Everyday *Household Tasks*

Grocery Shopping | Cooking

Caring for Clothes | Home Maintenance and Decorating

Grocery Shopping

Smart grocery shoppers have a plan. They know exactly what they have at home and what they need from the store. The best shoppers also know how to buy **nutritious**, high-quality food *and* save money. What could you do to eat better and spend less on groceries?

New Habits for a New Year

Most years, Kevin didn't think about making New Year's resolutions. But this year, he had a definite goal in mind. He wanted to get better at buying groceries.

Kevin's friend thought he was being silly. "Who cares about buying groceries?" she asked.

"I do," Kevin said. "For two main reasons."

One reason was cost. Kevin knew he spent a lot of money at the grocery store. After all, he went there three or four times a week. He usually stopped on his way home from work. Yet it felt like he never had anything in the house to eat. Kevin always had food. But none of it seemed to go together to make a meal.

As a result, Kevin often ended up eating random foods. One night for dinner, he had a frozen burrito and a can of peaches. Sometimes, he didn't bother trying to figure out what to eat. He'd just order a pizza.

Kevin's second concern was health. His diet wasn't healthy. He rarely bought fresh fruits and vegetables. It took time to clean and cook them. Plus, they spoiled if he didn't eat them right away.

Instead, Kevin ate a lot of **ready-made** foods. These were canned, boxed, and frozen products. He liked how easy these foods were to prepare. Most of them, he just popped into the microwave. But he knew these foods weren't very good for him.

Kevin resolved to change his eating and shopping **habits**. He rarely thought about his meals in advance. That meant he made many trips to the grocery store. Learning to shop smarter would save him time and money. It would also help him improve his health.

Chapter 1

Buying Grocery Staples

Grocery **staples** are the basic food items you use again and again. They are foods you need on hand to put together meals on a regular basis.

Think about your favorite meals. What foods, spices, and other items do you need to make them? These are called **ingredients**. If any will stay fresh in your refrigerator, freezer, or **pantry**, consider stocking up. These staples will make putting together a dish quick and easy.

Common Grocery Staples

Many grocery staples are nonperishable. That means they can be stored for a long time without going bad. Not all staples can be left in the pantry though. Frozen foods should stay frozen until you're ready to use them. Just remember to plan enough time for them to thaw before you need them for a meal. Some staples, like eggs and butter, need to be kept in the refrigerator. Here are other common grocery staples:

- canned or dried beans
- pasta
- jarred sauces
- frozen produce
- frozen meat
- rice
- nut butters

- coffee and tea
- cereal
- crackers
- honey
- oatmeal
- popcorn

- potatoes
- canned tuna or chicken
- condiments

Other Staples to Have on Hand

Do you bake often? If so, staples for your kitchen should include baking supplies. These are items such as flour, sugar, and salt. Baking powder, baking soda, and yeast are also good to have.
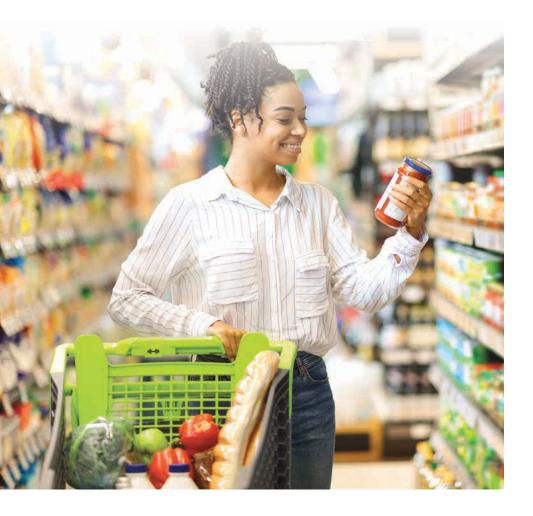
Herbs and spices are other staples. Rosemary and oregano add flavor to food. Cinnamon and pepper do too.

What about **condiments**? Products such as soy sauce, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, and barbecue sauce are staples.

Shopping for Staples

When you shop, always be aware of how long a product will stay fresh. Fresh fruits and vegetables can't be stored for very long. Frozen fruits and vegetables can be stored in the freezer for months. Canned products can last for years.

Stock your pantry with canned goods. Fill your freezer with frozen foods. But buy only as much fresh food as you can eat in a few days.

Storing Foods

Certain foods should be stored in the refrigerator or freezer. For example, dairy products must be refrigerated. These include items such as milk and cheese.

Many canned and bottled foods must be refrigerated after they've been opened. Otherwise, they will spoil. Look for this requirement on food labels.

Certain fresh fruits and vegetables can be stored in the refrigerator. Grains, such as breads and muffins, can be too. Some, but not all, of these foods need to be kept cold. Many are fine stored on a countertop or in the pantry. However, keeping them cool may help them last longer.

Other foods should be stored in your pantry. Foods stored in a pantry are often called dry goods and canned goods.

For all kinds of foods, pay attention to the **expiration date**. Many foods can still be eaten past this date. The quality and taste just won't be as good. However, some expired foods could make you very sick. These include many types of meat, seafood, soft cheeses, and some fruits and vegetables.

The Facts About Expiration Dates

Here's a surprising fact: Food isn't usually spoiled or harmful after its expiration date. It just won't taste as good. The quality may not be as good either.

Some grocery stores remove products from shelves after their expiration dates. But they don't need to. You should check products' expiration dates while you shop. Then you won't buy something that is about to expire. Look for these codes and know what they mean:

- **Sell by:** This is the date that a product should be sold by. After this date, stores should remove the product from shelves. Food is still safe to eat after this date.

- **Best by:** The flavor or quality may not be as good after this date. But the food can still be eaten.

- **Use by:** This is the last day the food's manufacturer stands by its quality.

Setting Up Your Pantry

The goods in your pantry should be organized in a **logical** way. For example, keep pasta and pasta sauces next to each other. You might also group similar items. Cereals may all go in one place. Baking ingredients might be kept together.

Figure out your own pantry plan. Then stick with it. That will make it easier to find things.