



FLY BY THE SEAT OF YOUR PANTRY

THE WELL-STOCKED PANTRY

The home pantry, whether it is a small closet dedicated to foodstuffs, a re-appropriated laundry room (in my case), a free-standing cabinet from Ikea, or just a regular kitchen cabinet, can be, if consistently stocked, your “go-to” grocery store when it comes time to make a quick meal. Your home pantry includes your refrigerator because some of the regular items you should stock are perishable and should be replaced on a weekly basis and others are longer-lasting staples that will be restocked as you use them up.

If your pantry and refrigerator are stocked with these ingredients you can be secure in the knowledge that no matter what time it is, and no matter who shows up hungry on your doorstep, there will always be something to eat. With a few basic recipes you can master with repetition, along with some imagination you will be “flying by the seat of your pantry” in no time!

PANTRY STAPLES

Extra Virgin Olive Oil: a good quality to be used raw for salad dressings, dipping, finishing dishes.

Extra Virgin Olive Oil: a lesser quality that you will cook with, but is still decent

Various Other Oils: Sesame or Toasted Sesame Oil, Walnut Oil, Canola or Safflower (neutral oil good for frying, cooking, salads), Flax Oil.

Vinegars: Aged Balsamic, Champagne, Sherry, Rice Wine, Red Wine, White Wine, Apple Cider, White

Salt: Kosher for everyday cooking. A sea salt for grinding and/or finishing.

Black Peppercorns and a good grinder that lets you adjust the fineness of the grind

Dried Spices – Replace jarred spices after 6 months or so...they do go stale. This list makes a well-rounded spice drawer:

Cumin, Cayenne, Red Pepper Flakes, Curry Powder, Garlic Powder, Onion Powder, Cardamom, Fennel Seed, Mustard Seed, Celery Seed or Salt, Ground Cinnamon, Ground Cloves, Chinese 5-Spice Powder, Ras Al Hanout, Smoked Paprika, Sweet Paprika, Mustard Powder, Allspice, Star Anise, Cinnamon Sticks, Bay Leaf, Whole Cloves, Ground Nutmeg or if available Whole Nutmeg (grated with microplane), Ground Ginger, Chili Flakes, Crushed Red Pepper, Sesame Seed, Poppy Seed.

Grated White Horseradish

Hot sauce

Various Pasta Shapes: Spaghetti, linguine, orzo, rotelle or penne, cous cous

Grains: Quinoa, Buckwheat, Millet, Quick Polenta

Various Rices: Brown, Basmati, Jasmine, Arborio (risotto).

Dried Beans or Canned Beans (cannelloni, black, chickpeas, kidney, black eyed peas)



Canned Tomatoes: Whole, or diced, in chemical free cans or “boxes” such as POMI

Tomato Paste: A dab of tomato paste added when building a soup or sauce can intensify flavor.

Anchovies (I prefer them in jars so I can seal them back up and refrigerate)

Capers

Various Flours: All Purpose Unbleached, Cake Flour, Whole Wheat, Almond Flour

Various Sugars: White Granulated, Confectioners, Turbinado, Light Brown, Dark Brown, Molasses

Various Condiments: Ketchup, Worcestershire, Tabasco, Tamari (Soy Sauce), Mayonnaise, Miso,

Canned Tuna: I prefer Bumble Bee Low Sodium. Or imported tuna packed in olive oil. All other tuna’s contain MSG “vegetable broth”

Honey, Stevia, maple syrup,

Baking Powder, Baking Soda, Dry Active Yeast (these lose their “punch” so should be replaced after 6 months)

Corn Starch, Potato Starch

Pure Vanilla Extract, Almond extract, Orange Extract

A bag of semisweet chocolate chips

Dutched cocoa; unsweetened cocoa

Various Jams: try “all fruit” jams that don’t contain added sugar!

Nut butters: try almond, cashew, sunflower instead of peanut!

Medium or Fine Grid Corn Meal

Cooking Wines: Red Wine, White Wine, Marsala, Madiera, Mirin (**Sweet Rice Wine**)

Wines that are not too expensive, but drinkable to use for cooking. I keep box wines for this purpose because they last opened for up to 2 months.

Other cooking alcohols: Brandy, Dark Rum, Bourbon, Vodka, various liquors such as Grand Marnier, Amaretto, Sherry, Orange or Grapefruit bitters

PERISHABLE STAPLES

Note: I always recommend buy organic whenever possible or affordable or supporting local farms by frequenting farmers markets and producers that use sustainable, low or no pesticide practices. I especially suggest using all organic dairy products when possible to lower your exposure to unwanted antibiotics and hormones present in conventionally raised dairy and meats. If you can’t always find organic meats (or can afford them!) at least try to find the meats in your area or in your grocer’s meat section that are raised anti-biotic and hormone-free. Hormones from meats and dairy can wreak havoc with our own hormonal systems and cause imbalances that lead to weight gain, hormonal issues, fertility issues and other serious health problems.

Garlic, Yellow Onions, Red Onions, Shallots

Celery, Carrots, Grape Tomatoes

Avocados

Various Olives: Green, Kalamata, Black

Lemons, Limes, Oranges



Fresh Herbs: Parsley, Rosemary, Thyme, Cilantro, Mint, Sage, Tarragon, Ginger Root (Start a kitchen herb garden and save money!) I keep my store-bought cut herbs in a vase, with stems submerged in water, on the counter, out of direct sunlight. They last up to a week if you change the water every other day.

Mustards: Dijon, Brown, Yellow

Eggs (organic or free range if possible)

Cheeses: Hunks of Pecorino Romano, Reggiano Parmesan for grating. Cheddar or Gruyere for melting and in casseroles, and Feta and Goat for salads and savory preparations. Ricotta, Cottage, Cream Cheese.

Nuts: pine nuts, blanched almonds, walnuts, pecans, peanuts, cashews, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds. I tend to keep these in air-tight containers or zip locks and keep them in the fridge. The oils in the nuts can go rancid if kept out for weeks at a time. If you use them up quickly, no need to refrigerate, but if not, then store in fridge. Same goes for specialty oils you don't use that much.

Chicken Broth: Low Sodium and Organic

Beef Broth: Low Sodium and Organic

Vegetable Broth: Low Sodium

Unsalted and Salted Butter

Milk, or Milk Substitutes (Do not recommend Soy or milks with lots of gums and preservatives and fillers. Soy can elevate estrogen levels...not good! Gums and fillers can irritate the stomach. Read labels...some Almond and Coconut milks kept in the refrigerated section of the grocery store don't contain additives...look for those!)

Cream, Half and Half

Sour Cream

Bread, (make break crumbs from stale bread and freeze).

Potatoes

Sweet Potatoes

Broccoli Heads

Cauliflower Heads

Zucchini

Other Vegetables you prefer