THE NEW BOSTON COOKING SCHOOL

Store Smarter: A Guide for Home Cooks

NOTES

Properly stored food lasts longer, is easier to find, and is more convenient to use. Here are some general storage tips to help you get started.

Pantry Storage

You don't need much space at all to have a fabulous dry pantry full of useful and delicious ingredients. Here are some general pantry rules.

- **Label everything that does not have packaging.** We love buying in bulk and storing items in glass jars, but do be sure to label them.
- **Use glass containers with airtight lids.** Glass is easy to clean, can be reused indefinitely, and doesn't hold on to odors from previous food. Make sure you buy containers with tight-fitting lids to keep your food the freshest.
- **Embrace bulk, but don't buy for an apocalypse.** Try to keep your pantry shelves stocked only one to two items deep; otherwise, you risk forgetting what you have and wasting food and/or money.
- **Organize shelves by type.** Classification is not just for libraries! Try reserving areas for:
  - Grains/legumes, such as beans, lentils, rice, and pasta.
  - Flavor builders, such as canned fish, sauces, dried mushrooms, and condiments.
  - Spices. Keep small amounts of your most-used spices. You can organize alphabetically or by flavor combinations you like (cumin, coriander, and cinnamon or dried oregano, bay leaves, and red pepper flakes, for example).
  - Liquids, such as broths, canned soups, and oils (store away from heat).
  - Baking ingredients, such as flours, sugars, and extracts (vanilla, almond, etc.).
- **Store the right foods in the pantry:** Dry pasta; dried and canned beans; boxed broth; white flours; sugars; spices; baking soda/powder; canned fish; unopened condiments; and certain storage vegetables like onions, garlic, avocados, and potatoes (keep these in a cool part of pantry)

Refrigerator Storage

Properly storing foods in your fridge both prolongs food longevity and helps avoid food safety issues. Here are some tips for storing food in the refrigerator.

- **Wrap all meat well and place it on the bottom shelves.** If any juices do drip, they won't fall on other ingredients.
- **Remember that the door is the warmest place in your fridge.** This makes it a poor place to store milk but a great place for condiments and other items with preservatives.
- **Let hot foods cool until they are warm before refrigerating.** When you put hot foods in the fridge, you risk raising the ambient temperature of the refrigerator too much.
- **Label your food.** Do you sense a theme here? Always label and date your food to make locating food easier and reduce food waste.
- **Keep in mind that crisper drawers are fabulous for keeping lettuce, well, crisp!** Roll washed and very dry salad greens in paper towels and then put them in an airtight container or zipper-lock plastic bag. In the crisper drawer your greens will stay fresh for days.
- **Store the right foods in the fridge:** Dairy products, eggs, meats, and perishable fruits and vegetables (greens, bell peppers, zucchini, summer squash, mushrooms, etc.)
  - ***Pro tip:*** *Most fruit that you plan to eat raw tastes better at room temperature. Take berries, apples, melons, and citrus out of the fridge an hour or two before eating to take off the chill and open up the flavors.*

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Store Smarter: A Guide for Home Cooks (cont.)

NOTES

Freezer Storage

Freezers are great for prolonging the life of cooked and raw food. It's important to know that your freezer door is less cold than the freezer proper and that freezers work best when not overcrowded. Here are more tips for storing food in the freezer.

- **Freeze portion-size units separately before storing in bulk.**
  - **Ice Cube Trays:** Freeze pesto, egg whites, chicken stock, and other sauces and liquids in ice cube trays; then pop them out and store the portions together in a plastic bag. This way you can defrost just what you need.
  - **Baking Sheets:** Rinse and dry well peas, blueberries, fresh pasta, and other solid foods, arrange them in a single layer on a baking sheet (leaving space between each item), and freeze them. Once frozen, store them together in a plastic bag or freezer-safe container. The pieces will stay separate, allowing you to scoop out just the right amount and not hack at a frozen 1-pound block of peas to get just ¼ cup.
- **Prevent messy spills.** Liquids expand when frozen. Leave about 1 inch of space at the tops of containers of high-water-content items like soups and fruit packed in juice or syrup.
- **Label everything.** Label each item with its name and the date it was frozen. Frozen chicken broth and applesauce look shockingly alike!
- **Keep frozen vegetables and fruit on hand.** All home cooks have days when fast is crucial; precooked frozen vegetables and frozen fruits reduce cooking time considerably. Frozen produce is also flavor-packed, very nutritious, and inexpensive.
- **Store the right foods in the freezer:** Nuts, fruits, blanched vegetables, whole-wheat flours, homemade stocks and broths, cooked beans, and fresh pasta.