

Your Mediterranean Pantry

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Most of us lead busy lives that don't allow us to shop for fresh food daily. Nor do we need to! There are plenty of delicious, nutritious staples we can store for weeks or months in a cool, dark pantry or kitchen cupboard. Having these to hand will make it easy to rustle up a quick and healthy meal in a short amount of time. (Your Mediterranean Fridge & Freezer list coming soon.)

Most of these products are available at Kings Soopers, Whole Foods and Sprouts. Also, [Amazon](#) and [Thrive Market](#) (an online health-food cooperative with significantly lower prices than many physical health-food stores) sell lots of pantry staples, so they're worth a visit.

If this list looks intimidatingly long, don't worry – you don't have to buy all this at once! Stock up as you go – every time you prepare a dish that requires some of these ingredients below, buy them for that recipe and then stock them for future use. All these items last a long time in cool, dark storage conditions.

Note: I do not receive any remuneration from any of the companies whose products I recommend below; the recommendations are purely based on my own experiences and preferences. If you discover better alternatives or important omissions, please let me know and I will incorporate them into this list.

Healthy fats

Store these in a dark, cool place to protect them from oxidation; if any oils, nuts or seeds smell rancid, throw them out as they can damage your health.

- Extra virgin olive oil (I usually buy a lower-cost oil for cooking (e.g. Kirkland Organic at Costco) and a more expensive one for dressings (e.g. Bariani, California Olive Ranch)
- Walnut and hazelnut oil (LaTourangelle) for dressings, baking, home-made Nutella
- Avocado-oil mayonnaise (Primal Kitchen or Chosen Foods)
- Nuts: Hazelnuts, almonds, pecans, walnuts, Brazil nuts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pine nuts,
- Seeds: pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, chia seeds, flax meal
- Nut and seed butters (peanut butter, almond butter, tahini (sesame seed), pumpkin seed butter, sunflower seed butter, etc.)
- Ghee (clarified butter – my favorite brand is Kelapo) or grass-fed butter
- Coconut oil (refined or extra-virgin) for high-heat cooking; I use extra-virgin coconut oil for Thai dishes and refined coconut oil for popcorn (and occasionally for wonderfully flaky short-crust pastry)

Legumes (dried or canned – some of each)

- Beans (e.g., cannellini, Great Northern, navy, pinto, red beans, edamame beans (frozen), black beans, fava beans, etc.)

- Lentils (my favorites are the nutty, crunchy, dark-green French Puy lentils, but brown and red lentils are great, too)
- Peas (yellow and green split peas)
- Garbanzos / chickpeas (they're the same thing), garbanzo flour (makes delicious Provencal pancakes called *socca* – recipe coming soon)

Herbs & spices

Herbs and spices go stale after a while, so don't buy these in bulk; stick to small jars and replace regularly. There are too many herbs & spices to list here, but these are the ones I use most often – they would make a great Mediterranean starter kit:

- Bay leaves (dried)
- Coriander
- Cumin
- Garlic powder
- Herbes de Provence
- Italian herb mix
- Nutmeg
- Oregano
- Paprika powder (plain & smoked)
- Red pepper flakes
- Rosemary
- Saffron (Trader Joe's has the best price)
- Sage
- Thyme
- Turmeric
- Thyme
- Turmeric

Dried fruits

Most dried fruits are too glycemic to eat frequently or in large quantities (i.e., fruits such as raisins, figs and dates can cause sharp increases in blood sugar), but the three listed here have a low glycemic load. Add them to homemade trail mix or granola, Moroccan stews, salads, or make homemade fruit spreads (see recipe in my book, *Zest for Life*).

- Prunes
- Apricots
- Sundried tomatoes

Whole grains

I only recommend "intact" grains – i.e., actual grains, not bread or pasta labelled "whole-grain" but doesn't contain any actual visible grains. My favorite whole grains include:

- Brown or black rice (can include brown basmati, Thai or jasmine rice) (GF)
- Barley (pearled or hulled)
- Farro
- Quinoa (GF)
- Steel cut or rolled oats (steel-cut are slightly more "whole" than rolled, but both are great) (GF)

- Whole grain crispbread (I love Trader Joe's Norwegian-style whole grain crispbread which comes in a GF and a gluten-containing version; it's delicious (flavored with thyme and oregano and contains loads of seeds), low in carbs, high in fiber, contains no artificial additives and stays crunchy once opened provided you store it in a Ziploc bag. I also like Mary's Gone Crackers.)

Mediterranean flavorings

The following foods that add deep, satisfying flavors to foods. When shifting to a "real-food" diet – esp. if you have been eating highly flavored, processed food – you want to make sure that your meals are packed with flavor so they will hold your interest. The Japanese have a word, *umami* (which translates as "pleasant savory taste" or "delicious") that describes a rich, meaty flavor. Adding *umami* to your dishes will make them taste irresistibly moreish! (If you want to geek out on *umami*, there's tons of information on it [here](#).) The Mediterranean diet is full of *umami*-rich pantry staples such as:

- Tomato paste, dried tomatoes, tomato juice
- Canned fish (anchovies, sardines, tuna, salmon)
- Olives and capers in brine, tapenade (chopped olive spread; I like Trader Joe's)
- Basil pesto (look for it in the chillers of most good supermarket; try to find one made with olive oil)
- Parmesan cheese, cured meats like prosciutto or Spanish chorizo (enjoy in moderation)
- Seaweed
- Fermented seasonings like fish sauce (I like Trader Joe's Red Boat sauce), soy sauce, coconut aminos, Worcestershire sauce, miso, apple cider vinegar, (white) balsamic vinegar
- Fermented foods like kimchi, sauerkraut, sourdough bread
- Pomegranate molasses (available at Middle Eastern supermarkets or Amazon)
- Green tea
- Mushrooms (I always keep a tub of dried mixed mushrooms in my cupboard – they keep for ages and add a deep, beefy taste to stews, soups and Bolognese sauce)

Miscellaneous pantry items

- Bone broth to use for soups, stews or to cook grains (I recommend Pacific Foods' chicken bone broth)
- Plant milk (I like Costco's Original (barely sweetened) soy milk – very low in sugar); when using plant milks, try to use those that contain some protein (soy) and/or healthy fats (hemp, flax, sunflower). Rice, almond or oat milk generally contain very little protein or fat.
- High-quality dark chocolate (my favorites are Endangered Species 88% or ChocoLove's 77%)
- Unsweetened cocoa powder
- Sweeteners:
 - o Maple syrup (less glycemic than most sweeteners)
 - o Honey (has some antibacterial, antiviral and antifungal properties but is more glycemic than maple syrup)
 - o Conventional white sugar (for baking): Surprisingly, this is only moderately glycemic. Nonetheless, it's "empty calories," so use sparingly.

- Non-caloric, non-glycemic sweeteners: Stevia or monk fruit sweetener
- Low-sugar fruit spreads (store in fridge once opened; since they are lower in sugar than conventional jams and preserves, they quickly turn moldy once opened)
- Sea salt or iodized salt (you don't need fancy-schmancy specialty salts)