

Wellness Wednesday



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How To Prioritize Your Pantry Cooking And Make Food Last Longer

Follow these tips, and you won't waste the food you stocked up on for the coronavirus.

As we're all hunkering down and self-quarantining to protect ourselves and the community from the coronavirus outbreak, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends having at least a two-week food supply on hand.

So, you've probably made a couple of trips to the grocery store to stockpile some necessities. With a lot of that shopping being done in a panic and stores running out of items, you may have ended up buying things not usually on your grocery list or overloaded on some of your usual staples.

Either way, it's important to use all the food you buy and avoid wasting it. Even outside of a pandemic, families waste \$1,500 per year on food they never eat.

"Even during a pandemic, it's possible that people buy foods that they think they should eat instead of foods they want to eat, which can lead to unnecessary food waste," said Alyssa Pike, registered dietitian and manager of nutrition communications at the International Food Information Council Foundation.

Keeping track of what's in your fridge and pantry and learning which foods to prioritize will keep you from wasting too much food and help you make do — and, even make some delicious meals — with what you already have. Here's how.



Practice the "first in, first out" FIFO rule

Professional kitchens abide by the first in, first out, or FIFO, rule. That means storing older foods in the front of your refrigerator or pantry, and newly purchased items behind them, in the back. This is a good practice for home kitchens, too, said Celine Beitchman, director of nutrition at the Institute of Culinary Education.

"You don't want to just keep shoving groceries into wherever you can fit them," she said. "You want to have some sense of organization as to where you put them."

Place fresh fruits and vegetables in the easiest-to-grab spot in the refrigerator, along with milk and other dairy with the soonest expiration dates. Arrange canned goods, pasta and other pantry items, so those with the soonest “use by” or “sell by” dates are front and center.

“We know that whatever is at the very front of the line is the thing that we should use first, and what’s behind that is the thing that we’ve maybe just bought,” Beitchman said. “So, we’re always kind of moving inventory around, so we’ve got that FIFO going.”

Eat fresh produce first

Any fresh fruits and vegetables should be used first, said Kris Sollid, registered dietitian and senior director of nutrition communications at the International Food Information Council Foundation.

“Try using the ripest first, and map out a schedule for using the others as close to their peak ripeness as possible,” he said.

Storing fruits and vegetables properly, with leafy greens in the refrigerator and onions and garlic in a dry, dark space, for example, will extend their shelf life.

But just because something starts to look wilted or mushy doesn’t mean it should be thrown away. Freezing or cooking produce can make it last longer.

Over-ripe bananas turning brown can be stored in the freezer or used in smoothies or baked goods, Sollid said.

Greens can be blanched, and vegetables, like tomatoes, squashes and carrots, can be roasted. Toss cooked veggies into soups or casseroles, or freeze them, Beitchman said.

Even better, make a soup or casserole with the fresh vegetables. Leftovers can be stored in the fridge for three to four days, or portion the meals out and freeze for up to three months.

FIFO goes for meat and dairy, too

Practice FIFO with meat and dairy, Beitchman said. Keep track of use by and sell buy dates and, like produce, consider freezing or cooking to make them last longer.

Uncooked meat can be stored in the freezer for four to 12 months, and cooked meat for two to three months, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Milk, cheese and other dairy also freeze well.

Beitchman suggests portioning everything out first — cut cheese into slices or chunks, freeze milk in ice cube trays and freeze meat in serving sizes that make sense for your family.

Another option for using up milk and cheese nearing its shelf life: Make a béchamel sauce. The versatile cream sauce can be used in mac and cheese, lasagna or other casseroles. Just watch your portion size.



Keep up with expiration dates of pantry items

After you've made use of fresh produce, meats and dairy, look to the freezer next. Frozen foods, whether store-bought or homemade, are usually more perishable than canned foods or other pantry items, said Claudia Sidoti, principal chef at HelloFresh.

"But, it depends on the dates, so that is the most important thing to check," she said, urging home cooks to put the date on anything they freeze.

Date labels on packaged foods can be confusing. They're usually not based on science and usually offer a guide for when a food is at its best, not necessarily that something is unsafe to eat.

A useful tool is the FoodKeeper App, created by the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service. It lets you search for foods and provides guidelines for when to consume them for optimal freshness and quality.

Pantry items may still be safe to eat even if they're recently expired, Sidoti said. If something looks or smells off, or you're doubtful, throw it away.

You can always cook anything that's about to expire, and don't forget items like flour and grains also have expiration dates.

"Cook up the pasta and store it in a Ziploc bag and then stir into soups, or make a crazy mixed-shape mac and cheese and portion it up and freeze it," Sidoti said.

Get creative with what you have on hand

You may end up with a random collection of ingredients, so getting creative in the kitchen is a must. Combining shelf-stable items like beans, pasta, rice and canned foods with fresh and frozen foods is the best way to make balanced recipes and use what you have in stock, Sollid said.

Making soups, chili or casseroles lets you combine different ingredients in unique ways, Sidoti said. Check out Pinterest, or Google recipes for the ingredients you have or refer to the cookbooks collecting dust on your bookshelves for ideas.

"If you look at cookbooks from the '50s, when casseroles and bakes were popular, it's kind of crazy to see what combos of canned ingredients home cooks were using," Sidoti said. "With time on your hands, get creative, look up ways to use your ingredient that you are struggling to find a use for. Have fun with it and take some risks."

Swap out ingredients and experiment with dried herbs and flavors, like honey or maple syrup, to use up foods and keep from getting bored with eating the same dishes over and over, Beitchman said.

Even while you're hunkering down, try to eat as healthy as possible with multiple food groups and lots of fruits and vegetables, whether they're fresh, frozen or canned, Pike said.

"Make the best choices you can based on what's available, what you enjoy and will actually eat, what's convenient and within your budget," she said.





GREEN APPLE LEMON CUCUMBER GINGER SMOOTHIE

110 Calories | *PREP TIME: 10 mins* | *MAKE TIME: 10 mins* | *YIELD: 2 SERVINGS*

COURSE: Breakfast CUISINE: American

INGREDIENTS

3/4 cup coconut water, or water

2 green apples, cored and quartered

1/4 English cucumber, chopped

1/2 bunch flat leaf parsley, leaves only, chopped

1 piece ginger, 1 inch thick slice

1 medium lemon, peeled and seeded

1 cup ice cubes

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 1/2 cups, Calories: 110 kcal, Carbohydrates: 30.5g, Protein: 2g, Fat: 0.5g, Sodium: 20mg, Fiber: 6.5g, Sugar: 18g

Source: Skinnytaste.com

This healthy Green Apple, Lemon, Cucumber and Ginger Smoothie is a great source of many vitamins and minerals, especially vitamin C, and a great way to boost your immune system.

TIP: If you're feeling under the weather, or just trying to add more nutrients to your diet, this healthy, green smoothie is a great way to start your morning.



INSTRUCTIONS



There's no dairy or nuts in this smoothie, so it's a lighter smoothie. It's naturally sweetened with apple and loaded with vitamin C. I love adding ginger to my smoothies and juices – the more, the better! It's great for inflammation, nausea and motion sickness.

This smoothie is packed full of nutritious ingredients, all with numerous health benefits.

- 1) Place all the ingredients in a good quality blender, starting with the liquids and blend until smooth. Optional, run through a mesh sieve if you don't like it pulpy.
- 2) Pour into 2 glasses with ice.
- 3) Easy peasy, lemon squeezy!

This smoothie is packed full of nutritious ingredients, all with numerous health benefits.

Coconut Water

Coconut water is high in potassium, an important mineral and a type of electrolyte. Coconut water can function as a lower-sugar alternative to sports drinks. It's a good way to hydrate and restore lost electrolytes after exercise. Coconut water is also lower in calories than most fruit juices and sports drinks.

Apples

Apples are a great source of nutrition – they are high in fiber and vitamin C. Apples are pretty low in calories, but the fiber helps fill you up. Vitamin C, an antioxidant also known as ascorbic acid, is a water-soluble vitamin that your body can't produce. That means it's essential to get Vitamin C from foods high in the vitamin, such as cantaloupe, red bell pepper and oranges.

I used green apples in this recipe, which are a little sweet and tart. Granny Smith are probably the most popular type of green apple, which is what I used.

Cucumber

Cucumbers have a high-water content, which helps with hydration. They are also low in calories. Cucumbers are full of vitamins and minerals, like Vitamins C and K and potassium.

This smoothie recipe calls for English cucumbers, which are less bitter and have a thinner skin than your standard cucumber. If you can't find English cucumbers, you can use regular ones, just be sure to peel the skin off first.

Parsley

Parsley is an excellent source of vitamins A, C, and K and the minerals calcium and potassium. It's such a versatile herb, so you can easily add it to many different dishes like pastas and meats. I prefer Italian flat-leaf parsley over curly parsley because it has a better flavor.

Ginger

Ginger is known as a superfood because of its many health benefits. One of its more popular uses is helping decrease nausea. Ginger also has anti-inflammatory properties, can reduce LDL cholesterol and can help Type 2 diabetics control blood sugar levels.

Lemon

Lemons are another fruit that is a fantastic source of vitamin C. Vitamin C has been shown to boost immunity and promote heart health. Lemons are also low in calories and high in fiber. Lemon brightens up so many recipes that I find myself adding it all the time.

FEATURED EXERCISE

Do Anywhere Total Body Circuit Workout



DO ANYWHERE TOTAL BODY CIRCUIT

10 BURPEES
 10 PUSH UPS
 10 REVERSE CRUNCH
 20 SQUATS
 20 HIGH KNEES
 20 SPEED SKATERS
 30 LUNGES
 30 MOUNTIAN CLIMBERS
 30 JUMPING JACKS
 60 SEC PLANK

REPEAT 3X

This total body circuit workout will work every major muscle group in your body while boosting your heart rate. No gym or equipment required. This workout can be done anytime, anywhere. No more excuses. Start now and cross your workout off your list of things to do.

Equipment: Not a thing

What to do: Perform each exercise for the designated number of reps. Do not rest between exercises. Rest 1 minute between rounds. Repeat 3 times.

SOURCE: <https://www.experimentsinwellness.com/total-body-circuit-workout/>

Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.

Nutritious Words

“HEALTH IS A
 DAILY PRACTICE
 NOT A 30 DAY
 DIET”

Cheshire Nutrition



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