



Staple Pantry List

**Excerpt from Transformation 101: Your Guide to Empowerment in Just 3 Weeks*

Space Clearing Your Pantry

Clean. Out. Those. Cabinets. **Before you go to the store and refill them!** Do this gradually, if need be. I don't want you binging on every morsel of chemical-laden processed foods in your cabinets, going into a food coma, and taking me to small claims court over food poisoning. *"But Alicia said to eat these processed foods and clear out my pantry!!"*

If you don't have a lot of processed foods, it'll only take you about a week to get rid of the more processed foods. Here are examples of how you can add a healthy ingredient to a processed food, making a healthier food choice while not throwing away too much:

- Make a healthy bean dip and use it to get rid of those *chips (black bean or regular hummus, white bean dips, or lentil pate)*
- Make large, organic salads and slowly get rid of those dressings (*then, make your own dressings*)
- If you have ultra-processed boxes of pasta or rice (*I'm talking Hamburger Helper or Rice-a-Roni ultra-processed*), pair them with beans and veggies

If you have an excess of processed foods, move them to a separate cabinet and slowly eliminate them, using the process above, whenever possible. Keep clean foods in another cabinet, replacing the processed versions with the improved versions. *Hamburger Helper is out; whole grain pasta and an organic sauce are in your designated cabinet.*

I can't tell you how important it is to have a clean house, which includes your fridge, freezer, and cabinets. If chips, frozen pizzas, cheese, and other processed foods are available, you'll grab those first when hunger strikes. **Most food companies do not care about YOU... they only care about their wallets.**

Scientists design foods with preservatives and chemicals to keep you addicted. Yes, designed. As in a lab. You'll find many food labs off the New Jersey turnpike.



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Healthy Substitutions for Your (Now) Clean Cabinets

- **Rice's:** Sushi rice, risotto, wild rice, brown rice, brown basmati, jasmine, forbidden/black rice, or simple rice mixes that are organic and contain real ingredients you recognize.
- **Beans/Legumes:** I prefer dried, as they're cheaper, there's less package waste, and there are no dangerous additives, as there are in some cans. But canned beans are great in a pinch, when you don't have time to soak and pressure cook. Beans add quick protein to dishes, so have a few different types in your cabinets.
- **Grains and grain-meal:** Barley, farro, couscous, polenta, grits, quinoa, millet are a few options to try.
- **Pasta:** Try different shapes and ingredients. How about orzo, farfalle, gluten-free, or the new explosion of bean pasta?
- **Breads:** look for sprouted versions in the freezer, preferably Alvarado Street or Food for Life (AKA Ezekiel). If this cost too much or aren't your type of texture, try organic whole grain options in the bread aisle: Dave's Killer or organic store brand options. If that's still too expensive, please opt for whole grain breads, or high fiber variations (*the low carb Mission wrap boosts 25 grams of fiber in EACH wrap, leaving only 5 net grams of carbs!*).
- **International sauces/spices:** Visit the international aisle of the grocery store and change the taste of a familiar dish. I love making samosas with spring roll wraps (*produce department*) and air-frying instead of the traditional deep fried dough variation. The international aisle has a host of dips and sauces for a quick pinch. Make sure they contain few ingredients that are 3-syllables or less and are recognizable, though!
- **Tomato products:** Use tomato paste to thicken sauces, or tomato sauces and diced tomatoes combined with onions or chillies to help save on prep time. Salsa makes a great low-fat addition to many meals, such as chickpea omelettes, beans and rice dishes, and hummus wraps or salads.



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- **Protein standards:** Quorn/Boca have vegan and non-vegan options made with non-GMO ingredients. Yves is in the produce section of most stores, as is Nasoya tofu (*again, please make sure your soy is organic, or at least non-GMO*). Lightlife, Field Roast, and Gardein brands are a few others to explore. Whole tofu and tempeh are the most important focus, as they are less processed and are lower fat than the other brands mentioned. You may sometimes want processed foods as a transition meal, or for comfort or taste.
- **Vegetables:** it's ideal to have fresh and frozen, for many reasons. Frozen vegetables often create less waste, as they've already cut the stems off foods like broccoli and cauliflower. You'll find it's also cheaper to buy organic produce this way, and the best part? Frozen veggies are flash frozen when picked, so they're fresher and more nutrient-dense than fresh produce. You'll find an array of cauliflower/broccoli rices to add to dishes, as well as spirals of zucchini. Please make sure to check ingredients and just buy whole food versions, not a medley with chemical-laden sauces. You'll save time buying frozen bell peppers and onions, if you don't like to cut up veggies.

For some veggies, fresh is best. You can purchase pre-cut mixes such as broccoli slaw (*guess where the broccoli comes from... you guessed it; those stems from the frozen florets—you're helping eliminate food waste when you buy these!*). You'll also find cut butternut squash, zucchini, mushrooms, onions, peppers, and much more. These save time in prep, but don't last as long, and don't have the life force of buying whole veggies. Pre-cut veggies also cost more, as you're paying for labor and excess packaging. *If your veggies or greens start to wilt, cover them with cold water and soak them in the fridge overnight. Bam!*

Canned veggies are the least ideal option, but may have their place in some kitchens. Look for no added sodium, and check cans for BPA-free, if possible. Canned tomatoes are a staple in a healthy kitchen, as mentioned earlier.

It may seem like a daunting task, but organizing your kitchen will take less than a half hour. If you want a complete overhaul, find a local food pantry or soup kitchen and donate your packaged and canned foods to them. Everyone wins in that scenario!



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A side note on organic: if an organic brand is available and is in your budget, please opt for this version. Many wheat products and beans are sprayed with glyphosate (AKA RoundUp) prior to harvest, as it dries the crop and allows for faster crop yield. Many of the dried, bulk ingredients cost the same or are nominally more than conventional products. Frozen organic veggies are often cheaper than buying them fresh, when you consider weight and waste from fresh veggies.

Prep, prep, prep! One of the greatest lessons I learned from my grandfather was monthly meal prep. *I don't recommend more than a week's prep, but the lesson itself was invaluable!* At the first of each month, he'd cook large pots of food, portioning each day's meals in recycled margarine tubs. When dinner rolled around, he pulled out a margarine tub from his stand-up freezer and popped it in the microwave.

My improved version was prepping vegetables, rice, beans, veggie burgers, and healthy sweets for the upcoming week. I may not cook everything on my prep day (typically Sunday), but I prepare longer-cooking items to keep us healthy during busy weeks.

I often have 1-2 bowls of beans soaking on the counter for pressure cooking. If you want to cut costs, reduce waste, save money and time, consider purchasing an Instapot or pressure cooker. They reduce cooking time by at least 50%. Cut up veggies for the week, cook and package meals for the week if you can.

If healthy food is accessible to you, you'll reach for that instead of junk. Success never happens by chance, including your health.

One last bit on grocery stores... they design stores to make you stop repeatedly. Ever noticed those stands in the middle of an aisle with unusual foods or drinks on them? Marketers place them there to divert your attention. You're forced to stop in your tracks, move around to see what's on them, and before you know it, there's an item in your cart you don't need. "But it was a great deal!"

Grocery stores have specific lighting, music, shelving standards, and marketing ploys you can't imagine. I can't stress it enough—make a grocery list and keep your attention focused on that list, not what's going on around you. My list is on my phone and I don't often look up at the store. I know how easy it is to get distracted. I shop for foods I can prepare, which minimizes cost and waste.