

Nourish Yourself Week 1: Stock Your Pantry + Get To (Re)-Know Breakfast

For this week's handout, we will focus on getting to know our pantries and (re-)introduce a regular breakfast routine into our mornings to rev us up for the day. For stocking your pantry, note that everything mentioned here is simply a guideline/suggestion. Everyone's preferences, schedules, and cooking abilities are unique, and your pantry will and should reflect that.

The Importance of a Well-Stocked Pantry

A good pantry can get you most if not all of the way to a great meal, fast. While everyone's pantry looks different, there are a few basic staples that will get you far no matter what you're cooking:

Extra-virgin olive oil

A flavorful everyday cooking oil that can be used for all but the highest-heat applications. Its rich flavor is great for homemade vinaigrettes and sauces. California Olive Ranch is a great widely available brand.

Neutral oil

This refers to any cooking oil that can withstand higher heat cooking, such as grapeseed, avocado, canola, vegetable, or sunflower. Use in high-heat cooking (e.g. stir-fries) or when you don't want the strong flavor of olive oil to clash with other flavors in a dish (e.g. in many Asian dishes).

Kosher salt

It doesn't matter which brand you use—just commit to one and get a feel for how much of it you like to use across everything you cook. (I like Diamond Crystal Kosher Salt because the salt crystals are very fine, which gives me more control.)

Freshly ground black pepper

Fresh pepper ground from a mill is spicy and floral, and a crank or two can transform the simplest dishes. Peppercorns loaded into your own [reusable mill](#) bear absolutely no resemblance to pre-ground pepper, which can often taste dull or dusty.

One or two vinegars

A splash of vinegar can take a soup or some sautéed or roasted vegetables from fine to transcendent. Vinegar is also essential for simple vinaigrettes. The hardest-working vinegars in my pantry are apple cider, unseasoned rice, white wine, red wine, sherry, and balsamic. You don't need a cabinet full—just pick one or two to experiment with and get to know their individual qualities.

Lemons and limes

Similar to vinegars, a spritz of juice from fresh lemons and limes can enliven almost anything on your plate, from a piece of fish to sautéed greens to a simple yogurt dip. Keep a few on hand at all times to add instant freshness to any meal, even one that's sourced entirely from the pantry.

A chunk of hard cheese (e.g. Parmesan, Pecorino)

A piece of good hard cheese will last in the fridge for a long time and adds character and umami to a pantry pasta, a plate of beans and greens, or a simple soup.

Dried pasta or noodles

Whether you prefer white pasta or brown rice spaghetti or chickpea fusilli or soba or udon, a box or two of a noodle you love in the pantry is like money in the bank. It's a quick-cooking, filling, and comforting vehicle for all kinds of add-ins such as vegetables, sausage, ground meat, etc.

Canned beans and/or dried lentils

One of my favorite "emergency" pantry meals is a 20-minute red lentil soup (lentils, an onion, water, salt) with a handful of frozen or fresh spinach wilted in, topped with a squeeze of lemon and a good grind of black pepper. When I have red lentils in the cupboard, I know I can feed myself well even if I haven't had time to hit the store. For you it might be canned chickpeas or black beans or dried green or brown lentils. Pick one or two and have a go-to meal you can rely on in emergencies.

Good bread in the freezer

Perhaps my single most relied-upon "pantry" item is the resealable plastic bag of good bread I've sliced and stashed away in the freezer. When frozen, good bread will keep for months and can be a lifesaver, especially for breakfast. What do I mean by "good bread"? Ideally it's a quality hearty, nutritious, filling loaf from a reputable baker or a local farmers market.

Flavor bombs

Nothing gets me more excited to cook out of my pantry than a few cans/jars/bottles of highly flavorful goodies that I know I can rely on to add immediate flavor to all kinds of dishes. Some flavor bombs in my pantry include store bought Thai curry paste (I love Maesri brand), Vietnamese fish sauce, gochujang (Korean red pepper paste), jarred or tinned anchovies in oil, and preserved lemons in the fridge. Consider your favorite cuisines—what are the predominant flavors you're drawn to? Do a little research and stock your pantry with a couple of ingredients informed by your favorite flavors.

Week 1 pantry homework:

1. Stock your pantry with a few flavor bombs, taking a few minutes to think about your favorite foods/flavors/cuisines. (It's okay if you don't know how to use them yet! We can experiment together.)
2. Donate or throw out anything in your pantry that you haven't used in the last year. (If you haven't used it in a year, you won't miss it!)

Get to (Re)-Know Breakfast

Remember: Breakfast doesn't always have to be a "breakfast food"—literally any food you eat in the morning counts as breakfast! Some non-traditional breakfast ideas:

- Leftover cold roast salmon and a quick vegetable (e.g. sautéed spinach)
- Whole grain crackers with cream cheese and smoked fish or canned tuna
- Veggie soup with toast
- Turkey, cucumber, and hummus roll-ups
- Savory chickpea pancakes (socca) with yogurt
- Beans and greens on toast
- Savory oatmeal with a fried egg and avocado

Easy ways to add fruits/vegetables to breakfast:

- Sprinkle salt and pepper over a few tomato and cucumber slices and eat with yogurt (you can salt the yogurt, too)
- If you love bell peppers and hummus as a snack, add some to your breakfast plate on the side
- Chop up last night's roasted vegetable leftovers and put into today's frittata/scramble
- Keep a bag of spinach in the fridge and add a big handful to scrambled eggs, eat as a scramble or tuck into a wrap/pita with or without cheese
- Boil some potatoes, let them cool, then cut up and store in the fridge. Add to omelets or quickly crisp up in a hot pan with olive oil for quick home fries during the week.
- If you have trouble keeping fresh fruit on hand, keep frozen fruit around for quick compotes (see recipe below) to mix into oatmeal, yogurt, overnight oats, etc.

Week 1 breakfast homework:

Eat breakfast as much as possible—it doesn't have to be homemade, but it should be something you enjoy. Take stock of how eating breakfast makes you feel over the course of the day.



Recipe: Easy Home Fries

Ingredients

2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

1 lb. (about 3 medium) Yukon Gold potatoes or one large sweet potato, scrubbed, cut into ½" pieces

Kosher salt

Optional seasonings: Fresh or dried herbs (such as rosemary, thyme, or oregano), Old Bay, garlic powder, smoked paprika

Preparation

Heat oil in a large skillet, preferably nonstick, over medium-high heat. Add potatoes to skillet all at once; season with salt. Cook potatoes in a single layer, undisturbed, until undersides are deeply golden brown, 2-3 minutes.

Give potatoes a stir then carefully add ¼ cup water to skillet and cover. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook potatoes until tender, about 5 minutes. Uncover and let any remaining water evaporate. Taste a potato—if it doesn't taste delicious, it needs more salt. Stir in desired seasonings; serve immediately.



Recipe: Freezer Blueberry Compote

Ingredients

1½ cups frozen blueberries
1 Tbsp. pure maple syrup
½ tsp. lemon or orange zest
Pinch of ground cardamom (optional)
1 tsp. cornstarch
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice

Preparation

Bring blueberries, maple syrup, lemon or orange zest, cardamom, and ¼ cup water to a boil in a small saucepan. Reduce heat to low and simmer until berries have burst, about 8-10 minutes.

Stir cornstarch and 1 Tbsp. water in a small bowl to dissolve cornstarch, then drizzle over blueberry mixture and whisk to combine. Simmer until the compote is thickened, 1-2 minutes. Remove compote from heat and stir in lemon juice.

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 5 days, or freeze for up to 3 months.