Now that your dining out options are limited, and you are encouraged to stay home, you may be faced with a new challenge of shopping and cooking for yourself. It’s easy to turn towards pre-packaged canned, boxed, and frozen meals to sustain you when you aren’t sure what to cook or when you’ll get to the grocery store next. While those items aren’t bad, and even useful in situations like these, it’s still important to adequately nourish your body with whole foods as a part of a healthy lifestyle. Here are some basic pantry staples that contain the building blocks of balanced meal. Aim for a protein, high fiber starch, and fruit or veggie at every meal.

Quick Pantry Meals

1. Rice + mixed veggies + egg + soy sauce = stir fry
2. Canned tomatoes + onion + garlic + broth = tomato soup (add grilled cheese sandwich!)
3. Lentils + rice + canned tomato + potato (optional) + curry powder/spices = lentil curry
4. Spaghetti + mixed veggies (think carrots cut into matchsticks, cabbage, bell pepper) + peanut butter + soy sauce + crushed peanuts = peanut noodles
5. Beans + rice + cheese + salsa = burrito bowl
6. Frozen chicken breast or canned chicken + BBQ sauce + tortilla = BBQ chicken wrap (brush a little oil on the tortilla and heat in pan on stove for a few minutes on each side for a crunch wrap)
7. Ground beef and/or beans + canned tomatoes + broth + spices = chili (top with cheese)
8. Baked potato + pick a protein + pick a veggie + pick spices = stuffed potato!

Now is a great time to play and experiment in the kitchen.
GROCERY LIST

Grains:
- pasta, oats, rice, quinoa
- bread/tortillas (freeze until ready to use to prevent molding before you can use it).

Proteins:
- canned or dried beans (dried takes up less room, cost less, makes more—you can make half a bag at a time or freeze what you can’t use immediately) get a variety: black, pinto, green and red lentils, chickpeas, etc
- fresh/frozen chicken breast and ground beef (cook and freeze if you won’t use it immediately)
- canned chicken or tuna
- beef or turkey jerky
- eggs

Dairy:
- milk or milk alternatives (you may want to keep a shelf stable carton of a milk alternative on hand)
- yogurt (plain greek yogurt is my favorite not only because it has more protein and less sugar, but also because it can be used as a sour cream or mayo substitute)
- cheese
- cottage cheese

Vegetables
- fresh veggies that you like and will eat
- carrots, onion, celery are the base of many meals and have a long shelf life
- potatoes and sweet potatoes last longer in cool, dry place
- kale and cabbage last longer fresh than other green leafy veggies
- frozen greens like spinach are great in pastas, casseroles, and smoothies
- frozen vegetables and vegetable mixes
- canned tomatoes
Citrus fruits like oranges, melons, and grapefruit have a longer shelf life and are great sources of vitamin C

- apples and applesauce
- dried fruit or fruit leather
- frozen fruit

Other

- cooking oil (I like olive and avocado)
- peanut butter or other nut/seed butter
- spices (start with garlic powder, onion powder, basil, oregano, cumin, paprika, chili powder, and cinnamon. For stir fries or curries add ginger, turmeric, curry powder)
- salt and pepper
- soy sauce
- broth (chicken, beef, and/or veggie, but you can also use water and spices)
- honey
- salsa
- other condiments you like such as ketchup, mustard, mayo, BBQ sauces, etc

Snacks

- popcorn
- whole grain cereal and crackers
- dark chocolate
- tortilla chips
- nuts/seeds
- granola bars (aim for 8–10 g or less ADDED sugar)