



Pantry Organization Guide

Fit + Healthy 365

Pantry Organization Guide

Important - while I have outlined steps and suggestions for organizing, do what works best for YOU and your family and the space you have. Also, don't become paralyzed with trying to decide on the "perfect" system for organizing. For example, don't stress over what zone pasta should go in. Make quick decisions and if the way you picked doesn't work in practice, just change it. The main thing is to keep it simple and organized.

STEP 1: PREPARE AND GATHER SUPPLIES

Prepare

Before you start reorganizing, analyze your space:

- what spaces are available to store food, such as cabinets, drawers, countertop, pantry/closet?
- what spaces could you reorganize to give you more space for food storage

Gather Supplies

Take a look at what you're currently using to organize. What's working? What's missing? Before tackling the reorganization, purchase the supplies you'll need. Places like dollar stores and Walmart can provide inexpensive options.

Note: I prefer to use glass containers as much as possible. Dollarama has an excellent selection for great prices. You can also use mason jars for many items.

I recommend keeping it simple and not "over-organizing". Some key supplies:

- clear containers with lids (a few of small, medium, large)
- labels
- storage baskets or tubs, with or without lids
- spice racks or organizers (many varieties, such as for the wall, over the door, cabinet, shelves, magnetic, etc.)
- shelf expanders or organizers, to stack more things and increase shelf space

Fit + Healthy 365

STEP 2: EMPTY, DECLUTTER AND CLEAN

Empty and Declutter

The first step is to take everything out of your pantry including food, food storage containers and junk/trash that may have accumulated. Place the items in one space so you can see everything at once.

As you take items out, separate them into these categories:

- Items you use
- Unopened items that can be donated
- Expired or suspicious items to trash

Place donation items in plastic bags and remove from your work space. Throw out expired items and garbage.

Note: If you realize you have a lot of food to eat, try to use the excess items over the next week or two, which helps clear off shelves, eliminate food waste, and saves some money by ensuring you eat the items you've already purchased.

Clean the Shelves

Now that your pantry is completely empty, clean/vacuum shelves. Wipe down each shelf with a damp cloth and let dry before reloading.

STEP 3: ORGANIZE INTO ZONES

Organizing your pantry into zones is the best way to ensure you can easily and quickly find what you're looking for and that you don't have to do another pantry overhaul in a couple of months.

I recommend organizing your items into the following zones:

- Baking Supplies
- Condiments, Oils, Vinegars
- Canned Goods: Beans, Legumes, Tomatoes, Tuna
- Boxed Goods: Pasta, Rice, Cereal, Crackers
- Nuts, Nut butters, Seeds,
- Snacks
- Root Vegetables
- Spices
- Entertaining and Storage Items
- Drinks
- Pet Food
- Miscellaneous

Fit + Healthy 365

If you have multiple packages of food that can be consolidated, such as flour or nuts, place into one single container.

* Use the [Pantry Basics Checklist](#) to determine what you have and what you need to buy.*

STEP 4: LABEL

Some foods are best stored in the containers they come in (canned vegetables, for instance). Others are better off transferred into a clear container so that it lasts longer and you can see when you're running low. As well, moving foods that come in oddly shaped or soft packages into sturdy containers with defined sides can save space and make your pantry less messy.

When you transfer foods, add a label with the item name and expiration or use by date.

Optional: Use labels on the shelves of your pantry or on containers holding a category of items to help with storage and organization.

STEP 5: RESTOCK THE SHELVES

Using the zones you created in Step 4, place the items back into your pantry or cupboards with all items in a zone kept together.

Selecting the Shelf

Keep the items you use most regularly in your prime pantry real estate. This means the space between your shoulders and knees. It's easier to reach and easier to put back after use.

Keep heavier items, like jugs of olive oil and pet food, on the bottom shelf along with the stuff you don't use on a regular basis.

For each zone, arrange items by height, keeping the shorter items towards the front and the taller items near the back.

For snacks, it's up to you where to keep them. If you've got young kids (or if you get too tempted), you may want to place snacks up high where they can't be easily reached.

Follow The Last In, Last Out Rule

Place things in your pantry in such a way that you're following the last in, last out rule. This means putting a newly purchased jar at the back of its section and moving the older jars closer to the front. Then, when you're ready to use one, just grab the one up front.

Fit + Healthy 365

STEP 6: MAINTAINING AN ORGANIZED PANTRY

Maintain your new organizing scheme by being consistent about putting items in the proper zone when you buy them and placing items back in their correct place after using them.

If you use an item regularly, and it has a long shelf life, your goal should be to have at least two of them at all times in your home. The one in use and the one ready to be used as soon as you finish the other. When you get the spare make sure to write down on your grocery list to pick up another at the store. You'll never run out of staples this way.