

The No-Grocery-Run Dinner Kit

Seven complete dinners to keep on the pantry shelf

7 complete dinners · US measurements · Printable recipe cards

7

A companion to The Ultimate Dry Mix Pantry Cookbook

Joanna Halstead

A little preparation. A calmer dinner.

A jar of seasoning is a useful start. A jar with the rest of dinner sitting beside it is a plan you can use on a busy evening. These seven kits pair a measured dry mix with unopened canned or shelf-stable ingredients, so a missing carton of milk or a bare vegetable drawer does not stop dinner.

Each recipe makes four servings and includes its full cooking method. The ingredients stay in the pantry until you open them; the finished food needs refrigeration. You will still need safe drinking water, a working stove, basic cookware and a can opener. This is an everyday dinner reserve, not a no-cook emergency-food plan.

In this guide

01 Tomato & White Bean Supper Soup

02 Garden Bean & Pasta Soup

03 Chicken, Pasta & Vegetable Skillet

04 Smoky Black Bean & Corn Rice

05 Tomato, Tuna & Olive Pasta

06 Warm-Spiced Chickpeas over Couscous

07 Coconut Red Lentils & Rice

Set yourself up well.

01 Choose two dinners your household would actually eat, then assemble those kits first. Add the others when you have space. Each recipe's ingredient sections double as its shopping checklist.

02 Measure dry ingredients into a clean, completely dry, airtight food container. Keep rice, lentils and any ingredient marked separate in its own sealed food-safe packet. Do not rinse anything before storage.

03 Place the sealed mix and unopened cans or cartons together in a basket. Keep oil, salt and the printed recipe nearby. Leave the commercial packages sealed until cooking day; never pour broth, oil, canned food or other wet ingredients into the dry jar.

04 Write the recipe name, packing date, allergens and the earliest relevant ingredient date on the kit. Keep package labels or take a photo of them. Follow the ingredient manufacturers' storage instructions, rotate older kits first and check them periodically.

05 Cooking times are practical ranges, including the stated rest time. Pan size, stove heat and pasta or rice brand affect the result; use the texture checks in the method. Use the specified type of rice, lentil or couscous.

Store, thaw & serve.

Store kits in a cool, dry cupboard away from the stove, sink and temperature extremes. Discard leaking, bulging, badly dented or heavily rusted cans and any package showing spoilage. Do not taste suspicious contents.

A dry jar is not a canning process and does not create a new guaranteed shelf life. Read every package for allergens and storage instructions; ingredients and brands differ.

After opening, refrigerate unused broth and canned ingredients according to their labels, or freeze promptly in suitable containers. They are no longer pantry-stable.

Divide cooked leftovers into shallow containers and refrigerate at 40 F or below within 2 hours, or within 1 hour above 90 F. Use refrigerated leftovers within 3 to 4 days. Reheat leftovers to 165 F; bring reheated soups and sauces to a boil.

A note for your kitchen

Use the ingredient types and quantities listed on each card. Check package labels, use clean equipment, and follow the cooking method through to its texture and temperature checks. Keep the recipe with its matching kit.

01 Tomato & White Bean Supper Soup

A smooth tomato base with enough beans to make a satisfying bowl.

4 servings | 25 minutes

Pack the dry mix

1 tbsp cornstarch

1 tsp sugar

1 tsp dried basil

1/2 tsp onion powder

1/4 tsp garlic powder

1/4 tsp black pepper

Keep beside the jar

One 28-oz can crushed tomatoes

Two 15-oz cans white beans, drained and rinsed at cooking time

2 cups shelf-stable low-sodium vegetable broth, from an unopened 16-fl-oz carton

1 tbsp olive oil

Fine salt, to taste after cooking

Make dinner

1. Empty the whole dry mix into a 4-quart saucepan. Whisk in the cool broth a little at a time until no dry pockets remain.

2. Stir in the crushed tomatoes and olive oil. Bring to a gentle boil over medium heat, stirring along the bottom. Reduce the heat and simmer for 10 minutes, stirring regularly.

3. Mash about half of one can of drained beans with a fork. Stir the mashed beans and all remaining beans into the soup. Simmer for 5 to 8 minutes, until the beans are hot and the soup lightly coats a spoon.

4. Taste before adding salt. Divide among four bowls. For a thinner soup, stir in a little hot water; no milk or cream is needed.

Pack & keep

Mix the dry ingredients thoroughly and seal them in a small airtight jar. Keep both bean cans, the tomatoes and the unopened broth carton in the same basket. Keep the oil in its original bottle.

Once cooked, follow the cooling and leftover guidance at the front of this guide.

02 Garden Bean & Pasta Soup

A vegetable-filled soup that turns a few familiar cans into dinner.

4 generous servings | 25 to 30 minutes

Pack the dry mix

1/2 cup small dry pasta, such as small shells or elbows

2 tbsp dried minced onion

1 tsp dried parsley

1/4 tsp garlic powder

1/4 tsp black pepper

Keep beside the jar

4 cups shelf-stable low-sodium vegetable broth, from one unopened 32-fl-oz carton

Two 15-oz cans white beans, drained and rinsed at cooking time

One 14.5-oz can mixed vegetables, drained at cooking time

One 14.5-oz can diced tomatoes, with juices

Fine salt, to taste after cooking

Make dinner

1. Combine the broth and tomatoes with their juices in a 4- to 5-quart pot. Bring to a boil.

2. Stir in the whole dry mix. Reduce to a steady simmer and cook, uncovered, for 5 minutes, stirring once or twice so the pasta does not stick.

3. Add the drained beans and vegetables. Return to a simmer and cook for 5 to 10 minutes more, or until the pasta is tender and the soup is hot throughout. Follow the pasta's texture rather than stopping at an exact minute.

4. Add salt only after tasting. If the pasta has absorbed more liquid than you like, add hot water, 1/4 cup at a time. Divide among four bowls.

Pack & keep

Seal the pasta and seasonings together in an airtight container with room to shake. Use the entire mix for one pot. Keep the canned ingredients and unopened broth together.

The pasta continues absorbing broth after cooking. Add a splash of water when reheating refrigerated leftovers.

03 Chicken, Pasta & Vegetable Skillet

Tender pasta, cooked chicken and beans in one covered pan.

4 servings | 25 to 30 minutes

Pack the dry mix

8 oz small dry pasta, such as elbows or small shells

1 tbsp dried minced onion

1 tsp dried parsley

1/2 tsp paprika

1/4 tsp garlic powder

Keep beside the jar

3 cups shelf-stable low-sodium broth, measured from an unopened 32-fl-oz carton

One 12-oz can cooked chicken, drained and broken into bite-size pieces at cooking time

One 14.5-oz can peas and carrots, drained at cooking time

One 15-oz can white beans, drained and rinsed at cooking time

1 tbsp olive oil

Up to 1 cup hot water, only if needed

Fine salt, to taste after cooking

Make dinner

1. Bring the broth and olive oil to a boil in a deep 12-inch skillet with a lid, or a wide 4-quart pot.

2. Stir in the whole dry mix. Reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 8 minutes, stirring halfway through. Keep the liquid gently bubbling.

3. Fold in the chicken, peas and carrots, and beans. Cover and cook for 5 to 8 minutes more, stirring gently once or twice, until the pasta is tender and everything is steaming hot. If the pan gets dry before the pasta softens, add hot water 1/4 cup at a time.

4. Uncover and simmer briefly if there is more liquid than you want. Taste before adding salt, then serve. Refrigerate or freeze the unused broth promptly after opening the carton.

Pack & keep

Use a roomy airtight container for the pasta and seasonings. Keep the chicken sealed in its commercial can until cooking day; it never goes into the dry jar.

Choose fully cooked canned chicken. This method is not written for raw chicken.

04 Smoky Black Bean & Corn Rice

A pantry rice skillet with beans, corn and warm spices.

4 servings | 40 to 45 minutes, including a 5-minute rest

Pack the dry mix

1 cup regular long-grain white rice, in a separate sealed packet

1 tbsp dried minced onion

1 tsp ground cumin

1/2 tsp smoked paprika

1/2 tsp dried oregano

1/4 tsp garlic powder

Keep beside the jar

1 3/4 cups shelf-stable low-sodium vegetable broth, measured from an unopened 16-fl-oz carton

Two 15-oz cans black beans, drained and rinsed at cooking time

One 15-oz can corn, drained at cooking time

1 tbsp olive oil

Up to 1/2 cup hot water, only if needed

Fine salt, to taste after cooking

Make dinner

1. Keep the seasoning packet aside. Rinse the rice in a fine-mesh strainer just before cooking and drain it well.

2. Heat the oil in a wide, heavy 4-quart pot over medium heat. Add the drained rice and stir for 1 minute. Stir in the seasonings and measured broth. Bring to a boil, cover tightly and reduce to low heat.

3. Cook for 18 to 22 minutes, until the rice is nearly tender. Fold in the drained beans and corn. If the pan is dry and the rice is still firm, add 1/4 cup hot water. Cover and cook on low for 5 to 7 minutes more, until the rice is tender and the beans and corn are hot.

4. Turn off the heat and leave covered for 5 minutes. Fluff gently and taste before salting. Use additional hot water only if needed to finish firm rice; do not substitute brown or instant rice in this method.

Pack & keep

Seal the dry rice separately so you can rinse it without losing the seasonings. Label both packets for the same recipe. Keep the bean cans, corn and unopened broth beside them.

Cool and refrigerate cooked rice promptly using the leftover guidance at the front of this guide.

05 Tomato, Tuna & Olive Pasta

A lively tomato sauce with no fresh onion, cheese or cream to buy.

4 servings | 25 to 30 minutes

Pack the dry mix

8 oz dry penne or rotini, in a separate sealed packet

1 tbsp dried minced onion

1 tsp dried oregano

1/2 tsp garlic powder

1/4 tsp black pepper

Keep beside the jar

Two 5-oz cans tuna in water, drained at cooking time

One 14.5-oz can diced tomatoes, with juices

One 2.25-oz can sliced black olives, drained at cooking time

2 tbsp olive oil

4 quarts water for boiling the pasta, plus 1/4 cup water for the sauce

Fine salt, to taste after cooking

Make dinner

1. Bring the pasta water to a boil in a large pot. Add the pasta and cook until just tender, following its package timing. Before draining, reserve 1/2 cup of the cooking water.

2. While the pasta cooks, combine the olive oil, tomatoes with their juices, 1/4 cup water and the seasoning packet in a large skillet. Bring to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the dried onion softens and the sauce thickens slightly.

3. Fold in the drained tuna and olives. Simmer gently for 2 to 3 minutes, breaking the tuna into flakes without mashing it.

4. Add the drained pasta and toss over low heat. Loosen the sauce with the reserved pasta water, 1 tbsp at a time, only as needed. Taste before adding salt; tuna and olives already contribute salt. Serve immediately.

Pack & keep

Keep the pasta and seasonings separate because the pasta cooks in water that is drained away. Store unopened tuna, tomato and olive cans with the kit.

This dinner contains fish and usually wheat. Read all package labels before serving anyone with an allergy.

06 Warm-Spiced Chickpeas over Couscous

A gently spiced tomato stew with carrots and sweet raisins.

4 servings | 25 to 30 minutes

Pack the dry mix

1 cup plain instant Moroccan-style couscous, in a separate sealed packet; not pearl or Israeli couscous

1 tbsp dried minced onion

1 tsp ground cumin

1/2 tsp paprika

1/4 tsp ground cinnamon

1/4 tsp garlic powder

1/4 tsp fine salt

1/3 cup raisins, in a separate sealed packet

Keep beside the jar

Two 15-oz cans chickpeas, drained and rinsed at cooking time

One 14.5-oz can diced tomatoes, with juices

One 14.5-oz can sliced carrots, drained at cooking time

2 tbsp olive oil, divided

1/2 cup water for the stew

Water for the couscous: usually 1 cup; use the amount specified for 1 cup dry couscous on its package

Fine salt, to taste after cooking

Make dinner

1. Combine the tomatoes with their juices, 1/2 cup water, 1 tbsp oil, the seasonings and raisins in a wide saucepan. Bring to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes.

2. Stir in the chickpeas and carrots. Cover loosely and simmer for 10 to 12 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the carrots and chickpeas are hot and the raisins are plump. Add a splash of water if the sauce begins to stick.

3. Meanwhile, bring the package-specified water for 1 cup dry couscous to a boil in a small saucepan with the remaining 1 tbsp oil. Remove from the heat, stir in the couscous and cover. Let stand for 5 minutes, or as its package directs, then fluff with a fork.

4. Taste the chickpea mixture before adding more salt. Divide the couscous among four bowls and spoon the chickpeas, vegetables and sauce over it.

Pack & keep

Pack couscous, spices and raisins separately; raisins are not mixed into the dry grain for storage. Keep all packets and unopened cans in one basket.

Instant Moroccan-style couscous steeps off the heat. Pearl couscous needs a different cooking method and will not work with these instructions.

07 Coconut Red Lentils & Rice

Soft red lentils in a creamy coconut-tomato sauce, with rice alongside.

4 servings | 40 to 45 minutes, with rice and lentils cooking at the same time

Pack the dry mix

1 cup split red lentils, in a separate sealed packet

1 cup regular long-grain white rice, in a separate sealed packet

1 tbsp dried minced onion

2 tsp mild curry powder

1/2 tsp ground cumin

1/2 tsp garlic powder

1/4 tsp ground ginger

1/2 tsp fine salt, divided into two packets of 1/4 tsp each

Keep beside the jar

One 13.5-oz can unsweetened coconut milk; not sweetened cream of coconut

One 14.5-oz can diced tomatoes, with juices

1 tbsp olive oil

2 cups water for the lentils, plus up to 1 cup more if needed

1 3/4 cups water for the rice

Additional fine salt, only to taste after cooking

Make dinner

1. Keep the seasonings aside. Sort and rinse the lentils just before cooking. Rinse the rice separately and drain it well. In a small saucepan, combine the rice, 1 3/4 cups water and one 1/4-tsp salt packet. Bring to a boil, cover and cook on low for 18 to 22 minutes, until tender. Remove from the heat and let stand, covered, for 5 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, combine the lentils, 2 cups water, oil, onion, curry powder, cumin, garlic, ginger and the remaining 1/4 tsp salt in a 3-quart saucepan. Bring to a boil, then simmer gently, partially covered, for 12 to 15 minutes, stirring often, until the lentils are soft and beginning to break down. Add water 1/4 cup at a time if they begin to stick before softening.

3. Stir in the coconut milk and tomatoes with their juices. Simmer uncovered for 10 to 12 minutes, stirring regularly, until creamy and spoonable. Add a little hot water for a looser sauce, or simmer a few minutes longer to thicken it. The tomatoes go in after the lentils soften.

4. Fluff the rice. Taste the lentils before adding more salt. Divide the rice among four bowls and spoon the lentils over it. Use split red lentils, not whole green or brown lentils, for this cooking time.

Pack & keep

Keep lentils and rice in separate sealed packets so each can be rinsed just before cooking. Pack the spice blend separately and clearly mark the two salt portions. Add both unopened cans to the kit.

Cook the rice and lentils in separate pans at the same time. Cool leftovers promptly rather than leaving the rice in the warm saucepan.

The complete shopping list.

This checklist makes each of the seven dinners once. Keep commercial packages sealed until their kit is cooked. Some recipes use less than a whole broth carton; refrigerate or freeze the remainder after opening rather than returning it to the pantry. Buy packet sizes that suit your household, and read ingredient labels for allergens.

Grains, pasta & dried fruit

8 oz small pasta plus an additional 1/2 cup small pasta

8 oz penne or rotini

2 cups regular long-grain white rice

1 cup plain instant Moroccan-style couscous

1 cup split red lentils

1/3 cup raisins

Seasonings & oil for all seven kits

8 tbsp olive oil (1/2 cup)

1 tbsp cornstarch

1 tsp sugar

1 tsp dried basil

7 tbsp dried minced onion

1/2 tsp onion powder

2 1/4 tsp garlic powder

3/4 tsp black pepper

2 tsp dried parsley

1 tsp paprika, plus 1/2 tsp smoked paprika

2 1/2 tsp ground cumin

1 1/2 tsp dried oregano

1/4 tsp ground cinnamon

2 tsp mild curry powder

1/4 tsp ground ginger

3/4 tsp fine salt for measured portions, plus extra only to taste

Cans & cartons

Five 15-oz cans white beans

Two 15-oz cans black beans

Two 15-oz cans chickpeas

One 28-oz can crushed tomatoes

Four 14.5-oz cans diced tomatoes

One 14.5-oz can mixed vegetables

One 14.5-oz can peas and carrots

One 14.5-oz can sliced carrots

One 15-oz can corn

One 12-oz can cooked chicken

Two 5-oz cans tuna in water

One 2.25-oz can sliced black olives

One 13.5-oz can unsweetened coconut milk

Low-sodium shelf-stable broth: two 32-fl-oz cartons and two 16-fl-oz cartons. Allocate a sealed carton to each of kits 1 through 4; the recipes use 10 3/4 cups in total.

Helpful references.

Food-handling guidance draws on the sources below. Recipe-specific ingredient choices and cooking instructions appear on each card.

USDA FSIS: How do I handle leftovers safely?

USDA FSIS: What methods of reheating food are safe?

USDA FSIS: Is food in damaged cans dangerous?

USDA FSIS: Will commercially canned foods last forever?

Your original cookbook

Open The Ultimate Dry Mix Pantry Cookbook on Google Drive