

The Best Foods to Stock in Your Pantry



Having these foods on hand can mean nutritious meals any day of the week—even when you're not in the mood to grocery shop.

Keeping your pantry stocked with healthy foods can make mealtime easier and help you shake the takeout habit—even on those days when there's not much in your fridge. ***Here are some of the best shelf-stable items to try to keep on hand.***

1 No-salt seasoning

No-salt seasoning can be a good replacement for seasoning salt or regular salt. It's usually made from a mix of dried herbs and spices, and it can be used to flavor many dishes.

2 Olive oil and balsamic vinegar

Olive oil can be used for dipping vegetables and crackers or mixing with tuna in place of mayonnaise—but use a light hand because the calories and fat add up quickly. Balsamic vinegar is a mild vinegar that (along with a drizzle of olive oil) is great for dressing up salads and vegetables.

3 Canned tuna and chicken

Canned tuna and chicken can be great protein add-ins for soups, salads and sandwiches—no cooking required.



The Best Foods to Stock in Your Pantry (*continued*)

4

No-salt-added canned veggies

No-salt-added canned vegetables are nutritious and convenient. Simply drain and add to salads and soups or mix several cans together for an easy side dish.

5

Nuts

Nuts—such as almonds, walnuts and pecans—are a great source of heart-healthy fats. To keep sodium down, buy the unsalted kind (usually found in the baking section). Stick with a 1-ounce portion to keep calories under control (about 160 calories, depending on the type); pair with 1/4 to 1/2 cup of fresh fruit for a healthy snack. Or chop them up and sprinkle them on top of cereal or yogurt.

6

Canned fruit in its own juice (not sugary syrup)

Mix diced canned peaches or apricots with fresh seasonal fruit for a colorful salad, or spoon on top of hot cereal for a little sweetness.

7

No-salt-added canned beans and low-sodium bean soups

No-salt-added canned beans—such as white, black, kidney and garbanzo—are full of fiber, protein, vitamins and minerals. Rinse the beans before adding to soups or salads or blending into a dip. Low-sodium bean soups can be a great base for a mostly homemade meal—just stir in vegetables and lean meats.

8

Whole-grain pasta and marinara sauce

Whole-grain pasta makes an easy meal when topped with a zesty marinara sauce and a source of lean protein, such as chicken, and vegetables. Marinara (made from tomatoes, of course) is a good way to sneak in a veggie serving via a mini pizza (spread the sauce on a whole-wheat tortilla, top with vegetables and a pinch of cheese) or as a topper for chicken or burgers.

9

Oats and other whole grains

Oats offer a warming low-sodium breakfast with lots of fiber, including the soluble kind linked with heart health. Top them with frozen berries and a sprinkling of nuts. Whole grains, such as brown rice or quinoa, can be served as a side dish, as a salad base and even as a hot cereal. These grains offer more fiber and protein than refined grains, which can help keep hunger at bay.

