



Shaping Up America's Kitchens!

Your Toolbox for Building a Healthier Family

Sound familiar?

It's 6 PM. Everyone's stomach is growling—including the dog! You are exhausted, homework papers are scattered on the kitchen counter, and you still need to get to parent-teacher conferences by 7:30, dropping your son at scouts on the way. The pizza take-out menu looks tempting! But, consider this: in the time it takes to order and pick up the pizza, you could whip up a delicious, healthy meal that the whole family can enjoy together—it starts with a little organization of your food storage zone.

Tools help you perform tasks faster, easier, and better.



This Factivity Folio will give you the tools to tune up or overhaul the healthfulness of your family's food supply.

Food Storage Zone Factivity Folio #2

Why bother?

Healthy, streamlined, delicious, *and* homemade dinners start with having the right ingredients on hand. Remember, healthy meals build healthier families!

The Food Storage Zone

Keeping the food storage zone organized is especially important for streamlining food preparation, ending over-buying of foods already in stock, reducing trips to the supermarket for forgotten items, and stamping out mealtime stress. Start by considering the organization of this zone, then move on to its healthfulness.

Action Step: Taming the Fridge, Freezer, & Pantry

1. Open the fridge—look at it as if you have never seen it before.
2. On a scale of 1 to 10, how organized is it?
3. How does your freezer stack up?
4. What about the pantry, cabinets, or shelf areas where you store dry and canned foods?
5. Pick the area with the worst score and examine the foods stored there.

Analyze the Situation

Are all of the foods fresh and safe to eat? The date on food packages can help you decide.

- 🕒 **Freshness date** tells you how long a food will be fresh and at top quality. After that date, the product is still safe to eat, but it may not taste as good. Bread, salad dressing, raisins, and cereal have freshness dates.
- 🕒 **Sell date** (also called *pull date*) is the last day a food should be sold. Most foods will still be fresh and safe to eat for a week or so after the sell date. These dates appear on foods like yogurt, cheese, milk, and meat.
- 🕒 **Expiration date** is the last day a food should be eaten—it may not be safe to eat if the date has passed. Expiration dates are found on baby formula.

For foods that don't have dates, consider using a marking pen to indicate when you purchased them. If you aren't sure when a food was bought, keep in mind that frozen foods stored in a freezer set to 0°F (18°C) will maintain their quality for 6 to 12 months. In refrigerators set at 32 to 40°F (0 to 4°C), most fresh fruits, vegetables, juices, cold cuts, and dairy products will retain their quality for a week or two. Fresh herbs last about a week in the fridge—preserve their quality by wrapping in a damp paper towel and sealing in a plastic bag.

Keep in mind:

- Refrigerated condiments stay fresh for many months.
- Unopened canned and dry foods (flour, pasta, cake mixes) stored in a cool, dry place last 1 year or more.
- Warm storage areas (hot garage, above oven) quickly lower the quality of canned and dry foods.
- Damp storage places (under the sink) make cans rust and cardboard packages soggy—food quality drops and may make these foods unsafe to eat.
- Storing foods in clear containers in brightly lit areas, especially oils, rapidly lowers their quality.
- Frequently review the foods on hand—especially perishable foods—toss those that are past their prime.
- When putting away groceries, place newly purchased items behind existing ones of the same item so you use older items first (first in, first out).

Will you eat the foods on hand?

If the food is fresh and safe and you don't plan to eat it, donate it to a food drive or throw it out. Consider—which is more valuable, the food or the storage space? If you decide to toss it, try to recycle the container.

Can you find the foods you need without going on a scavenger hunt?

Organizing foods by type makes it easy to find them and rapidly decide what to put on your shopping list.

Refrigerators make it easy to organize foods.

- ✓ Use door shelves for bottles and jars (dressings, ketchup, jams)—labels facing front.
- ✓ Put those special areas for storing butter and margarine to work. Skip the special egg storage area—eggs left in the carton stay fresh longer.
- ✓ Use drawers for fruits, vegetables, and meat to keep these foods organized (and fresh longer).
- ✓ Save shelves for beverages, leftovers, and thawing meats.

Freezers

- ✓ Store small packages in door racks or freezer bins.
- ✓ Reserve shelves for larger items and ice trays.
- ✓ Add plastic bins or expandable shelves to better utilize and organize space.

Buying In Bulk? Be sure extra storage space is cool, dry, and pest-free.



Storing foods in clear containers? Keep the storage area dark.

Make it easy for your family to help you keep the food storage zone organized—label shelves and drawers to indicate where foods should be stored.



Pantry areas (non-perishable food storage) are where many kitchens need the most help. **The key is to arrange foods so that you can see everything**—keeping things in plain sight can help you quickly make a shopping list, put groceries away, and find foods when you need them.

Designate space for each food package type:

- ☉ boxed foods (cereals, pasta, raisins, aseptic boxes of soup and juice)
- ☉ canned foods, dried herbs and spices
- ☉ bottled foods (vinegar, oil)
- ☉ bagged food (cookies, chips, flour, sugar)

Group similar foods in each designated place:

- Place boxed cereals together arranged like books on a shelf with their names turned outward for easy reading. Do the same with types of boxed foods.
- For canned foods, group vegetables, soups, meat/fish, and fruits. A similar set up works with bottles and bagged foods.

Save space:

- Stack canned foods
- Install a door or wall rack for bottles
- Use tiered shelf risers so you can see the back row of spices as easily as the front.

Store and organize:

- Place flour, sugar, and other bagged foods in airtight storage bins to make it easier to stack them and keep them fresh longer.
- Use baskets and bins to keep bags of cookies and chips together and store vegetables that shouldn't be refrigerated, like potatoes.
- Use sliding mesh drawer units like a mini-file cabinet to keep packets of hot chocolate, dip mixes, and tea bags organized.



Food Safety Tip:

Thaw raw meats on the lowest refrigerator shelf to prevent juices from dripping on other foods.



Shelf Height: What goes where?

Eye Level Shelves: Store foods you use most often.

Lower Shelves: Use for heavy containers (bins of flour, large boxes of dog bones), paper plates and napkins, plastic bags and wrap, and snacks kids can serve themselves, like cereal and rice cakes.

Higher Shelves: Place snacks that require parent approval (candies and cookies) and foods that are used less often, like specialty vinegars. Keep specialty foods from getting lost on the back of high shelves by storing them in a plastic bin. Post a list of those specialty items so you know what you have on hand—a quick glance may give you ideas for jazzing up daily meals.

Evaluate the Foods You Have on Hand!

Concerns about ingredients, calories, nutrients, or family health are reasons you may want to make changes to your current food supply. If so, use ingredient labels and Nutrition Facts panels to help you decide what to keep, toss, or buy.

Ingredient labels list all ingredients used to make a packaged food. The ingredient used in the largest amount is listed first. The next largest is listed second and so on, with the last ingredient being used in the smallest amount. Use ingredient labels to find foods with the ingredients you want. For instance, if you want a juice that is mostly fruit, chose a brand that lists fruit juice as the first ingredient.

Nutrition Facts panels reveal a food's calorie and nutrient levels. Use Nutrition Facts panels to find foods that meet your needs. You may want to find foods that are low in fat or high in vitamin A.

1. Start here →
2. Check calories
3. Limit the nutrients in orange
4. Get enough of the nutrients in blue
5. Footnote

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Potassium 700mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories: 2,000	2,500
Total fat	Less than 65g	80g
Salt fat	Less than 20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g

6. Quick Guide to % DV
 - 5% or less is Low
 - 20% or more is High
 - Tip: look for foods high in nutrients shaded in blue and low in the nutrients shaded in orange

Nutrient content claims can help if you feel reading Nutrition Facts panels takes too much time. Claims like *low fat*, *no cholesterol*, and *sugar free* appear on some food packages. These claims are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration and must be true.

Should you purge the food from your household?

Labels that tell you something you don't like (too many calories or ingredients you want to limit) are a sign that the food should go. Keeping it will only derail your efforts to create a nourishing kitchen. If tossing the food will strain your food budget, resolve not to buy it again. If your family will revolt, buy less and gradually switch to more healthy options. Learn more about nutrition at eatright.org.



Why choose whole grains?
They provide more fiber and a wider array of vitamins and minerals without adding calories!

Are all the foods on hand healthy choices?

Review foods by type. Which meet the descriptions below? Which could be improved? If foods don't fit these descriptions, check their ingredient and Nutrition Facts labels to decide whether to keep, donate, or toss them. Keep these best bets in mind when re-stocking your kitchen—they'll help you make healthier choices.

Best Bets

- ★ **Bread**—be sure the label lists **whole** grain as the first ingredient (some “dark” breads aren't whole wheat, they are colored brown with caramel)
- ★ **Grains**—go for the whole grains, like oats, brown rice, and barley
- ★ **Cereal**—look for cereal with at least 2 grams of fiber and less than 2 grams of added sugar per serving
- ★ **Fruit**—choose fresh, unsweetened dried and frozen, canned in water or juice
- ★ **Fruity drinks**—go for 100% fruit juice, otherwise you are buying lots of water and sugar
- ★ **Vegetables**—select fresh, dried, frozen (plain, raw, or baked), canned (plain, no sauce), and 100% juice
- ★ **Dairy**—reduced fat and nonfat versions (1% or nonfat milk, nonfat yogurt, light ice cream) are the best choice after age 2
- ★ **Cheese**—opt for natural (not processed) with a stronger flavor—gives more flavor for less cheese
- ★ **Beans/Legumes**—choose canned or dried
- ★ **Poultry**—choose fresh, frozen, or canned chicken and turkey (remove skin)
- ★ **Meat**—go for fresh or frozen (plain) lean cuts
- ★ **Fish**—use fresh, canned in water, or frozen (plain, unbreaded)
- ★ **Ground meat and turkey sausage**—select the leanest choice
- ★ **Lunch meats**—opt for whole deli meats (turkey, roast beef); limit sausages (salami, pepperoni) and loafs (olive loaf, bologna) —they're packed with fat
- ★ **Oils**—choose olive, canola, or cooking spray. Use non-stick cookware.
- ★ **Sauces & condiments**—add zing with salsa, low sodium soy sauce, balsamic vinegar, raspberry vinegar, hoisin sauce, hot sauce, barbecue sauce, steak sauce, light salad dressings, and mustard
- ★ **Herbs & Spices**—your choice! They add loads of flavor and few (if any!) calories.
- ★ **Desserts**—try angel food cake, pudding made with nonfat milk, ginger snaps, vanilla wafers, frozen 100% fruit pops, and sugar free gelatin with fruit
- ★ **Beverages**—pick nonfat milk, plain bottled water, diet soda, tea, and coffee
- ★ **Snacks**—go for baked chips, air popped popcorn, rice cakes, pretzels, whole grain crackers/granola bars, low-sugar breakfast cereal, and unsalted nuts
- ★ **Lunch Box**—pack yogurt, carrot sticks, raisins, fig bars, string cheese, and fresh or zip top canned fruit

Change can be scary,
so make a few small changes at a time.

Now that you have analyzed the situation, it's time to get to work!

Food Storage Zone Assessment

1. Ask Yourself:	Yes	No	If no, what are my plans for improvement?
Are all the foods on hand fresh and safe to eat?			
Will I (or my family) eat the foods?			
Can I find refrigerated foods quickly?			
Can I find frozen foods quickly?			
Can I find pantry (dry, canned) foods quickly?			
Are the foods used most often on eye level shelves?			
Using the <i>Best Bets</i> as guidelines:			
Are there foods in the refrigerator I wish were <u>not</u> there?			
Are there foods I wish <u>were</u> in the refrigerator?			
Are there foods in the freezer I wish were <u>not</u> there?			
Are there foods I wish <u>were</u> in the freezer?			
Are there foods in the pantry I wish were <u>not</u> there?			
Are there foods I wish <u>were</u> in the pantry?			

2. Amount of reorganization needed: Very little Some Total Overhaul

3. The top 3 changes I will make to my food storage zone are:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

4. The supplies I will need (like bins, baskets, racks) to make these changes are:

5. The major barriers to accomplishing these changes are:

6. The strategies I will use to overcome these barriers are:

7. The strategies I will use to get my family to help me make the changes and keep the food storage zone in shape are: _____

8. The date I will start on this goal is: _____ I will complete this goal on: _____