



For Immediate Release

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Cornell Cooperative Extension Suggests to Families: Start Stocking a Home Food Pantry

Cobleskill, NY – Friday, January 28, 2011 -- There are any number of reasons to set up a food pantry space in your own home, be it to become more frugal, or to support eating locally, or to just be better prepared for an emergency. However, one of your primary goals will be to create meals for yourself and your family from the contents of that storage pantry. Doing so requires that you know how to stock it so that you can “shop the pantry” regularly.

Cornell Cooperative Extension suggests that you begin with the understanding that a current home pantry concept includes all food storage considerations, including non-perishables/cupboards, freezer and refrigeration. What you stock in those areas is as individual to you as what your family likes to eat.

To develop basic pantry stock, begin with writing down your family’s favorite meals and list the ingredients. The non-perishable ingredients of these meals make up your basic food pantry stock items. Jennifer Wilkins, a Senior Extension Associate with Cornell Cooperative Extension, says that, “it is important to develop a list of staples that you and your family use often, and keep them in stock.” Dr. Wilkins adds that when basic staples are on hand in the pantry, it expands ones cooking options and generally makes meal planning easier.

Through trial and error, you will figure out what else to buy and how much of it to buy. However, here are a few tips to shorten your trials when initially stocking a pantry:

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- Buy what your family will eat. If they hate carrots, stocking your pantry with 48 cans of carrot coins will not be of help to your meal planning or preparation.
- Buy in bulk, but primarily when on sale.
- Only buy quantities that are practical to store in your own home situation.
- Skip over non-essentials like chips and soda to keep your family's food options healthy.
- No need to go broke stocking the pantry. Start slow by shopping for several extra items each month.
- Commonly forgotten pantry items include dried herbs and spices, supplies for baking and sauces, and oils. Think about stocking water, too, in the event of an emergency.
- Remember the “first in, first out” rule of inventory maintenance. Throwing away foods because the stock was not rotated and has exceeded the ‘use by’ date means you are throwing away your money.

Since the 90's, the trend in America has been moving back towards home food pantries and Cornell Cooperative Extension supports this trend. The extension organization, with offices in almost every county in New York State, including Schoharie County, has long been involved in encouraging communities to be prepared for emergencies while educating the public on the most economical ways to purchase and prepare family meals.

Pantries help on both accounts. Cornell University-based Extension Associate, Sonya Islam, states that, “using a well stocked pantry is such an easy way to save time, money and frustration.” Ms. Islam further explained that, “having the ingredients for a few meals on hand is both comforting, and practical.”

More information on creating your own food storage pantry system is available at your local Extension Office and includes a listing of how long foods can be held in storage. Contact Cornell Cooperative Extension Schoharie County at 518-234-4303 / 518- 296-8310, or email your request to schoharie@cornell.edu.

About Cornell Cooperative Extension:

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