



# From the Food Bank Kitchen

## Stocking A Healthy Pantry

*Healthy eating doesn't have to be hard. Having your pantry shelves stocked with nutritious food is a necessity for quick and healthy meals. This way, while planning a healthy meal for your family, you will have the essentials to prepare meals easily and quickly. Keeping these vital items in the pantry will help create nourishing meals and snacks for everyone.*

### GRAINS

- **Brown Rice:** This and other whole grains can lower risk for type 2 diabetes when compared with white rice. Using instant versions will decrease cooking time. Also consider trying **barley**, a whole grain ready in 40 minutes (2 cups water: 1 cup barley).
- **Whole wheat pasta:** This grain contains many heart healthy benefits and can be quickly cooked. Look for "whole wheat" as the first ingredient. Adding vegetables can transform it into a well-balanced meal. If you don't care for 100% whole wheat pasta, try opting for a blended version which still contains nutritional benefits, but tastes more like the 100% semolina pasta you are used to. Ronzoni, Barilla, Big Y, and Stop and Shop all offer this half and half whole grain variety.
- **Quinoa:** Quinoa is a grain-like seed that can be prepared similarly to rice, but you gain the benefits of higher protein content — 8 gm per cup cooked compared with 5 gm in brown rice. It is versatile for use as a side or main dish.
- **Popcorn (kernels):** Popcorn can be a quick, cheap and healthy snack. Instead of pre-packaged versions high in sodium and/or fat, you can microwave your own by placing about ¼ cup kernels in a paper lunch bag, folding over the top, and microwaving until popping slows. Watch carefully. Season it yourself with garlic, cinnamon, chili powder or parmesan cheese.

### PROTEINS

- **Beans and Lentils:** Canned beans are easy to store and are full of nutrients. Rinsing them before using will reduce sodium. Dried lentils are faster to cook than dried beans. To do so, use a 2:1 ratio of water to lentils, boil, then simmer for 20 minutes.
- **Nuts/Nut Butters:** These can be the perfect snack because of the beneficial fats, fiber and protein. Watching your calories? Try to limit serving size to 1 oz of nuts (23 almonds or 14 walnut halves) or spread 1-2 Tbsp peanut or nut butter on a rice cake.
- **Powdered Eggs:** Great as a back up if you ever run out of eggs, powdered eggs can easily be substituted in any recipe. 1 whole egg is equal to 2 Tbsp powder + 3 Tbsp water. (Tip: place in fridge for 15 minutes first).

### FRUITS & VEGETABLES

- **Canned Fruits:** Look for no sugar added, fruit in juice, or light syrup instead of heavy syrups. If you have fruit in heavy syrup, try rinsing and draining to cut down on sugar content.
- **Canned Vegetables:** Choose low sodium versions to reduce sodium intake. Canned tomatoes are especially useful to keep around to add to sauces in multiple recipes. Add canned vegetables to a variety of soups and stews.
- **Dried Fruit:** This is a great alternative to canned fruits. They can be added to foods such as oatmeal and yogurt, or eaten individually as a snack. Be cautious of serving size though, because they are concentrated in natural sugars, and may also contain added sugars. The recommended serving size for dried fruits is one quarter of a cup.

## Pasta e Fagioli (Italian pasta and bean soup) 12 servings Adapted from SparkPeople.com

- 1 (29 oz) can diced tomatoes, no salt added
- 1 (14 oz) can Northern beans, drained and rinsed\*
- 1 package (10 oz) frozen chopped spinach, thawed
- 2 quarts low sodium vegetable or chicken stock
- 1 (8 oz) can tomato sauce
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 Tbsp garlic, minced
- ½ tsp pepper
- 1 tsp salt
- 1½ tsp basil

- 1½ tsp rosemary
- 1½ tsp thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 2-3 carrots, peeled and diced (optional)
- ½ pound shell or macaroni type pasta (uncooked)

\* Any type of bean can be substituted for Northern beans.

Nutrition Facts: Calories 156, Fat 1 gm, Saturated Fat .2 gm, Sodium 450 mg, Carbs 32 gm, Fiber 6 gm, Protein 8 gm

**Directions:** Sauté in frying pan onion, garlic, and spices in oil for a few minutes. Add to a large soup pot rest of ingredients except pasta. Add onion mixture to pot and bring to a boil. Then cover and simmer 30 minutes on low heat. Return to a boil and add pasta. Cook 12 minutes, or until pasta is tender. Serve with grated Parmesan or Romano cheese sprinkled on top. *To create a more filling main course, add to one portion 3 ounces of leftover cooked chicken, turkey, pork, fish or beef.*

**See other side for more tips and a money-saving recipe for homemade chicken stock**

## Other Pantry Essentials

- **Cooking Spray:** With barely any calories, canola or olive oil spray makes cooking convenient when you need a little oil to prevent sticking. Using a nonstick frying pan can also help avoid the mess of food getting stuck while preparing a meal.
- **Stock:** Look for low sodium versions of chicken, vegetable or beef stock, as these come in handy for numerous recipes. Making your own stock is a great idea too! See below for a simple chicken stock recipe.
- **Vinegar:** These are great for adding flavor to dishes without adding fat, sodium or significant calories. Experiment with different types such as red wine, balsamic, or apple cider vinegar as well as herbed vinegars.
- **Dried Herbs & Spices:** These are the easiest, healthiest way to enhance the flavor of any food. Keep a wide variety in your pantry to go with every dish. Check out the site [www.Nutrition411.com](http://www.Nutrition411.com) *Herbs: A Guide for Cooking with Herbs*.
- **For baking:** Keep on hand regular and whole wheat flours, oats, cornmeal, baking soda, cornstarch, sugar, brown sugar, baking powder, applesauce, honey, vanilla extract and cocoa powder to make a wide range of baked goods from scratch.
- **Oils:** Canola and olive oils contain more heart healthy monounsaturated fats than other oils. Olive oil is known to add its own flavor, which is why it is highly recommended to keep in the pantry.
  - ◆ Suggested use of regular olive oil is for sautéing or frying
  - ◆ Extra virgin olive oil is best for use in salad dressings and marinades

## Homemade Chicken Stock

Adapted from [www.cheapcooking.com](http://www.cheapcooking.com)

- 1 tsp garlic powder or 3 cloves fresh garlic, minced
- 2 –3 chicken carcasses\* or 1 whole chicken or 2-3 lbs bone-in chicken parts
- water to cover chicken
- 1 tsp thyme
- 1 tsp parsley
- 1 tsp salt
- A few shakes of pepper
- 2 stalks of celery (broken into chunks)
- 2 carrots (broken into chunks)
- 1 onion, halved
- *\*You can freeze and save them until you have 2 or 3 accumulated*

**Directions:** Place chicken carcasses in a pot and cover with water. You can break apart carcass to fit into pot if needed. Bring to a boil, then quickly turn down to a bare simmer. A gray scum will likely be on top; you can skim this off with a spoon and your broth should be clear. Add the vegetable chunks and seasoning, partially cover, and simmer gently. If using chicken with bones or a whole chicken, after an hour, pull the chicken parts out and let cool on something that can catch drained juices. Then pull the meat off the bone, and place the bones back into the pot to simmer for another few hours, or longer if you have time. Place the cooked meat in the fridge or freezer for later use in any recipe. Strain the soup using a colander or cheesecloth and pour it into a large jar; refrigerate overnight. In the morning, spoon the solidified fat off the top. Store broth in fridge, or freeze in 1 cup or 1 quart containers for later use. Use refrigerated broth within **3 days**.

## Additional Tips for Keeping a Stocked Pantry

Stocking up your pantry to make it healthier and easier to cook is the first step. Once you have your pantry all set, it is important to keep it full of the essentials. Here are some tips to make sure you are never out of what you need.

### Stay Organized

It may help to group the items in your pantry according to use or food group. This will help to limit waste and allow you to see when you need to restock. Keep a paper and pen handy, or put up a whiteboard to jot down items as you run low. You could also invest in extra shelving and labeled storage containers to designate a place for each food item.

### Buy in Bulk

Buying in bulk from bulk bins or at stores like BJ's or Costco can help save you money. Compare unit prices to get the best deals, and take advantage of weekly sale flyers. If buying in bulk is too much product for your family or you don't have room to store it, team up with friends to split the cost. That way, you all get to save money, and still get the amount you need.

### FIFO ("First In First Out")

This is a technique used by most supermarkets and restaurants; it is used to reduce food spoilage and ensure you are using fresh products. Simply keep the oldest stocked food in front, and place the newest items in the back. When an item is opened, label that item with the date to keep track of freshness. This method will allow you to easily use the food in the order that you bought it. For more pantry organizing and money saving tips, see [www.cheapcooking.com](http://www.cheapcooking.com).