

## How to Stock a Vegetarian Pantry

A vegetarian pantry has different needs from a more general pantry. It is important to keep vegetarian foods on hand that will provide energy and nutrients; and substitutes for other non-vegetarian food products. This article will help you achieve your goal of a well-stocked and

- 1.) **Clean out your pantry.** If you are changing to a vegetarian or vegan diet, it is time for a good clean out. Remove all out-dated food, any food with unsuitable animal-derived products and remove anything that lacks labels but you aren't quite sure what it is. Wipe down all the shelves and allow them to dry.
- 2.) **Go shopping.** It is always a good idea to stock a new pantry with as many fresh items as possible at the same time, so that the items date together. If you are simply restocking, keep items that are still plenty in date but note them. Make sure to write a list of the items that you need, so that you are not overwhelmed by choices or forgetful as to what you need.
- 3.) **Select your items in food groups.** A vegetarian pantry that is stocked with the basics should contain:



- *Grain products:* rice (especially brown, arborio, jasmine, basmati and sweet), millet, couscous, quinoa, kasha, wild rice (aquatic grass), buckwheat, barley, polenta, and whole grain flours.
- *Pasta and noodles:* pasta made from grain products (e.g., wheat pasta, rice pasta), noodles (e.g., udon, buckwheat etc.). Try to avoid quick-cook noodles; these tend to have a lot of the healthy nutrients removed and are often high in trans-fats.
- *Legumes:* dried legumes (peas, split peas, lentils, puy lentils, chickpeas/garbanzo, kidney beans, pinto beans etc.), tins/cans of legumes, shelf-stored tofu.
- *Instant mixes for veggie burgers, falafels, etc.* Try to prefer organic options and low sodium.
- *Vegetables and fruits:* There are various ways of storing these in the pantry:
  - Tins/cans of fruit in natural syrup, tins/cans of some vegetables. Try to avoid sourcing a lot of your fruit and veggies in this way because canned varieties lose nutrients, have high sodium, and can leach chemicals from the can soldering/composition into the food over time. Always choose cans that are free from dents, and be sure to check use-by dates.
  - Preserved fruit and vegetables. Follow the instructions carefully if you make your own at home.
  - Dehydrated fruits and veggies can also be kept in the pantry for reconstitution. Dried mushrooms rehydrate very well. Dried Seaweed with miso and Vegetable broth makes a quick healthy soup!
  - Dried fruit. A must for both eating and cooking with. Apricots, peaches, pears, apple, nectarines etc. are all great choices. Beware of added sugar; dried pineapple, strawberries, paw-paw, kiwifruit etc. often have considerable added sugar.
- *Nuts and seeds:* Nuts and seeds should be eaten quickly to ensure that they remain fresh. Only purchase small amounts at a time. It is handy to always have on hand some kind of seed (walnuts, almonds, sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, cashews, pecans and sesame seeds) for snacks. Peanuts are a personal choice given modern allergy problems. Nut and seed butters are also very useful to keep on hand; consider tahini, peanut butter, cashew nut butter, almond butter etc. Some require refrigeration on opening.
- *Flavourings:* There are a number of key flavorings that no vegetarian pantry should be without. These include:



- Nutritional yeast
- Soy sauce, shoyu, tamari; look for low sodium options
- Vegetable broth/stock cubes, liquid or powder - check ingredients carefully, some have animal protein (casein in them)!
- Pesto sauce in packets; packet soups
- Liquid smoke (add it to canola oil for a "bacon" taste to meals.
- Oils (Olive, Safflower, and Canola are good for almost any purpose).
- Curry powder
- Seasonings such as herbs, spices, salt, pepper etc.
- Seaweed products for seasoning or for miso soup
- Flavoured vinegars, dressings
- Sweeteners such as raw and organic sugar, honey, maple syrup, or Sweet and Low. Select whatever suits your needs, preferences, and dietary requirements.



- 4.) **Have a few treats in store.** It is useful to have some treats on stand-by for guests, children and the munchies. Good products include dark chocolate, soy chocolate, chickpea crisps, wasabi peas, sugar-free cookies (sweetened with alternatives), microwave popcorn and raw kernels, etc.
- 5.) **Keep egg substitutes on hand for your baking needs.** Ener-G makes an excellent egg-replacing product available at most health food stores and over the internet.
- 6.) **Have soy milk on hand.** It is always handy to have some shelf milk on hand for times when you run out and guests arrive. Flavoured soy milks are also handy, including chocolate, vanilla and strawberry. These make great coffee creamers!
- 7.) **Keep an eye on use-by dates and discard products that go beyond these.** They might seem all right, but once stale, items never taste quite as fresh. They also do not provide the same nutrients as fresher, in-date items. Circulate goods at the back of the pantry and bring them to the front at least monthly, if not more often. It's easy to forget about items you can't see, and the less you waste the happier your wallet will be.

#### Tips:

- Places to stock up on vegetarian pantry foods include health food stores, health food co-ops, large health-food oriented super-stores or supermarkets, fruit and vegetable stores, some bulk/wholesale stores, local markets (farmer's markets etc.) and straight from boutique stores on farms.
- Don't over look your local supermarket. Many "regular" grocery stores are now catering to the Vegan crowd by offering several varieties of soy milks, tofu and vegetarian meat substitutes as well as organic produce.
- Some specialty grocery stores are also great to visit in and discover new flavours and textures; try Chinese, Lebanese, South African, Italian, West Indian, Samoan, etc. stores for new ideas.
- How to Veganize Recipes
  - Look through your recipe books and choose a recipe that appeals to you.
  - Check off all the items in the ingredients list that are not vegan, for example, meat or fish, dairy, gelatin etc.
  - Start substituting the ingredients. For example, you can substitute most items as follows:
    - Cheese - vegan cheese (soy or rice based)
    - Beef - veggie mock beef strips (usually seitan-based)
    - Chicken - veggie mock chicken (usually gluten-based)
    - Pork/bacon - veggie mock pork/bacon (usually soy-based)
    - Sausages - there are many mock sausage versions on the market
    - Sliced sandwich meat - a variety of mock veggie sandwich meats exist
    - Butter - substitute oils or vegan margarine. For baking, solid coconut fat is a great choice and it is good for you in small quantities owing to its vitamin E content.
    - Ice cream - try soy or rice substitutes (Tofutti will cover the ice cream craving!)
    - Milk - try soy, rice, nut or oat substitutes. Water or juice will often substitute in baking.
    - Eggs - there are many egg-substitutes on the market. Other ideas include pectin (for example, use pureed apple in cakes).
    - Gelatin - agar agar and pectin are good choices; sometimes banana or apple can substitute. It is best to follow instructions in a vegan cookbook on substituting gelatin.