

# stock a healthy

According to the Food Marketing Institute, the average supermarket carries 48,750 items, leaving it up to you to zero in on the best ones. With the expert advice here, you can cut to the chase, loading your cart with healthy diet building blocks—staples for your pantry, refrigerator and freezer, and essential kitchen tools. The only choice left to make: What's for dinner?

BY BARBARA BRODY PHOTOGRAPHS BY KATE SEARS



# kitchen



## essential tools

**OLIVE OIL SPRAYER** Even though it's healthy, olive oil has 14 grams of fat per tablespoon. Fill a Misto M100S (\$15.99; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)) with EVOO and mist it on vegetables before roasting. It's a great alternative to canned sprays, which may contain chemicals, says Devin Alexander, host of FitTV's *Healthy Decadence* and author of *The Biggest Loser Dessert Cookbook*.

**NONSTICK SKILLET** With GreenPan's Stainless Steel 12-in. Gourmet Open Frypan (\$59.95; [hsn.com](http://hsn.com)), you can stir-fry, sauté, scramble and sear. Since it's coated, it requires little oil or butter, and cleanup is a breeze. Plus, it's free of PFOA, a chemical found in some nonstick pans that has been linked to cancer in studies.

**SALAD SPINNER** A Zyliss Smart Touch Salad Spinner (\$24.99; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)) makes it easy to rinse the grit off healthy leafy greens.

**RASP** Small servings are more satisfying when the dish is flavorful, so use a Microplane Classic Series Zester/Grater (\$12.95;

[us.microplane.com](http://us.microplane.com)) to add zing with citrus zests and grated ginger or Parmesan.

### PORTION CONTROL DISHWARE

The porcelain Measure Up Bowls (\$29.99 for 2; [measureupbowl.com](http://measureupbowl.com)) have etched lines—from ¼ cup to 2 cups—that make it easy to adhere to serving sizes.

**CHEF'S KNIFE** Healthy eating requires fresh ingredients, so invest in one blade, like the Wüsthof Classic 8-in. Cook's Knife (\$119.95; [cooking.com](http://cooking.com)) to "make chopping, slicing and dicing easy and cut down on prep time," says Marissa Lippert, RD, author of *The Cheater's Diet*.

**STEAMER** The OXO Good Grips Pop-Up Steamer (\$16.99; [oxo.com](http://oxo.com)) preserves nutrients like vitamin A and B in vegetables that boiling can zap. Its rounded legs won't scratch pans, and its pop-up handle helps you get it in and out of pots.

**BLENDER** One way to get your fruits and vegetables: Pile them into KitchenAid's 5-Speed Blender (\$129.99; [macys.com](http://macys.com)) and whip up smoothies and soups.

## pantry essentials

### OLIVE AND CANOLA OIL

Both are sources of heart-healthy monounsaturated fat, says Karen Ansel, RD, a spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association (ADA).

**VINEGARS** Balance and brighten the taste of vegetables or mixed savory dishes with like-colored vinegars, like balsamic with dark vegetables and cider with chicken and rice, says Jackie Newgent, RD, author of *Big Green Cookbook*.

### SPICES AND DRIED HERBS

Paprika, cumin, oregano and other spices add flavor without fat. When you use blends, make sure they're labeled "low-sodium."

**DIJON MUSTARD** A tangy sandwich spread, it's also tasty in a vinaigrette with balsamic and olive oil.

### ONIONS AND POTATOES

These recipe staples have incredibly long shelf lives.

**LOW-SODIUM VEGETABLE OR CHICKEN BROTH** A key component in fast, flavorful meal prep, the broth can be used in stews, soups, braises and pasta dishes.

**CANNED TUNA** Choose light tuna—it's low in mercury and high in omega-3s.

**CANNED TOMATOES** Open a can and you're halfway to a sauce, says Jessica Fishman Levinson, RD, founder of Nutritiousicious, a nutrition counseling practice in New York City. Look for 200 milligrams or fewer of sodium per serving.

**MARINARA** There's nothing wrong with sauce in a jar. Pick one that has tomatoes as the first ingredient, has fewer than 3.5 grams of fat per serving, and has no high-fructose corn syrup.

**REGULAR AND WHOLE-GRAIN PASTA** Whole-grain's healthier, but regular is OK in moderation, says Lippert. Cook it al dente—a little firm—so you end up with more resistant starch, which acts like fiber in your body.

**BROWN RICE AND WHOLE GRAINS LIKE BARLEY, QUINOA AND COUSCOUS** With more fiber than refined white rice, brown rice also has magnesium, which can help keep heart disease at bay.

**CANNED BEANS** Stock up on a variety—black, pinto, Great Northern. Toss in soups and sides for protein and fiber kicks, says Lippert. Tip: Rinse them to cut the sodium.

**DRIED LENTILS** These low-cal legumes pack a fiber and protein punch.

**ASIAN SAUCES** Choose flavorful soy, teriyaki and chili garlic sauces with the least amount of sodium you can find; the "lite" or "low-sodium" varieties are your best bets, says Alexander.

**HONEY** Rich in antioxidants, honey sweetens up dressings and marinades.

**NATURAL PEANUT BUTTER** The regular stuff often has added sugar and vegetable oil, says Keri Gans, RD, author of *The Small Change Diet*.

**ALL-NATURAL PRESERVES OR JAM** Opt for jars containing only fruit, sugar and pectin, says Lippert. Spread on grilled meats as a glaze.

**DRIED FRUIT** Stir chopped pieces into rice pilaf and stews or pair it with pork.

**DARK CHOCOLATE CHIPS** A tablespoon has about 70 calories, and may help lower blood pressure and increase levels of mood-boosting serotonin, studies show.

**UNSWEETENED APPLESAUCE** Mix it in pancake batter and dollop it on oatmeal, yogurt and waffles, says Elisa Zied, RD, author of *Nutrition at Your Fingertips*.

**WHOLE-GRAIN CEREALS** Opt for oatmeal and cold cereals that list whole grains as the first ingredient, says Ansel.





## refrigerator essentials

**FRESH VEGETABLES AND FRUITS** To guarantee taste and nutrition, opt for local, seasonal produce. Going organic isn't always essential, but some foods are more susceptible to pesticides, so consult the

Environmental Working Group's "Dirty Dozen" list ([foodnews.org/walletguide.php](http://foodnews.org/walletguide.php)) to find out what's best bought organic. Hint: Pay extra for organic apples.

**FRESH HERBS** Some herbs—like parsley, cilantro and basil—simply taste better fresh, says Alexander.

### EGGS AND LIQUID EGG WHITES

Whole eggs are OK—the yolk contains nutrients like choline (important for your liver, brain and nerves)—but if you're counting calories or cholesterol, opt for egg whites. Or try this nutritionist trick: Combine 1 egg with 2 egg whites.

**SKIM OR 1% MILK** Consider going organic to avoid hormones, suggests Zied.

**ORANGE JUICE** One hundred percent fruit juice provides phytonutrients; dilute it with seltzer to avoid (natural) sugar and calorie overload.

**LOWFAT OR FAT-FREE GREEK YOGURT** The tart protein-rich treat can sub for sour cream or mayonnaise in recipes.

**HIGH-FLAVOR CHEESE** With sharp and tangy cheese (Cheddar, Parmesan, feta), a little goes a long way—so you can use less.

**AVOCADO** Filled with healthy fats, the salad and sandwich filler should be kept on the counter until it ripens, then moved to the refrigerator.

**HUMMUS** Made of chickpeas, it's a satisfying sandwich spread and vegetable dip.

**FRESH FISH** Go for oily fish like salmon, which is high in heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. (See "Salmon Four Ways," page 70.)

**BONELESS, SKINLESS CHICKEN BREAST** The protein works in countless recipes. (Case in point: "Chicken Four Ways," page 62.)

## freezer essentials

**VEGETABLES** Peas, corn, spinach and more are often healthiest frozen, since they're picked at the peak of freshness before nutrients degrade, says Tammy Shames, RD, coauthor of *The Secret to Skinny*.

**FRUIT** Use it in cobblers and smoothies (see five blender-friendly recipes, page 30).

**LEAN GROUND TURKEY OR CHICKEN** One hundred percent white meat can tend to be dry, says Ansel, so look for the 93-percent-lean variety. "It has just enough fat to make it taste good."

**RAW SHRIMP, PEELED AND DEVEINED** It tends to taste better and be less watery than precooked frozen shrimp, says Alexander.

**VEGGIE BURGERS** Going meatless (even once a week) may help reduce the risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Choose burgers with the least amount of sodium and saturated fat and the highest amount of protein and fiber, says Gans.

**100% WHOLE-GRAIN BREAD** Multigrain bread is not always the same as whole, says Levinson, so be sure the first ingredient is a whole grain (like whole-wheat flour). Sugar and high-fructose corn syrup shouldn't be among the first three ingredients.

**UNSALTED NUTS** Nuts—which should be frozen so they don't go rancid—are heart-healthy and protein-rich. Counting calories? Try pistachios. "You can have 30 for 100 calories, and only about 10 of other nuts for 100 calories," says Shames.

**FUDGE BARS** Individual low-calorie bars prevent cravings from turning into splurges, says Shames.

**GINGER** Even when frozen, it can be chopped and grated to amp up food.

**LEFTOVERS** Freeze in single-serve containers for easy reheating. ■

