

Okay, So What Are Those Basics I Want In My Pantry?

Here is my list of go-to items that I always like to have on hand:

- Healthy oil (avocado oil, olive oil, coconut oil, or grapeseed oil)
- Vinegar (balsamic, rice vinegar-not just for dressings but as a flavoring agent.)
- Dijon mustard (also used to make salad dressings and tasty marinade)
- Low sodium soy sauce or tamari (adds that “umami” flavor to Asian style dishes, but also makes a great addition to marinades for meat and vegetables.)
- Hot sauce (this helps add a little zip and flavor when using a little bit, and starts introducing more spice)
- 2 dry spices that represent 2 different ethnicities (ex: cumin and oregano can be used together in Mexican cooking, but oregano can also be used in Greek or Italian inspired dishes and cumin can be used in Indian food)
- Cinnamon (This naturally makes things taste sweeter without using sugar; and is good for balancing blood sugar)
- 2 kinds of Real cheese- one that melts (like cheddar or jack- for omelets, quesadillas and open faced sandwiches) and one that is a dry and salty (like parmesan or cotija- for pastas, sprinkling in salads or topping soups)
- Canned beans (these add fiber, protein and iron to any dish, plus can be pureed into a dip or added to soups)
- Canned chicken broth (limitless uses, but I use for making soups and sauce, or even cooking rice and potatoes to add flavor without adding extra fat).
- Canned tomatoes (super high in vitamin C and lycopene, these can be used for making sauces, a ten minute tomato soup or adding flavor to grain dishes)
- Frozen mixed vegetables (frozen veggies are minimally processed and are a great quick addition to chicken pie, or can be added in the last 4 minutes of cooking fried rice or quinoa, or my famous tortilla soup).
- Potatoes, garlic and onions...yes I know these are fresh ingredients, but they are such inexpensive staple items that can last a long time in the fridge; and are so great to add flavor and heartiness to any dish.
- Nuts or seeds (unless you have an allergy, nuts are super foods that add healthy fat and a ton of protein. Also when they are toasted they make a delicious crunchy snack or topping for salads and soups)
- Refrigerator staples: free-range organic eggs, milk, yogurt (grass fed cow, organic almond, or soy)