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Pantry 911!



Wondering how to convert your kitchen into a fully loaded, ready-for-anything vegan wonderland? Take our experts' tips and your galley will be ship-shape in no time flat. *By Heather and Jenny Goldberg*

SINCE OUR CHILDHOOD, WE GOLDBERG ladies have always loved cooking—especially the eating that follows the cooking. We took kids' cooking classes, made cookies with our grandma, and in college—when that whole “finding yourself” thing happened—we both became vegan.

When a person first makes the transition to eating more vegan foods, it's easy to quickly begin to circle the junk-food drain (vegan-doughnut, “pepperoni,” and French-fry overload, anyone?). Remember: Keep your food real. The trick to not getting bored with the same old stir-fry, or always reaching for the convenient frozen burrito, is to build a great vegan pantry. Many people wrongly believe that everything in an animal-product-free pantry is a soybean in disguise, but there is an abundance of soy- and gluten-free products out there that taste great. Here are a few basic pantry staples that allow you to prepare a satisfying range of dishes in no time.

Refrigerated Ready-mades

These days, it seems like you can milk anything: rice, oats, soybeans, hemp, coconuts—the list goes on. Our favorite is 40-calorie, unsweetened almond milk. A cup of cow's milk has around 120 calories and is loaded with saturated fat and cholesterol. Almond milk is free of those nasties and delicious, not to mention it's also soy- and gluten-free.

To replace butter, try Earth Balance non-hydrogenated spread. It works like butter in recipes, tastes amazing on toast, and has been a tool in our vegan arsenal for years. Also, unlike butter, Earth Balance has no saturated fat and there's a new soy-free version, made from a

blend of palm, canola, safflower, and olive oils.

We absolutely heart Vegenaïse. Don't go slathering this egg- and dairy-free version of mayonnaise on everything just because you can, but once in a while, use this little sucker on a veggie burger. The results? Amazing. It also makes coleslaw a snap, and creates a base for all your non-dairy dips and dressings. Last but not least is Tofutti's non-hydrogenated cream cheese. This stunt artist definitely does the trick on a bagel, and has about a million other uses, from cheesecakes to casseroles.

The Covetable Cabinet

Building your pantry is as easy as keeping whole grains like brown rice and organic pasta handy for quick meals. Look for gluten-free pasta made from quinoa—this stuff can make any vegan's mac 'n' cheese dreams come true.

Keep organic, canned beans handy for salads, veggie burgers, or dips, and reap the benefits of extra fiber and protein. Just be extra sure to rinse beans before you eat them. That way, the bubbles and gunk will go down the drain instead of into your stomach, making the beans much more digestible.

For cooking, have a high-heat oil in your pantry, such as refined coconut oil. Don't be scared of coconuts because they have fat—it's good fat. Use flax-seed oil for dressings and drizzled over cold foods to ensure that you are getting all your omega-3s, which are important for aiding in digestion. They are known to reduce many types of inflammation in your bod. Svelte City, here we come.

If you shop at your local farmers' market on a weekly basis for fresh fruits and veggies, and have these foods handy in your pantry,

Top 10 Pantry Must-haves

What will you absolutely always find in the Goldberg's kitchen? Take a tour of their total necessities.

- ✔ **Agave** This sweetener doesn't raise your glycemic index like sugar, and is great in coffee, tea, or dressings.
- ✔ **Avocados** Put them on everything, including on toast instead of butter.
- ✔ **Bananas** Use in smoothies, or as a replacement for eggs in baking. They also make an amazing dessert when baked with a little maple syrup and Earth Balance.
- ✔ **Coconut water** This stuff has amazing enzymes that help our bodies feel balanced and ready to take on the day.
- ✔ **Miso paste** There is more to miso than soup! Use instead of cheese in pesto, in dips for a salty flavor, or in dressings to add texture.
- ✔ **Nutritional yeast** Try making your own cheese sauce, or sprinkle on pasta. Fortified versions have many nutrients vegans need, including B vitamins.
- ✔ **Nuts** Use in salads and smoothies, or eat 'em straight when you need a little snack. Store in the refrigerator or freezer for a longer shelf life.
- ✔ **Spelt bread** Great when toasted for sandwiches, or cut into squares for homemade croutons.
- ✔ **Unbleached sea salt** Sea salt has minerals, which add flavor to your food, causing you to use less salt overall.
- ✔ **Vegan Worcestershire sauce** This is the secret to amazing veggie burgers, baked tofu, and vegan ranch dressing. Use sparingly and sneakily!

you'll be able to make amazing veggie food in a snap, save money, shed the extra pounds, feel healthier, and reduce your impact on our environment. That's a win-win-win-win-win, if you ask us. **VN**

Sisters **Jenny and Heather Goldberg** are the founders of **Spork Foods**, a Los Angeles-based gourmet, vegan food-company that provides cooking classes, catering, and in-home consultations.

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