

What to put in a micro pantry

A major challenge when filling a micro food pantry is that only nonperishable food items can be used, which rules out anything needing refrigeration. That leaves several creative options, however. Make sure that all items are “shelf stable.” If unsure, check for the words “no refrigeration needed” or “refrigerate after opening.” Here are some examples of items that work great in the micro pantry.

Canned or pouched meats: Chicken, ham, Spam, tuna, salmon, sardines, pre-cooked bacon, Vienna sausages

Other proteins: Canned stew, meat ravioli, spaghetti and meatballs, peanut butter

Fruits and vegetables: Canned fruits, fruit cups, vegetables, corn, baked beans, applesauce cups

Grain products: crackers, tortillas, bread

Soups: Chili; chicken noodle soup, bean or vegetable soup, ramen noodles cups

Breakfast items: Dry cereal, prepackaged instant oatmeal, boxed or canned fruit juice, fruit cups, pop tarts or other breakfast pastries, peanut butter, jelly, “Shelf” milk, dehydrated milk

Healthy snack foods: Granola or protein bars, trail mix, yogurt pouches, pudding snack cups, jerky

Other: Coffee, tea, bottled water

Grooming supplies: Toilet paper, shampoo and conditioner, body wash, bar of soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes, deodorant, feminine hygiene products, grooming kits for homeless people

Avoiding food in glass jars. Items such as peanut butter and jelly, mayonnaise, and pasta sauce are often available in plastic rather than glass jars. Repurpose those little packets containing napkins and plastic silverware that come in to-go restaurant orders. That way, homeless people or students who avail themselves of food in the pantry have something to eat it with. Sample-size soap and shampoo picked up from hotel rooms are perfect for grooming kits. Pull-top cans are ideal but not required. Homeless often do not have access to can openers.