



Making Common Food Pantry Items Healthier

Common Food Pantry Item	Suggested Uses	Comments
Cheddar Cheese Soup	<p>Soup or casserole: mix with equal parts fat free milk to make a creamy soup or casserole base. Add chopped vegetables, barley, brown rice, or whole wheat pasta for additional fiber and flavor.</p> <p>Dip or topping: for reduced fat crackers, chips, raw vegetables, or burritos:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mix with equal parts low sodium salsa 2. Also try mixing with equal parts fat free sour cream to make a cheesy cracker dip. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High in total fat, saturated fat, and sodium but an excellent source of vitamin A and calcium • Mixing with fat free milk significantly reduces the fat and sodium content.
Canned Salmon	<p>Patties: mix with egg, bread crumbs, season with herbs, form into a patty and bake</p> <p>Other: add to soup/chowder, tossed salad, pasta salad, or add mayo and eat on a sandwich</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully cooked and can be eaten hot or cold (quick and easy) • High in sodium but an excellent source of calcium • Only 120 calories per serving
Dried Beans	<p>Most need to be soaked overnight, then simmered for 60-120 minutes (depending on type of bean). Add to soups, burritos, stews, side dishes, or salads. The most economical way to cook with beans. Lentils can be cooked up quickly without soaking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fat, sodium, and cholesterol free • High in fiber and a good source of iron and protein
1% shelf stable milk	<p>Use anywhere regular milk is used: on cereals or to add calcium and richness to oatmeal, in smoothies, soups, or desserts like pudding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not need to be refrigerated until opened Store unopened for 1 month or up to 1 week (refrigerated) after opened • High in calcium and a good source of vitamin A • Low in fat and cholesterol
Canned tuna	<p>Use in salads, casseroles, sandwiches, or main dishes both hot and cold. Tuna packed in water is healthier choice than packed in oil.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 ounces provides 100 calories and 22 g protein (half the calories but same amount of protein as an 85% lean hamburger)



Canned chicken	<p>Add to quesadillas, enchiladas, tacos, or spaghetti for a quick meal or use in soups, casseroles, or chicken salad.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 oz provides only 140 calories but 23 grams of protein • Fully cooked, so is safe to eat without cooking
Beef stew	<p>Eat as stew or serve over pasta, rice, or potatoes.</p> <p>Use equal parts stew and milk or water and add fresh or frozen chopped vegetables to reduce the amount of sodium consumed per serving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High in sodium • Good source of protein, vitamin A, vitamin C and fiber
Plain yogurt	<p>Add frozen fruit and low-fat granola to make a parfait. Can mix plain yogurt with 1 tsp of jam or honey to provide more sweetness with much less sugar than pre-sweetened varieties.</p> <p>Blend with milk, juice, and fruit to make a high-calcium smoothie. Greek yogurt has twice as much protein as regular yogurt so is more filling.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for low-fat/fat-free options • Excellent source of protein • May be fortified with vitamin D, which assists calcium absorption
Cottage cheese	<p>Use on salad, add herbs to make a dip, or use to partially replace cheese in stuffed shells, lasagna, macaroni & cheese or other entrees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready-to-eat
Bakery mix (low fat)	<p>Use to make biscuits, dumplings, shortcake, pancakes, waffles, muffins, pizza dough, and cakes.</p> <p>Use to make a crust topping for casseroles, fruit crisps, or other baked dishes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% less fat than regular bakery mix • Fairly high in sodium
Frozen fruit	<p>Eat by itself as a cool treat or in a smoothie, on cold cereal or oatmeal, in yogurt, muffins, pudding, or made into a warm sauce to top pancakes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower in calories than most foods and usually a good source of fiber and nutrients
Fresh produce	<p>Eat raw or cooked and add to any entrée, soup, or side dish.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower in calories than most foods and usually a good source of fiber and nutrients