

Healthy Pantry, Healthy Meals

A Planning and Shopping Guide



Know Before You Go

- "Shop" your pantry, cupboards, fridge and freezer so you know what you have already.
- Identify and make a list of what needs to be used in the next week. Plan your menu around these items. Use MyPlate.gov to plan healthy meals, snacks and beverages.
- Make a shopping list of items you need.
- Consider using frozen or canned produce in your meals and snacks. These items are nutritious, affordable, have a longer shelf life and help trim prep time.
- Discounts and promotions (coupons, sales, reward programs) can save money if they allow you to buy what you can use and store by the "use by" or "best by" date on the container.



In the Moment

- Remember your shopping list and stick to it.
- Select items with "use by" and "best by" the furthest out to extend shelf life at home.
- Use the unit price to find the best price for your needs. The unit price is usually found on or with the price tag either on the shelf with the grocery item or on the package. Use it to compare the prices of items based on similar size, weight or quantity to work for your budget.



For more information such as
Quick & Easy recipes and videos:



New England
Dairy



Connecticut Dairy
CTDairy.org

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Your Stocking Plan For a Healthy Pantry and Fridge.

Keep track of frequently used items to build your menu & shopping list. The examples below are based on our Quick & Easy recipe ideas.



Fruits & Vegetables:

(Choose a variety of fresh, frozen, and canned).

- Frozen spinach
- Frozen peas
- Onions
- Mushrooms
- Broccoli
- Corn
- Apple
- _____
- _____
- _____

Proteins:

(Fresh, frozen, or canned lean meats, nuts, seeds, etc.)

- Chicken
- Turkey
- Fish
- Ground beef
- Black beans
- Peanut butter
- Tofu
- _____
- _____
- _____

Grains:

(If possible, include whole grains like brown rice).

- Whole grain tortillas
- Pasta
- Pita bread
- Flat bread
- Rice
- Oatmeal
- _____
- _____
- _____

Dairy:

- Milk
- Butter
- Monterrey Jack Cheese
- Yogurt
- Mozzarella cheese
- Cheddar cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Ricotta cheese
- _____
- _____
- _____



Cooking and Storing

- Use the rule of “first-in, first out”. This means you put away newly purchased items behind those already in your home.
- Label and date foods in your refrigerator and freezer.
- Fruit and vegetables may ripen at different speeds. Check for ripeness daily to help you plan what to use.
- Find a use for less fresh or lightly damaged but otherwise safe produce. Blend overripe fruit or vegetables into smoothies, soups, or baked goods. Chop and roast less than perfect vegetables or add to soups and stews.
- Freeze foods that will not be used right away. Bread, meat, dairy, as well as cut fruits and vegetables can all be frozen.



Know what best-by, sell-by and use-by codes really mean:

- **Expiration Date:** This is generally seen on medication or occasionally baby food/infant formula. Products with an expiration date should not be used past the date.
- **Sell By:** Used by the store to guide how long to display the product for sale or inventory management. It is not a safety date.
- **Use-By:** This is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. It is not a safety date except when used on infant formula.
- **Best if Used By/Before:** Indicates the date a product will be of best flavor or quality. Not a purchase or safety date