

My Pantry Staples

From Mel's Kitchen Café (www.melskitchencafe.com)

In the left column is the food item with a brand preference listed underneath, if I have one. If nothing is listed, I buy whatever is on sale. In the right column are additional details/recipes about the food item listed. Keep in mind that I buy a lot of other ingredients not on this list, but I buy those foods when I am going to use them in a specific recipe. The foods listed below are in my pantry/refrigerator at all times and when we run out, I automatically add them to my next grocery list.

Canned Goods:	
DICED TOMATOES <i>(Hunt's brand – mostly because I can buy cans in bulk at Sam's Club)</i>	Used mostly in Spaghetti Sauce , Homemade Pizza Sauce and quick homemade pasta sauces (i.e. can of diced tomatoes simmered with fresh garlic, onions, dried spices and a bit of chicken broth, and tossed with hot pasta, topped with freshly grated Parmesan cheese)
TOMATO PASTE <i>(Hunt's brand – mostly because I can buy cans in bulk at Sam's Club)</i>	Used in Homemade Pizza Sauce and Spaghetti Sauce and numerous other recipes
TOMATO SAUCE	Used in many recipes, including this Chili Mac which is a great fill-in dinner when plans go awry, also these Tacos make use of the tomato sauce, too
CHICKEN BROTH <i>(Swanson's Natural Goodness chicken broth with 33% less sodium)</i>	Used in too many recipes to even begin naming!
BLACK BEANS	Used in Balsamic Black Bean Salsa (great, quick appetizer) and easy dinners Slow Cooker Southwest Chicken Stacks , Crispy Southwest Chicken Wraps and many, many others
WHITE BEANS	White Chicken Chili , baby
GREEN CHILES	I use green chiles in lots and lots of recipes but the main reason I keep them on hand is to add quick flavor to a meal where I may have forgotten to pick up a jalapeno or the green peppers in the fridge have gone bad (so much for planning!) – they do have added sodium so many times, I rinse and drain them before using.
DRY PANTRY GOODS:	
SPAGHETTI NOODLES <i>(Barilla Brand)</i>	
WHITE LONG GRAIN RICE	
BROWN RICE	Perfect Stovetop Brown Rice and Baked Brown Rice

PENNE AND OTHER NOODLES (Barilla Brand)	I keep an extra box of pasta on-hand for quick, throw together meals (see the section of Diced Tomatoes for the easy sauce)
CEREAL/DRY PANTRY SNACKS:	
CEREAL	As much as I would like to be super-mom, hot breakfasts only happen about four times a week so the other three we rely on healthier cereals like Life, Cheerios, Shredded Wheat, lots of Kashi etc. I keep about three boxes on hand at all times.
PURE MAPLE SYRUP	Mostly for baking and other recipes since I make this homemade syrup for our hot breakfasts
OATMEAL PANCAKE MIX	I use this mix at least three times a week. Lifesaver.
PRETZEL STICKS	
SALTINE CRACKERS	
RAISINS	
SNACKING CRACKERS (LIKE REDUCED FAT WHEAT THINS/TRISCUITS, ETC.)	
SPICES:	
CINNAMON	
GARLIC SALT	
GARLIC POWDER	
ONION POWDER	
THYME	
CUMIN	
CHILI POWDER	
OREGANO	
DRIED BASIL	
DRIED PARSLEY	
FRESH BLACK PEPPER	
TABLE SALT	
KOSHER/COARSE SALT	I use a tablespoon of coarse salt every time I boil water for pasta. I also use it for these soft pretzels and for any other recipe that calls for it.
MYRIAD OF OTHER SPICES	Like curry powder, cayenne, dried sage, rosemary, the list goes on and on but usually I only replace these minor ones when a recipe calls for it whereas the list of spices above I go through constantly, it seems.
BAKING GOODS:	
COOKING SPRAY	I like the canola spray, personally.
SEMISWEET CHOCOLATE CHIPS (Ghirardellis)	Too many numerous applications to list, including eating handfuls a day to cope with mid-winter blues and grumpy children.

SEMISWEET AND BITTERSWEET BAKING CHOCOLATE BARS <i>(Ghirardelli or Baker's brand)</i>	
CORNSTARCH	
CORNMEAL	Used in this Cornbread and for Homemade Pizza Making and also for these buttery crescent rolls .
POWDERED SUGAR	I always keep this on hand to sweeten whipped cream, make frostings, etc.
QUICK OATS	I use this in baking, obviously, but I also use it for quick breakfasts – 1/3 cup oats cooked with 2/3 cup milk or water in the micro for 90 seconds and then drizzled with pure maple syrup...heavenly
ROLLED OATS	
NONFAT POWDERED DRY MILK	Used almost exclusively in the Lion House Rolls
POTATO FLAKES <i>(Idaho Spuds Brand)</i>	Used in this Soft Wrap Bread and these amazing Dinner Rolls
UNBLEACHED ALL-PURPOSE FLOUR <i>(Gold Medal or Pillsbury Brand based on Cook's Illustrated recommendations – I buy whichever is cheaper)</i>	
WHOLE WHEAT FLOUR	I grind my own from the white wheat I have in my food storage and store the ground wheat flour in the freezer in gallon-sized Ziploc bags
WHEAT BERRIES	I prefer white wheat berries (see this series on the basics of Wheat and Wheat Grinding) but also have red wheat berries, too. I use it for all of my bread/roll baking and for these morning pancakes .
WHITE GRANULATED SUGAR	I buy generic on this or use it from my food storage
DARK BROWN SUGAR	
LIGHT BROWN SUGAR	
CANOLA OIL	Generic brand all the way, baby
COCONUT OIL	I keep refined and unrefined on hand (see this post for the ins and outs of coconut oil).
EXTRA VIRGIN OLIVE OIL	
RED WINE VINEGAR	
BALSAMIC VINEGAR	
APPLE CIDER VINEGAR	
WHITE VINEGAR	Honestly, I don't know if white vinegar belongs on this list since I've never used it in cooking (that I can recall) and usually use it to clean our humidifiers
PURE VANILLA EXTRACT <i>(I buy this at Sam's Club)</i>	If you love me, please don't use imitation
INSTANT YEAST <i>(SAF BRAND)</i>	I store my yeast in a quart mason jar with a lid in the freezer.

PANTRY VEGETABLES:	
FRESH GARLIC	I keep at least three heads of garlic on hand at all times
YELLOW ONIONS	At any given time, I probably have 6-7 yellow onions begging to be used
BREADS:	
FLOUR TORTILLAS	For Enchiladas , lunch quesadillas, quick dinners, tacos with this Sweet and Spicy Chicken
WHOLE WHEAT BREAD	Homemade from this recipe
REFRIGERATED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES:	
LEMONS	Fresh lemons are a gift from the heavens. The zest or juice added to many dishes adds the perfect lightness you can't achieve from anything else (plus freshly grated lemon zest in sugar cookies is dee-vine)
FRESH PARSLEY	
BABY CARROTS	
APPLES	Lunch, lunch, baby
MANY OTHER FRUITS AND VEGETABLES FOR SNACKING AND LUNCH	Like celery, pears, grapes, etc.
REFRIGERATED JARRED AND OTHER GOODS:	
WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE	
KETCHUP <i>(My husband is brand loyal to heinz although i'm looking for a hfcs free option)</i>	
STRAWBERRY AND OTHER JAMS (LOW-SUGAR)	
SOY SAUCE	I prefer the low-sodium varieties.
SESAME OIL	Great in Asian dishes and fried rice; I feel like I use this ingredient a lot.
DAIRY/CHEESE/EGGS:	
BUTTERMILK	Used in this Oatmeal Pancake Mix , these Refrigerator Bran Muffins and various other recipes
1% MILK	Not that you care, but we go through about 4 gallons of 1% milk a week. That will exponentially increase, I am sure as my four boys become teenagers.
HEAVY CREAM	Don't judge me. I use an exorbitant amount of heavy cream.
SOUR CREAM	
SALTED BUTTER	I don't buy unsalted butter. I always keep several boxes of butter on hand for baking.
SMART BALANCE SPREAD	I use this on our toast, rolls, anything that we

	would “butter”
LARGE EGGS <i>(Eggland’s Best)</i>	
FRESH PARMESAN CHEESE <i>(I’ve found the best bang for my buck is to buy this in a large wedge at Sam’s Club)</i>	As noted above this table, fresh Parmesan cheese is an amazing pick-me-up food for dishes. Plus my five-year old loves to eat a big slice of it after school. He’s kind of weird. Like his mother.
MOZZARELLA CHEESE	For pizza , mostly.
SHARP OR EXTRA SHARP CHEDDAR CHEESE BLOCK	Used in anything from after-school snacks to this corn chowder to macaroni and cheese .
YOGURT <i>(Stonyfield Lowfat Vanilla/Blueberry/Strawberry)</i>	I usually make my own yogurt these days.
LOWFAT COTTAGE CHEESE	Such a great source of protein – it usually makes up my lunch with a handful of cherry tomatoes.
STRING CHEESE	
ORANGE JUICE <i>(Simply Orange)</i>	
MEAT:	
GROUND TURKEY <i>(Jennie-O)</i>	For Meatballs , Meatloaf , Tacos , Asian Noodles , etc., I usually use it for my favorite spaghetti sauce , too.
BONELESS SKINLESS CHICKEN BREASTS	Too many dishes to name...I cook with chicken a lot
NATURAL LUNCH MEATS <i>(Hormel Natural Choice)</i>	
FREEZER:	
FROZEN PEAS	I use frozen vegetables mainly as a side dish for dinner but they come in handy for this Dumpling Soup and other applications
FROZEN CORN	Again, used mostly for a side dish but I also use it for this Black Bean Salsa , Super Burritos and Corn Chowder , to name a few.
ICE CREAM	Don’t judge me.
FRESH GINGER	I always keep fresh ginger in the freezer. I peel it and chop it into about 1-inch segments and store it in a Ziploc bag. When a recipe calls for it, like almost any Asian dish I post, I pull out a chunk from the freezer and grate it frozen on my rasp grater
FROZEN FRUIT	For fruit smoothies and topping for yogurt.