

8 Swaps to Make in Your Pantry for Healthy Eating

By Brette Sember | October 27, 2015 | 9:00am

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Eating right at home is all about having the right options on hand when you reach into the pantry. If you stock your pantry with food choices that are healthy and appealing, you've stacked the odds in favor of wise decisions. Try swapping out foods that are less nutritionally dense with these power-playing options.

Smart Noodles

If ramen is one of your go-tos, it's time to rethink it. Traditional packaged ramen is high in salt. Instead, buy Asian udon (wheat) or soba (buckwheat) noodles, which cook almost as quickly. Cook them in chicken broth and low sodium soy sauce or dab of miso paste. A package of frozen veggies in the freezer is a good add-in.

Raise the Snack Bar

Power bars and cereal bars sound like a healthy option for a grab-and-go snack, but they are very high in calories. A better bet is to buy trail mix and store it in snack size, zip-top bags. If you really like having a bar to nosh on, look for Kind bars (which are under 200 calories).

Crunch Craze

Who doesn't crave something crunchy once in a while? Skip the chips and instead stock some better-for-you snacks. Nuts and seeds provide that crunch and also give you a dose of protein to make you feel less hungry. Seasoned rice crackers are another good bet. Air-popped popcorn or packaged low-fat, low-salt popcorns may feel more like traditional snack food if you want a bag in your hand. Some new crunchy healthy snack foods on the market include packaged kale chips, pea crisps, seaweed chips, and roasted chickpeas.

Cookie Monster

Cookies are the ultimate comfort food, and we've all been known to root around in the pantry hoping to find just one. Instead of packaged chocolate chip cookies, buy organic whole grain fig bars. They're healthier than almost any type of packaged cookie and they still have that childhood nostalgia going for them. They're sweet and last long enough to make you feel you have had a treat.

Candy Crush

Sometimes your sweet tooth is too loud to ignore. Instead of keeping mini candy bar—which feel like a healthy option but are really just empty calories—stock squares of at least 60 percent cacao dark chocolate. You'll get the reward of a sweet treat and the anti-inflammatory benefits of high-percentage dark chocolate.

Cereal Killer

Granola sounds like a healthy food, but in reality most brands are high in sugar, calories, and fat. If you like to eat granola as cereal, try plain oatmeal with chopped nuts and raisins and a dash of maple syrup. If you like your granola sprinkled on yogurt, switch it out with a mix of chia and hemp seeds and unsweetened coconut flakes.

Rice Rewind

If you have a box of white instant rice in your pantry, it's time to rethink it. Yes, it's a quick and easy addition to a meal or even as the base for a rice bowl full of veggies, but you're missing a great opportunity. Replace it with brown rice and you'll get three times as much fiber and it will also reduce your [risk of type 2 diabetes](#). Brown rice is also high in selenium and manganese as well as healthy oils.

Chewy Choices

Fruit roll-ups have been clearly debunked as a fairly poor option for snacking, but if you're still dying for that gummy bear experience, look to fruit in other forms. Dried apricots are satisfyingly chewy. Dried cherries and cranberries can also hit the spot.

With a little revision, your pantry can keep you eating right. This doesn't mean cutting out certain foods one hundred percent, but by not having them around the house, they'll be come occasional treats instead of everyday go-tos.

Brette Sember is the author of Cookie: A Love Story: Fun Facts, Delicious Stories, Fascinating History, Tasty Recipes, and More About Our Most Beloved Treat. Her website is www.BretteSember.com.