

The Prepared Pantry: Eating Well and Staying Safe

With health agencies recommending we stay home as much as possible, we have compiled lists and strategies to make eating well easier by stocking your pantry, using items you already have on hand, and preparing recipes and freezing extras.

Pantry Smarts: Stock your pantry & freezer with these basics!

Protein

- ✓ Canned tuna, sardines, salmon, chicken
- ✓ Canned beans
- ✓ Beef jerky
- ✓ Meat, poultry, & fish (freeze in 1lb increments, patties, or individual 3-4oz filets)
- ✓ Veggie burgers
- ✓ Eggs
- ✓ Milk or plant milks
- ✓ Plain yogurt
- ✓ Aged cheeses

Produce

- ✓ Frozen fruit like berries, mango, pineapple
- ✓ Frozen vegetables like broccoli, spinach, corn and peas
- ✓ Canned fruit
- ✓ Canned tomatoes, corn, green beans, peas

Grains

- ✓ Bread, English muffins (store extra loaves in freezer)
- ✓ Tortillas
- ✓ White and brown rice
- ✓ Pasta
- ✓ Couscous
- ✓ Quinoa
- ✓ Popcorn
- ✓ Whole grain crackers
- ✓ Oatmeal, cereals

Fats/Spreads

- ✓ Nut butters
- ✓ Unsalted mixed nuts (almonds, walnuts, cashews, peanuts)
- ✓ Seeds (sunflower, pumpkin)
- ✓ Olive oil
- ✓ Butter
- ✓ Cooking oil (vegetable oil, avocado oil, grapeseed oil)

Misc + Prepared Foods

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ✓ Granola or protein bars | ✓ Tomato paste | ✓ Bagged salad kits |
| ✓ Canned soups | ✓ Herb pastes (ginger, basil) | ✓ Sugar, salt, dried herbs/spices |
| ✓ Frozen pizza | ✓ Capers, olives, canned chilies | ✓ Vinegar |
| ✓ Chicken, beef, or vegetable broths | ✓ Flour, cornmeal | ✓ Coffee, tea, water |
| ✓ Dried soup mixes | ✓ Baking soda, baking powder, yeast | |
| ✓ Sauces | ✓ Cornmeal, cornstarch | |

Shopping Smarts: Quick Tips

1. Plan for at least one week out
2. Consider using delivery or drive up grocery services
3. Clean food containers before storage
4. Follow safe food washing practices for fresh produce
5. Buy a little extra, but don't stockpile
6. If you do not rely on SNAP benefits, consider choosing an alternative product (vs one with a SNAP-eligible label) to help those that do

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Tips for Freezing Fresh Items to Extend Storage Life:

**adapted from [BudgetBytes.com](https://www.budgetbytes.com) and [University of Georgia](https://www.universityofgeorgia.edu)*

- ❖ **Vegetables:** Use one gallon of water per pound of prepared vegetables. Put the vegetables in a blanching basket and lower into vigorously boiling water. Place a lid on the blancher and start counting blanching time as soon as the water returns to a boil. Consult this chart for specific blanching times by vegetable:
 - ❖ hfp.uga.edu/publications/uga/uga_freeze_veg.pdf
- ❖ **Fruit:** Wash, dry, and spread fruit into a single layer. Cover with plastic cling wrap; transfer tray to the freezer, and freeze for several hours or up to overnight. Remove your tray from freezer. Gently peel fruit off the parchment paper, and transfer to freezer bags
- ❖ **Onions:** dice the onions, separate them into 1 cup portions (about one onion-worth), and freeze in quart-sized freezer bags. Frozen onions can be added to most recipes straight from the freezer. For green onions, simply slice and place in a freezer bag, or empty jar, then stash in the freezer.
- ❖ **Jalapeños:** Slice, freeze flat on a baking sheet covered in parchment, then transfer to a freezer bag once solid.
- ❖ **Garlic:** peel and freeze in freezer bags. The garlic's appearance will change slightly after thawing, but the flavor will still be great.
- ❖ **Ginger:** Wash the ginger well, then freeze in a freezer bag. The frozen ginger can be easily grated into your recipe using a small-holed cheese grater, while still frozen, no need to peel. If you prefer to peel your ginger, simply peel before freezing.
- ❖ **Cheese:** Cheese can be frozen either in block form or shredded. Make sure to wrap tightly to reduce air exposure.
- ❖ **Meat:** Divide meat into ½ - 1 lb. portions before freezing. Again, make sure to wrap tightly to prevent air exposure, which leads to freezer burn.
- ❖ **Fresh Herbs:** Remove thick stems from herbs and finely chop leaves. Using ice cube trays, portion out spoonfuls of chopped herbs and press them into the trays, topping off each "cube" with a thin layer of oil. Once the cubes are frozen solid, transfer them to a freezer bag for long-term storage.

And always, *always* label and date everything you put into the freezer!

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Using mostly canned, frozen, and prepared foods doesn't mean that you're compromising your health.

Quick & Easy Ideas to Make a meal or snack with common pantry items:

- ✓ Top a frozen pizza with a salad kit to make salad pizza or add frozen spinach and broccoli to a frozen pizza
- ✓ Bulk up instant ramen with frozen shrimp or diced tofu, an egg, & handful of spinach
- ✓ Crumble a veggie burger or frozen meat patty, or add cooked lentils, into pasta with tomato sauce
- ✓ Make a hash with frozen potatoes and mixed frozen veggies; top with a fried egg
- ✓ Stuff canned chili into a baked sweet or white potato with shredded cheese
- ✓ Add frozen broccoli and peas and canned tuna to boxed macaroni and cheese
- ✓ Make a simple one-pot pasta with a can of diced tomatoes (excess liquid drained), canned white beans (drained), and garlic powder/Italian seasoning/grated parmesan cheese to taste. Add capers or olives, etc if you have them and want something a little more briney
- ✓ Tortillas are an open canvas, to be made into pizzas, wraps, burritos
- ✓ Cook up a big pot of chili or soup and freeze it into smaller containers
- ✓ Muffin tin magic: make crust less mini quiche cups; mac and cheese; meatloaf; Shepard's pie, cheddar corndog, scrambled egg and hash browns, salmon patties, freeze

SUPER Simple Pantry Recipe: 3 Ingredient Black Bean Soup

Ingredients

- ❖ 2 (15.5 ounce) cans black beans
- ❖ 1 cup of chicken or vegetable broth
- ❖ 15 ounce can diced tomatoes

Notes

- ❖ Makes ~6 servings
- ❖ Optional garnishes: sour cream, shredded cheese, green onions, chives, jalapeños.
- ❖ For added flavor use diced tomatoes with chiles or other flavors.
- ❖ To lower the sodium level, use low-sodium black beans and/or chicken broth.
- ❖ Recipe: <https://www.honeyandbirch.com/3-ingredient-black-bean-soup/>

Instructions

1. Combine all ingredients in a medium pot. Bring to a boil and simmer for 10 minutes.
2. Remove from stove and blend using an immersion blender or a traditional blender.

The Prepared Pantry:

Prepare, Don't Panic

***For Seniors and the Immune-Compromised (including cancer patients): some stores have special hours for customers, check websites or call to find out if yours does.*

Important information from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA):

- ❖ Coronaviruses are generally thought to be spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets. Currently, there is no evidence to support transmission of COVID-19 by food.
- ❖ Unlike foodborne gastrointestinal (GI) viruses like norovirus and hepatitis A that often make people ill through contaminated food, SARS-CoV-2, which causes COVID-19, is a virus that causes respiratory illness. Foodborne exposure to this virus is not known to be a route of transmission.
- ❖ **There are no nationwide shortages of food**, although in some cases the inventory of certain foods at your grocery store might be temporarily low before stores can restock. Food production and manufacturing are widely dispersed throughout the United States and no widespread disruptions have been reported in the supply chain.

Other helpful websites with recipes and ideas:

- ❖ https://www.eatright.org/coronavirus?_zs=7dBFa&_zl=l1222
- ❖ <https://www.fightbac.org/coronavirus-resource-page/>
- ❖ <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2015/04/02/new-usda-foodkeeper-app-your-new-tool-smart-food-storage>
- ❖ <https://www.budgetbytes.com>
- ❖ muffin tin recipes: <https://www.tasteofhome.com/collection/muffin-cup-recipes/>
- ❖ <https://www.mealtime.org/consumers>
- ❖ <http://albany.cce.cornell.edu/resources/be-food-safe-choose-myplate>