

Creating a Sustainable Pantry
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We could all agree that the enjoyment that comes from fresh produce cannot be compared. However, the satisfaction of reducing food waste, cutting the cost of your weekly, biweekly, or monthly grocery store run, and improving your overall nutritional health by building a sustainable pantry is UNMATCHED.

If you are a person who receives Cal-fresh benefits, according to Legal Clarity (2025), the average CalFresh benefit is approximately \$332 per household per month, which can be estimated to equal about \$11 per household per day, or roughly \$3–\$4 per person per day, depending on household size. Even if you are just someone who wants to cut grocery costs, building a pantry or a pantry revamp may be helpful. With budget restraint or simply wanting to eat more whole foods, it's important to find items that you can stock up and store as part of your pantry. Pantry ingredients can be the base of delicious and nutritious meals.

While this isn't a total guide, here are quick tips to start building your pantry. According to [Doula Farms](#), the first steps to building a sustainable pantry are:

1. Purging and organizing your current pantry:

Start by removing all spoiled or unwanted food items. This not only clears up space but also ensures that you're not holding onto items that could potentially go to waste. Consider donating unopened, non-perishable items to a local food bank or shelter to support your community and reduce waste.

2. Sort items into categories such as grains, canned goods, and snacks.

This makes it easier to see what you have and what you need, helping you avoid duplicate purchases.

3. Wipe down shelves and containers with a natural cleaner and keep non-perishables in airtight containers.

It's a good idea to label your pantry staples, such as flax seeds, chia seeds, and flour.

4. Now you're ready to start adding to your pantry. Here's a list of

suggested items:

Flour

Oatmeal

Various types of beans

Lentils

Baking powder

Assorted spices (Cumin, Paprika, Dry Thyme, Rosemary, and Turmeric)

Assorted Rice (Wild, Jasmine, Basmati)

Pastas

Canned tomatoes or sauce

Fresh produce with a prolonged shelf life – like onions and potatoes

Some condiments – like mustard, mayonnaise, and ketchup

Although your family may have its own way of doing things, having a well-organized and stocked pantry can add ease to your cooking situation. The list above is not a complete list of items that can be kept in your pantry, but this list is a good starting point. Over time you can add fancy airtight containers, but a simple mason jar will also suffice. Lastly remember the easier your pantry is to use and navigate, the more likely it is that you will use it, save money, and reduce food waste, because building a sustainable pantry is more than just organizing food -- it is a first step toward improved nutrition, and intentional living.