

Healthy Kitchen Makeover

If you haven't introduced yourself to your kitchen yet formally please do so at this time... I'll wait.

Great, glad you got to know each other. One of the first steps in achieving optimal health and wellness is creating an environment that allows you to thrive. Since the kitchen is where most of us do a majority of our cooking and eating you are going to want to make sure that it is set up so that this is as easy and seamless as possible.

How to set up your kitchen for healthy living:

Step 1: Black bag it!

We want to remove all of the junk that you currently have crowding up the kitchen and replace it with the foods from our food list that emphasize a healthier lifestyle. The idea here is that if it is in the house we are more tempted to nibble on it. Unhealthy foods are usually easier to prepare and less time consuming so when we get hungry we tend to rip open a bag as opposed to fixing up a healthier alternative.

1. Grab a large black trash bag, maybe two...maybe three.
2. Open the pantry and look for these items or similar
 - a. Chips
 - b. Pretzels
 - c. Chocolate
 - d. Candy
 - e. Baked goods/hostess/little Debbie
 - f. Instant foods (cake mix, mashed potatoes, macaroni)
 - g. Flavored nuts
 - h. Cereal
 - i. Breads/Bagels/Pasta
 - j. Crackers
 - k. Granola bars
3. Open the freezer and look for these
 - a. Ice cream
 - b. Frozen dinners
 - c. Hot dogs
 - d. Cookie dough

- e. Candy/chocolate
 - f. Waffles
4. Open up the fridge and look for these
- a. Milk
 - b. Fruit juice
 - c. Alcohol
 - d. Any caloric beverage
 - e. Sweetened yogurt, sweetened anything
 - f. Processed meats (deli, pre packed)
 - g. Restaurant leftovers
 - h. Margarine
 - i. Breads, bagels, whole grains
 - j. Peanut butter
 - k. Condiments (bbq, ketchup, salad dressings)
 - l. Cream cheese

These lists do not include everything. But should give you a general idea. If it comes in a box, bag, or some sort of wrapper throw it out. If it has more than 3 ingredients throw it out. If you cannot pronounce some of the ingredients throw it out.

If you are not sure about a certain food a good rule of thumb is to throw it out. Refer to the Real Food Chart. If it's in your house and not on the list a good idea is to chuck it.

What a waste:

Absolutely not! What you are throwing away is not food. They are substances that promote disease and an unhealthy lifestyle. Please feel free to be liberated while throwing this crap away.

BONUS POINTS if you film yourself doing a happy dance and send it in to me.

One excuse you may be making up in your head right now is that it's for the kids or your significant other. This is a wonderful opportunity to promote health throughout your household. If you are making the switch to a healthier lifestyle and are beginning to understand the real dangers that unhealthy foods can promote wouldn't you want to share that with your loved ones?

So now my kitchen is empty. What the hell do I eat?

Take out that food list and grocery shopping guide and hit the market. It's as simple as that. Your kitchen should now be stocked with those foods only. As you progress through the guide you will most likely find that the list grows. So please do not fret about only being able to eat what is included on the list for the rest of your life. Although, the list has more than enough variety to satisfy anyone.

Must have appliances:

Spice rack:

Essential for adding variety and flavor to meals. Try and favor whole spices above ground ones as they last longer. Keep them stored in a cool area and away from heat. Heat causes them to go bad quickly. Spices should be calorie free, contain no additives, and no extra sodium. Garlic should be garlic, fennel should be fennel, and cumin should be just cumin.

All purpose knife:

You most likely already have an assortment but make sure a very sharp 8-inch knife is on hand. It will probably cut tough meats like steak and be able to gently dice soft foods like tomatoes with equal effectiveness. Make sure to try it off immediately after cleaning to avoid wear and rust on the blade.

Spatula and Large spoon:

Both for mixing and serving meals.

Ladle:

To serve soups, chili's, and broths. A second ladle with holes may be a good idea to help when serving items from a boiling pot.

Glass containers:

Use glass containers for storing leftovers. Make sure they come with a sealing lid. Glass containers actually keep food fresher than do plastic ones.

Tupperware:

If you are like most you probably have a job to get to. Although bringing a couple hot plates of food to work might be awesome it's probably in your best interest to store them in Tupperware for the day.

Insulated bag or large grocery bag:

You can usually get insulated bakes at Trader Joe's for as little as 5 bucks. This will help keep food both warm and cool if necessary. If you are just carrying food for the day a simple bag will do. You can even use an old Trader Joe's bag to carry your Tupperware for the day.

Kitchen shears:

A good pair is a plus but I have honestly used a pair from the dollar store with pretty good success. They make it easy to chop up chicken, bacon, pieces of beef, and fish. They can also be used for veggies and fruit as well.

1-3 cooking pans:

I say 1-3 so that you can easily cook in batches or a variety of foods at the same time in order to save on some time. Make sure they have lids.

Cast iron skillet:

Awesome for steaks, pork chops, and cutlets.

Large pot:

For chili's, soups, and various broths. Also a great way to cook up a load of veggies.

Optional appliances

These appliances are not completely necessary but do come in handy depending on certain dishes you are preparing.

Meat cleaver:

To assist in taking apart thick cuts of meat, chicken, and bone.

Whisk:

For making homemade condiments and mixing ingredients for certain dishes.

Grater:

For vegetables, fruit, or acceptable dairy.

Food processor:

It really comes in handy if you are making items that call for very fine pieces like cauliflower rice. You should be able to get away with a standard knife as long as you have a little patience.

The food processor comes in handy when you are looking to do something quick, preparing very large batches of food, or have no patience what so ever 😊

Dehydrator:

These can be bought fairly inexpensively and are a great tool for making homemade beef jerky, dried fruit, and preparing nuts.

As you get going you may find that you need a few extra items here and there but this is a great starting place to prepare, serve, and store all of the nutritious grub you are about to embark on.