



# Eating Better Starts WITH A Pantry MAKEOVER

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With the holiday season underway, we organize to-do lists and gift lists in addition to the usual operations associated with school, work, and running a household. However, an often-overlooked area that's also part of our daily routine lurks behind closed doors: the kitchen pantry. Within this small space, though, we have the power to save money, buy time, reduce stress, and (perhaps most importantly) improve our nutrition and overall health with the following strategies:

## IF OUTDATED, OUT IT GOES

Sifting through an overstuffed pantry? As an easy first step, check the expiration dates and pitch the overdue items. You're on your way!

## DONATE WITHOUT REMORSE

Most of us likely wouldn't experience "separation anxiety" when we drop extra inches from our hips...so you shouldn't feel guilty about parting with unused brownie mix, either. Items that qualify include: (1) those that don't contribute to your wellness goals...you know the ones; and (2) those that you'll likely never use...canned boiled peanuts, anyone? If you're still unsure, check nutrition labels for the following: less than 10 percent saturated fat; less than 500mg sodium; and less than 5g total sugars. Generally speaking, the less an item is processed and the fewer ingredients it contains, the better.

## FRONT-AND-CENTER FOODS

Invest in a few clear, plastic boxes for healthy, on-the-go foods, and place them at eye level. Portion snacks into single-serving baggies, and place them in boxes by type (trail mixes, cereals, nuts, pretzels, etc.). It's a "fitter hunger fix," as well as a quicker, economical grab versus convenience-store choices or fast-food restaurant fare.

Occasional treats are fine, too. (Note that the key term in this phrase is occasional rather than usual, though.) The best way to "highlight the healthy" is to store less-than-optimal choices on the top or bottom shelves, and/or at the back of the closet.

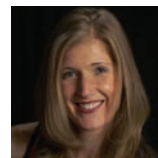
“...CHECK NUTRITION LABELS FOR THE FOLLOWING: LESS THAN 10% SATURATED FAT; LESS THAN 500MG SODIUM; AND LESS THAN 5G TOTAL SUGARS.”

## ORGANIZING WHAT'S LEFT

I admit...I used to make fun of my mother for alphabetizing her spices. Now, as the sole chef in my household and with limited time to shuffle through a sea of spices, I find her strategy a valuable one! Consider inside-the-door racks and lazy-susan spinners to keep small items neatly racked and readily accessible. It's easier to concoct healthier recipes when the clutter is cleared.

Next, you have several options for simplifying your canned and dry goods. First, you can arrange them by category: beans, tomatoes, sauces, condiments, pastas, rice, cereals, etc. On the other hand, you might arrange them by meal or recipe. For instance, since I like to prepare a tortilla casserole for the week, I keep olives, green chilies, salsa, and rice next to one another. Do what's most convenient for you, or you'll be chanting, "Take out!" faster than you can pull your needed items off the shelves!

By following these guidelines, you'll be taking leaps toward a healthier holiday season and get a jump-start toward reaching your 2010 wellness goals! 🍴



Jodi Peckich is a health educator for Total Nutrition Technology, which is offering a complimentary health assessment to help you meet your health and wellness goals for the new year.

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