
Healthy and Low-Cost Eating Using Canned and Dry Foods

Eating healthy can be low cost and easy. Using canned goods and dry food items from your pantry is an inexpensive way to create healthy dishes. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

Protein

Canned Protein (Tuna, Salmon, Chicken, Beef, Pork, Sardines, Anchovies)

- Add to sauces and top on pasta, rice, or vegetables
- Use as a topping for pizza, enchiladas, or quesadillas
- Use as the base to your tacos
- Add flavor and texture to soups and stews
- Cook into a vegetable stir-fry
- Pair in casseroles and sandwiches
- Add to a dip

Canned Beef Stew

- Eat alone for a complete meal
- Serve over pasta, rice, or cooked vegetables

Canned Chili

- Pair with rice, cooked vegetables for a complete meal
- Use as a topping on a baked potato
- Add to casseroles and soups

Beans (canned or dried)

- Add to soups, stews, casseroles, and chili
- Incorporate in salads or wraps
- Use as a filling for your enchiladas or quesadillas
- Puree and use as a dip for crackers, chips, or vegetables
- Roast in the oven for a crunchy snack
- Use to make bean burgers
- Serve as a side with rice, vegetables, salmon, chicken, or beef
- After boiling and pureeing, substitute white or black beans for flour in baking

Lentils

- Add to soups, stews, and chili
- Use as a meat alternative in tacos or meatballs

Nutritional Yeast (a little goes a long ways)

- Sprinkle on cooked vegetables and pasta
- Use as a cheese alternative; try making an alternative cheese sauce
- Sprinkle on air-popped popcorn
- Mix in with various dishes for a cheesy-nutty flavor and a boost of protein!

Cheese

- Melt on toast
- Add to sandwiches, wraps, or salads
- Use in soups, stews, casseroles, savory breads, and muffins
- Serve with fruit as a simple and easy snack

Vegetables

Canned vegetables (rinse and drain before using)

- Heat and eat
- Add to soups, stews, chili, casseroles, salads, pasta, or rice dishes
- Make a salsa
- Puree canned beans with rinsed, drained chickpeas for an easy, high fiber dip

Canned tomatoes

- Use as a sauce for pasta, rice, or on vegetables
- Add to soups, stews, or casseroles
- Puree and flavor with garlic, pepper, and dried herbs for pizza sauce
- Make tomato soup
- After pureeing, use as a marinade for fish or chicken

Tomato Juice

- Drink warm or chilled
- Use to make soup

Fruit

Canned Fruit (canned in natural juice or lite syrup)

- Add to hot breakfast cereals
- Add to baked goods such as muffins, breads, cobblers, or crisp
- Use as a topping on pancakes or waffles
- Serve over cottage cheese
- Cut up to add to smoothies

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- Add to salads
 - Flavor your water naturally with a few pieces of canned fruit

Unsweetened Applesauce

- Use in place of oil when baking
 - 1/2 cup oil = 1/4 cup oil and 1/4 cup applesauce
- Top cooked proteins

100% fruit juice

- Drink alone
- Blend with yogurt, fruit, handful of spinach and ice to make a smoothie
- Freeze in ice-cubes with fruit to make a refreshing treat
- Use to make a gravy
- Replace water when making oatmeal

Dairy

Evaporated and Instant Dry Milk Powder

- Use as a replacement for cream in sauces, soups, and gravies
- Add to breads, muffins, soups, sauces, and desserts
- Make milk
 - Add 1/2 cup evaporated milk to 1/2 cup of water

Grains and Starchy Foods

Pasta

- Add to soups, casseroles, or salads
- Top with chicken, shrimp, eggs, meat, or vegetables

Brown or wild rice

- Use as a side with chicken, beef, or fish
- Combine with beans and vegetables for a meatless meal
- Use in recipes for soups, stews, casseroles
- Make a pilaf
- Make rice pudding

High fiber dry cereal

- Use as a breading for chicken, pork, or fish
- Add to baked goods
- Add to fruit and yogurt
- Have with milk and fruit for an easy breakfast or snack
- Pair with dried fruit and nuts for a hearty trail mix

Farina

- Make as a hot breakfast cereal and top with fruit and warm spices such as cinnamon or nutmeg
- Use to make dumplings, breads, pancakes, or muffins

Corn Grits

- Pair as a with fish, chicken, or other meat for a side dish
- Make as a hot breakfast cereal and top with fruit and warm spices such as cinnamon or nutmeg

Oats

- Cook with milk and top with fruit and nuts for a hearty meal
- Use in baked goods such as muffins, pancakes, cookies, and breads
- Replace as a replacement for breadcrumbs
- Make overnight oats

Canned potatoes

- Use in soups, stews, casseroles, and salads

Canned sweet potatoes

- Heat for an easy side dish
- Use in soups or stews
- Add to baked goods

Healthy Fats

Nut Butters

- Use as a spread on bread or crackers
- Use as a dip for fruit (apples and bananas) or vegetables (carrots and celery)
- Add to sauces, yogurt, soups, smoothies, and stews for a creamy, nutty compliment

Nuts

- Top on salads, yogurts, or hot breakfast cereals
- Choose for a healthy snack; limit to 1 ounce per serving
- Add to baked goods
- Add to smoothies
- Use as a topping on baked fish or chicken

Seeds

- Use as an egg replacement in baking
 - Add 1 Tablespoon of ground flax seeds to 3 Tablespoons of very warm water
- Use as a topping on yogurt with fruit
- Add to baked goods
- Sprinkle on salads
- Add to smoothies
- Make jam

Budget Friendly Recipes

Go to www.nutrition.va.gov/recipes and check out the [Cooking with Ease Cookbook](#) for microwave recipes, slow cooker recipes, and recipes that require no cooking at all.