

Tri Fit's Healthy Habits

The Healthy Pantry – Prepare your pantry for a new way of eating!

Having a well-stocked pantry with basic supplies on hand will not only save you money but you'll be prepared to put together a last minute healthy family-friendly meal. If you are on a budget, gradually build up your stores of the following pantry staples. Take advantage of sales and add a few items each week.

Load up on Whole Grains – Use alternative grains more often

- Quinoa
- Wild/brown rice
- Buckwheat
- Amaranth
- Spelt or kamut flour (instead of white wheat flour)
- Rye
- Heirloom Corn Kernels
- Millet
- Barley
- Whole grain pasta

Love Your Legumes – To save cooking time, soak your beans overnight, strain and store them in an airtight container ready to cook when you get home. Keep BPA-free canned legumes on hand for a quick meal. Rinse well.

- Black beans
- Navy beans
- Kidney beans
- Chick peas
- Adzuki beans
- Green, brown and red lentils
- Split peas

Cash in on Cans and Cartons – For a quick meal have canned goods and cartons of soup stock on hand.

- Beans & Lentils
- Coconut milk
- Tomato paste
- Tomatoes (diced, whole, pureed)
- Tuna and salmon
- Vegetable, chicken and beef broth

Go Nuts for Seeds – Seeds are perfect for sprinkling on cereals or adding to smoothies and nuts make a great snack. Fill your pantry with a variety of raw, unsalted nuts and seeds. Store in the refrigerator to keep fresh and increase shelf life.

- Chia seeds
- Hemp seeds
- Sesame seeds
- Almonds
- Cashews
- Pecans
- Walnuts
- Hazelnuts
- Peanuts
- Pistachios



Flavourful Dried Fruit – Cut the sugar and use dried fruit to sweeten desserts. Choose sulphite-free varieties

- Dates
- Currants
- Raisins
- Cranberries
- Apricots
- Prunes
- Mangoes
- Figs

Spicy Seasonings - Flavour your favourite dishes with seasonings from around the world. Keep a bag of onions and some garlic on hand. These can be stored in a cool dark place for weeks on end.

- Chili
- Turmeric
- Cumin
- Coriander
- Oregano
- Basil
- Rosemary
- Tarragon
- Paprika
- Nutmeg
- Cinnamon
- Peppercorns

Freezer Finds – Stock your freezer with frozen fruits and vegetables; the next best thing to fresh!

- Berries
- Mixed fruit
- Edamame
- Spinach
- Mixed vegetable varieties

Crucial Condiments – Store oils in a cool, dark cupboard. Purchase only as much oil as you will use in 6 months

- Olive oil (EVOO)
- Organic Coconut oil (OEVCO)
- Avocado oil
- Grapeseed oil
- Sesame oil
- Vinegars – Apple cider, balsamic, red wine
- Dijon mustard
- Butter (keep in freezer if used infrequently)
- Fish sauce
- Curry paste
- Olives and capers
- Hot sauce
- Low-sodium soy sauce

Sweet Treats – Swap processed white and brown sugar for whole food varieties. Use in moderation.

- Raw honey
- Maple syrup
- Coconut sugar
- Jars of applesauce

Sources: http://www.eatingwell.com/healthy_cooking/healthy_cooking_101/shopping_cooking_guides/guide_to_stocking_your_pantry?slide=1
<http://www.thegraciouspantry.com>; Photo credits: freedigitalphotos.net

Basics of Batch Cooking

Batch cooking involves preparing larger quantities of a recipe and freezing in portions for later use. It requires more time on the front end but you'll be thankful for quick heat-and-serve nutritious meals on those busy evenings! So ditch the packaged, convenience foods and opt for real food! With a little planning and preparation it's possible to have healthy food ***fast*** throughout the week. Here's how!

Plan your menu

Choose 4 or 5 recipes you're going to make in one session, maybe on a Sunday afternoon. Make your grocery list and check your pantry to make sure you have all ingredients including spices.

Choose familiar recipes

Look for recipes that have familiar ingredients and recipes that call for inexpensive cuts of meat as they freeze better. Stews, soups and casseroles are great freezer dishes.

Use kitchen aids to chop

Use a food processor to chop batches of onions and garlic and other foods such as grated cheese to enhance efficiency.

Undercook the vegetables

Remember that vegetables will be re-cooked so under-cook vegetables (especially soups and stews) to prevent mushiness.

Double (non-baking) recipes

But be careful when adding seasoning and spices. It's best to underspice and then add when dish is reheated after thawing. Rather than add spice directly to cooked dish, "bloom" them first by adding spice to heated oil in a frying pan and cook until fragrant. Add to your reheated dish.

Cool foods completely

Allow dishes to cool fully to room temperature and then freeze immediately to avoid growth of bacteria. Remove any air to avoid freezer burn.

Get Rid of the air

Air will cause "freezer burn" so if you are putting contents into a freezer bag, suck out excess air with a straw. If you are freezing in a partially full container, place a piece of parchment paper over the dish and tuck in the sides to prevent air from getting to the food. If you are using glass jars for freezing, leave some room as contents will expand upon freezing.

Select appropriate containers and label

Whether you are using freezer bags, glass jars or other containers, have them clean and ready to fill. Freeze in usable portions and label with name, date and cooking directions.

Freeze in usable portions

Determine how much you will need for 1 meal and freeze batches of this quantity. No sense in freezing more in a single container than you will eat.

<http://www.chatelaine.com/recipes/chatelaineKitchen/big-batch-cooking-tips/>

Batch Cooking Kitchen Helpers

Slow Cooker

Slow cookers do the cooking for you while you are out of the house or busy with other activities and are great for cooking beans or inexpensive cuts of meat.

Try this Hearty Tuscan soup in your slow cooker.

http://www.heartandstroke.on.ca/site/c.pvI3leNWJwE/b.7800081/k.8E02/Recipes_Hearty_Tuscan_soup.htm



Pressure Cooker

Today's models are safe, preserve nutrients and cook meals up to 70% faster than traditional methods. Great for cooking stews, soups and inexpensive cuts of meat. Cook beets in 15 minutes or less using a pressure cooker.

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/436339-the-best-ways-to-pressure-cook-beets/>

Food Processor

Use your food processor to chop, julienne, pulverize, mash and split foods. Effective for processing non-liquid, heavier foods such as onions, carrots, garlic and cheese. Saves time too! Use this step-by-step guide to chopping vegetables in your food processor.

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/548607-cutting-vegetables-in-a-food-processor/>



Big Batch Freezer Tomato Sauce

Homemade tomato sauce is great to have on hand for a spaghetti sauce base, chili, stews, soups and pizza topping. Visit a pick-your-own farm and choose the ripest tomatoes.

Ingredients

¼ cup (65 mL) olive oil
3 medium onions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
12 cups (3 L) tomatoes, peeled, cored and chopped
1 Tbsp (15 mL) each dried oregano and dried basil
1 tsp (5 mL) each salt (optional) and black pepper



Directions

Peel tomatoes by placing them in boiling water for 1 minute, then plunging them into ice cold water. Skin should split and easily peel away. Heat oil in large pan, saute onions and garlic until tender and add the rest of the ingredients. Heat to boiling, reduce heat and simmer, partially covered for 2 hours. Stir occasionally. Cool completely and freeze in freezer bags or other suitable freezer containers for up to 3 months.

<http://www.food.com/recipe/big-batch-spaghetti-sauce-37563?oc=linkback>><http://www.food.com/recipe/big-batch-spaghetti-sauce-37563?oc=linkback>

Big Batch Easy Minestrone Soup

Serve this hearty soup for a quick lunch or dinner. Double or triple the recipe and freeze in meal-sized batches. Remember to undercook vegetables if you are freezing.

Ingredients

2 tsp (10mL) Olive oil	½ can (540mL) Romano beans (drained, rinsed)
1 onion, diced	½ carton (900mL) vegetable broth
1 carrot, peeled and diced	Parmesan rind
1 celery stalk, diced	¾ cup (175mL) tubetti pasta (whole grain)
1 garlic clove, minced	2 cups (500mL) packed spinach
¼ tsp (1mL) chili flakes	2 Tbsp (30mL) Parmesan cheese
1 can (796mL) diced tomatoes	¼ cup (65mL) chopped basil

Directions

Heat oil in a large saucepan and add onion, carrot, celery, garlic and chili flakes. Cook until vegetables are slightly tender, about 2-3 minutes (less if freezing). Add tomatoes, beans, broth, parmesan rind, pasta and ¾ cup (175mL) water. Bring to boil, reduce heat and simmer, covered until pasta is tender – about 10 minutes (less if freezing). Remove, discard parmesan rind and stir in spinach. Add basil and parmesan cheese. If freezing omit basil and parmesan cheese until soup is thawed and reheated. Serves 4.

<http://www.chatelaine.com/recipe/vegetables/easy-minestrone/>