

## **Being Prepared in the Kitchen**

Cooking wholesome, vegetable-centered meals at home is definitely a rewarding and worthwhile lifestyle goal! For some of you, it may take a few shifts in routine; we'll try our best to make it as fun and easy as possible.

To believe I've succeeded when cooking, I need to feel efficient, cheerful, and get satisfying results. Here are a few key things I do to help achieve this:

### 1) Keep a well-stocked kitchen pantry, refrigerator, and freezer

I consider these my food "tool boxes". If you don't have what you need on hand, it's easy to get frustrated. *See Basic Staples List below.*

Keep in mind your palette. If you love Asian style food, you'll want ginger and sesame oil on hand; if you like it spicy, stock hot sauce and canned chili peppers.

### 2) Stick to standardized meal rotation ideas

A routine is critical. For example, if you love pizza, have a pizza night most weeks. Every time will be different, because you'll be using different veggies. Have prepared crusts on hand, and try changing up the "crust" with naan, an English muffin, or cauliflower rice.

Have favorite recipes?

Put them into your rotation on a regular basis.

Go with what is easiest, most appealing, and enjoyable to you -salads/grain bowls, stir frys, wraps, pastas, soups, omelets/frittatas, etc.

### 3) Make a weekly plan

*Keep it realistic*, again based on what YOU like. Sit down once a week for 15-30 minutes, and considering your schedule, decide (in general) what to make for meals each day.

Have the recipes you'll use out, and ready to go.

Think of recipes that will "piggyback" well together (e.g. use leftover flaked fish in a taco the next night).

Create a list for any extra items needed at the store.

To help you with your planning each week during the CSA season, I'll include recipes in the newsletter that will coordinate with the produce in that week's box.

### 4) Now, try to stick to the plan!

The plan can be a wonderful tool for freeing your mind (no need to worry about what's for dinner; there's a plan!). Making healthy meals should be an enjoyed, life simplifying and enhancing priority!

### 5) Be prepared

Like every good scout knows, this is what it's all about! Create habits that will be maintainable.

For example, take a few minutes once a week to chop some of your veggies into bite-sized pieces in advance- that way, they'll be ready to roast, toss into a salad or stir fry, etc. Each morning, look at what's on the menu for dinner- anything you can do in 5 minutes right now to prep? –pull something out of the freezer?

It may sound simple and silly, but it can be so relieving to come home when you're hungry to a refrigerator stocked with the chopped onions and pre-cooked chicken needed for a dinner recipe.

Listed below is a list of Urban Graze's Pantry, Fridge, & Freezer Basic Staples. Of course, these are suggestions, and a starting point- add and subtract as you please, and according to the way you cook!

# Urban Graze's Pantry, Fridge, & Freezer Basics

Please try to buy organic, unrefined, local products whenever you can! Adjust lists based on what you like to cook.

## Pantry Staples:

- **Olive Oil, Extra Virgin**
- **Light Oil, such as Sunflower**

### *Other/Optional Oils:*

- Sesame &/or Toasted Sesame, if you enjoy Asian stir fries and salads
- Others such as Coconut, Peanut, Walnut
- Non-stick Spray

- **Apple Cider Vinegar**

### *Other/Optional Vinegars:*

- White &/or Red Wine, Rice, Balsamic

- **Flour, All Purpose**

### *Other/Optional Flours:*

- Pastry, Buckwheat
- Gluten-free varieties

- **Rolled Oats**

- **Cornmeal**

- **Pasta- Spaghetti/Fettuccini type, Rotini/Penne type, and Egg Noodle type**

*Try experimenting with semolina flour pasta substitutes such as quinoa, brown rice, lentil, vegetable*

### *Other/Optional Pastas:*

- Udon, Soba, Elbow, Orecchiette/Shell, Orzo

- **Rice, Long Grain, such as Basmati or Jasmine**

### *Other/Optional Rice:*

- Short grain, such as Arborio
- Brown, Wild

- **Soft Grains, such as Quinoa, CousCous**

- **Chewy Grains, such as Wheatberries or Farro**

- **Canned or Dried Legumes (vegetables!)**

- Beans- e.g. Garbanzo, Black, Red/White Kidney Beans, Pinto
- Lentils- e.g. Brown, French Green, Red
- Peas- e.g. split, black-eyed

- **Canned Tomatoes, Whole &/or Diced**

- **Tomato Paste &/or Sauce, and Pasta Sauce**

- **Nuts and Seeds, such as Almonds, Walnuts, Pecans, Peanuts, Sunflower Seeds, Pepitas**

*Note: Keep in freezer if you don't use often. I also always keep buckwheat groats in my pantry. Usually available in coop/grocer bulk section. Despite name, they're NOT wheat, and are gluten free. Awesome nut substitute in baking; add terrific crunch to yogurt, salads, etc.*

- **Dried Fruit like Cranberries, Raisins, Apricots, Blueberries**

- **Bread (+crumbs/Panko & croutons, if you like)** *Keep all in freezer if you don't use often.*

- **Tortillas, Taco Shells, &/or Spring Roll Wraps**

- **Pizza Crust- sealed for shelf storage are great!** (or naan/pie crust/other to make a pizza or galette)

- **Salt, Pepper, Spices\***see pg. 2

- **Baking Powder, Baking Soda, Cornstarch**

- **Honey**

- **Coconut &/or Rice Milk**

- **Potatoes, Garlic, and Onion** (you may like green onion on hand in the refrigerator too)

## Refrigerator Staples:

- Butter
- Eggs, or Egg Substitute
- Cheese
  - Shredded &/or Block- e.g. Parmesan, Cheddar, Mozzarella, Swiss
  - Soft- Cream, Goat, Feta
- Plain Yogurt (+Kefir if you like smoothies)
- Milk &/or Cream
- Maple Syrup
- Chicken/Beef/Vegetable Broth (I use 'Better Than Bouillon', which comes in a jar that's kept in the fridge)
- Condiments/Sauces\*\*see pg. 2
- Celery
- Fresh Ginger
- Fresh Fruit

## Freezer Staples & Tips:

Freezers often store meat, and things seldom used. It can become a forgotten zone.

Instead, try thinking of it as a real work horse, an extension of your pantry, which can become your meal prep "holding station". Consider what you like to eat, and the ingredients you can prep and freeze in advance. With very little work each week, you'll be amazed at the time savings you'll achieve. When it's easier to cook at home, you'll do it more often!

Another tip, think creatively about freezing "leftovers" –even a small quantity of veggies, a scoop of canned beans, can be transformed into a quick dinner by scattering on a pizza crust later. Note: for food safety reasons, don't freeze food twice. Once thawed, you need to eat it.

Have freezer bags &/or containers of various sizes on hand. I like to use freezer bags, even for soups; they take up less room when laid flat and stacked. For the greatest likelihood of success, date and label each item, then keep your freezer organized, so you know where to find things. Use cooked items within a couple of months- make it a habit to utilize something from your freezer a few times every week.

Whenever I cook meat/poultry/fish, grains/lentils, and roasted veggies, I ALWAYS cook an extra portion. (This also means buying extra at the store.☺). Now, I've got a main component at the ready for another meal. Any seasoning should be noted on the freezer label- for instance, you'll know to pull out the "chipotle" chicken or fish, for an awesome taco. Always make enough soup or casserole so that you'll have some to freeze.

In my freezer, you'll typically find containers holding prepped foods such as:

- Cooked chicken, chopped into bite sized pieces
- Fish, cooked and flaked
- Cooked ground turkey and/or beef
- Breadcrumbs, croutons
- Roasted veggies
- Cooked grains
- Soup
- Leftover meals (hotdish, lasagna, etc.)

Other basic staples in my freezer include peas, corn, edamame, berries, breads/rolls, bread crumbs/croutons, shrimp, bacon, single-wrapped Chorizo and Italian sausages, Trader Joe's frozen rice.

### **\*Ground Spices/Dried Herbs**

We like to go to Penzey's, or buy in bulk at a local co-op. When you buy in bulk, it's fresh, and you can buy any quantity you want- just a pinch or a cupful.

#### **General use:**

- **Basil**
- **Dill**
- **Marjoram and/or Oregano**
- **Rosemary**
- **Tarragon**
- **Thyme**

#### **Often used for baking:**

- **Allspice**
- **Cardamom**
- **Cinnamon**
- **Cloves**
- **Nutmeg**

#### **Spicy dishes:**

- **Chili Powder**
- **Cumin**
- **Curry**
- **Garlic Salt/Powder**
- **Ginger**
- **Mustard**
- **Red Pepper Flakes**

### **\*\*Condiments/Sauces/Misc.**

- **Mayonnaise**
- **Ketchup**
- **Dijon Mustard** (plus other mustards if you wish: Coarse/Whole Grain, Yellow)
- **Tamari and/or Soy Sauce**
- **Hoisin, Teriyaki, or other Asian cooking sauce/marinade**
- **Hot Sauce, such as Sriracha or Tabasco**
- **Lemon juice** (and/or fresh lemons/limes)

### **Other nice to have:**

- **Canned Tuna**
- **Peppers, whole or chopped**
- **Olives and Capers**
- **Applesauce**
- **Horseradish Sauce**
- **BBQ Sauce**
- **Peanut butter**
- **Worcestershire Sauce**
- **All-Fruit Jam**
- **Salsa**
- **For baking: Sugars, Vanilla/Almond Extract, Cocoa Powder**
- **Breakfast Cereal/Muesli/Granola**