notebook in the kitchen to track the meals that you and your family eat regularly. This could also help you to build your menu for the week and to write your grocery list.



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Did you know?

Keeping an inventory can help you track when pantry items are running low. Make sure to purchase them before you run out!



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Shelf-stable items

Shelf-stable items will probably make up the bulk of your pantry. Keeping these items stocked can make it easier for you to create last-minute meals when you haven't planned them. Combining whole-wheat spaghetti, canned crushed tomatoes and some dried oregano and basil is just one example of a quick meal than can be thrown together from shelf-stable items alone. Other examples include rice and beans, oatmeal with cinnamon and canned apples, and many types of soup, stews and chilies.

If you restock the items when they are low, you can reduce the need for expensive grocery trips. Remember to use the older products first.

Seasonings - herbs and spices

When stored out of direct sunlight and away from any moisture and heat, dried herbs and spices have a long shelf life. Herbs and spices are great for quickly adding extra flavor to both sweet and savory foods. (See Week 19 for more tips.) Make sure to double-check your spice cabinet before leaving the house as it's easy to forget what seasonings you have at home.

WEEKLY RECIPE

Remember to wash your hands and prepare food safely.

Homemade Croutons*

1. Using **bread** that is a few days past its prime but not yet moldy, cut into cubes.
2. In a large pan, melt about a **tablespoon of butter** over medium heat.
3. Add bread cubes to the pan, toss to coat with butter and let cook on each side for about 1 minute. Toss and turn until all sides are cooked.
4. Sprinkle lightly with your **favorite seasonings**, such as oregano or basil, and store in an airtight container.
5. *To make breadcrumbs instead of croutons, toast the bread instead of cutting into cubes, and then run it through the food processor.



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Recipe from Brown, L. (2014.) *Good and cheap: Eat well on \$4/day*. NY: Workman.

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Acknowledgements

Developed by Erin E. Powell, MS, RDN; Tom Cummins; Elizabeth Dorman and Denise Aungst, MS; for MSU Extension. Based on a concept created by Denise Aungst and Layne Schlicher for MSU Extension. Produced by ANR Creative for MSU Extension.



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