

Medical Minute

HEALTHY PANTRY STAPLES



Here's some information I came across about stocking your kitchen so eating healthy can be quick and simple. Naturally, I took this as a personal challenge to see how quickly I could ruin it.

1. They say all you need to dress any salad is oil, vinegar, and spices. Then they recommend flavored olive oils, fancy vinegars, adobo, garam masala, and za'atar. I

did not misspell those, although my spell-check is now lying down with a cold compress. Let's make this truly simple: one bottle. RANCH. It dresses a salad, hides a salad, and—if necessary—helps you forget you are eating a salad.

2. Am I the last person on Earth to discover milk in a carton that does not need refrigeration? I found out about it after one of our hurricanes, and honestly, it felt like a God moment. No electricity? No problem. My beloved shells and cheese will still happen. Shelf-stable milk is not just a pantry item; it is emergency preparedness for noodles.

3. Dried fruit and nuts can be tossed into cereal, yogurt, or—in my case—directly into your mouth while standing in front of the pantry. I cannot say I eat much dried fruit, but I do like nuts. The experts suggest yogurt with cashews. I suggest vanilla ice cream with cashews, because I believe every healthy recommendation deserves a comfortable place to land.

4. For easy-to-prepare protein, they recommend canned beans in salads, soups, and pasta. Then they say to rinse the beans to remove half the salt—which sounds suspiciously like rinsing off half the personality. They also recommend canned fish: sardines, anchovies, smoked salmon, and other things that make the pantry smell like it has its own marina. I eat canned tuna about once a year, heavily disguised with mayo, onions, and sweet relish. If I can still identify the fish, I have not added enough mayonnaise. Sardines? Anchovies? Nope. Some doors are better left canned.

So there you have it: a perfectly sensible list of healthy pantry staples, lovingly transformed into ranch dressing, shells and cheese, ice cream, and mayonnaise. Some people have a green thumb. I apparently have a deep-fried one. It may not be healthy, but at least I have finally identified my spiritual gift.