



The pantry staples you should always have on hand (and how to store them)

How often do you go to make a recipe only to discover you're missing a crucial ingredient? If you follow this advice, it will never happen again.

Proper pantry planning is not something that only neat freaks and the organisation obsessed should worry about, but something all eager home cooks should master to make the most of the food they're buying. Follow this advice to stock your pantry with the ultimate staples, then learn how to display and organise them so you're never stuck without an essential or food well past its use by date.

What pantry staples should you always have on hand?

A well-stocked pantry means that you're able to make whatever your heart desires – from birthday cakes to comforting soups – at the drop of a hat. While some items will need to be regularly topped up, others will benefit from buying in bulk and redistributing to smaller containers as required. If you're somehow starting from scratch, this list will seem daunting, but for most established home cooks you'll likely have the majority in your cupboards already.

Here's the basics on what every well-stocked pantry should have on hand:

- Salt and pepper
- Oils: Start with olive and vegetable oils as a base and you can slowly build up other oils as required (such as peanut, sesame or grapeseed, depending on your recipes)
- Dried herbs: Basil, oregano, rosemary, bay leaves, thyme
- Spices: Paprika, chilli, cumin, nutmeg, cinnamon, ground ginger
- Flour: Plain and self-raising flours can be bought in bulk and stored in airtight containers
- Vinegar: White, red wine and balsamic vinegars will cover most of your needs
- Sweeteners: Raw sugar, caster sugar and brown sugar cover most bases, with icing sugar being essential for regular bakers. Non-granulated sweeteners like honey, agave syrup or maple syrup
- Rice and grains: Long-grain white rice, brown rice and rice or egg noodles, along with standard pastas (such as spaghetti or penne), polenta and breadcrumbs (plain or panko) will round out your grain essentials, while you can also keep other popular varieties such as couscous and quinoa on hand in their own airtight containers.
- Canned / jarred goods: Tomatoes, tomato paste, beans (cannellini, kidney and chickpeas), roasted peppers and tuna (other tinned fishes such as anchovies are also great to have on hand).
- Baking needs: Cocoa, baking soda, baking powder, vanilla extract, evaporated or condensed milk and chocolate (chips, buttons or bars)

How to organise your pantry

To help extend the life of your pantry staples and make storing them neater and easier, redistributing them into airtight containers is essential. This not only makes stacking and sorting easier, but can let you see at a glance when you need to restock. Be sure to label everything so you're not using the wrong flour or sugar in your recipes.

From a practical standpoint, you should keep all of your everyday essentials (oils, spices and flour, for example) at eye level so you can take stock of your ingredients without searching. This should also be where you keep the things you will reach for every day, such as tea, coffee and breakfast items. Below this, you can store all your long-life and canned goods so you can always have something to throw together when you need a quick dinner.

Use the bottom of your pantry for storing heavy, bulk items that don't need to be used frequently, and the top shelves for appliances and unhealthy snacks so that they're out of sight (and out of mind).

