

FALL INTO

Kitchen Organization



THE GOODIES

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Spring Cleaning gets all the hype, but **Fall** turns out to be the best time to do a kitchen/pantry cleanse. Think about it: a lot of food-centric seasonal events are looming. Neighborhood block parties, school bake sales, and, of course, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and Christmas. By putting a little method to the madness you can get your kitchen and pantry ready for all the culinary action to come.

1. *Move Stuff*

Clear off the kitchen table and countertops. You want as much surface area as possible for sorting out things in later steps. Even if it just gets moved to a different room for now, get those spaces empty.

2. *Set up Receptacles*

Get the trash can and a large box or laundry basket or two set up in a convenient but out of the way area in or adjacent to the kitchen. These boxes will be where you put items and foodstuffs that you no longer want or need. Putting them in the box from the start makes it that much easier to transport things to donate to your nearby Goodwill or food bank.

3. *Pick a Corner*

Do you want to start with your pantry or the cabinets by the stove? It's up to you, but choose one and move in a clockwise or counter-clockwise fashion to avoid skipping areas and feeling like the job isn't finished.

4. *Dive in!*

Think about every piece you touch. Do you somehow have a lid that goes to no pan? Plastic storage containers with cracked sides, or five salt shakers? Only keep things that are useful and easy to cook with and care for, or that serve a special purpose like your holiday turkey platter.

5. *Think about Quantities*

Do you wonder why you constantly have a sink full of cups? You may have too many and instead of taking the time to wash them, a family member or roommate may be continually getting a new cup every time they misplace theirs. This is the time to consider if you really need a pint glass from every single "Keep the glass" night that you've ever attended.

6. *Read the Dates*

When it's pantry time, look at the expiration dates on items. Trash anything that's out of date. If the expiration date is coming soon, set those items aside because they are going to need to have a place of prominence in the pantry once it's time to put everything back in.

7. Give Away Other Foods

Maybe Vienna sausages are not part of your diet anymore, or the boxes of mac and cheese weren't as good as you remember them tasting when you were a kid. But to other people, those items can be the difference between eating dinner that day or not. Donate any unexpired, unopened items that you no longer want to your local food bank by immediately placing those items in a designated box.

8. Group Like Items

When it's time to replace the pantry items that'll be kept, put condiments and spices together, boxes of pasta and rice alongside one another, and cans in another area. Gather up sauce and seasoning packets. Once all of these items are together, assess storage needs. Packets and spices can be corralled in boxes for easy access, and cans are stackable. Similar pasta shapes or bags of rice can be combined into large, airtight jars to save on space and make them more visible. The boxes needn't be fancy—cardboard ones work as well as a colorful matching set.

9. Fridge and Freezer it

The same process can be applied to the refrigerator and freezer, though work a little faster or utilize coolers to keep food at safe temperatures.

10. Wipe it Down

Places that food is stored get a little gross over time, so take a wet cloth to those horizontal surfaces before putting your newly organized foodstuffs in there.

These steps, depending on the size of your kitchen, will take a few hours to accomplish. But that clean, refreshed feeling will carry over throughout the whole season. It'll be worth it to easily find the leaf shaped cookie cutters in October or the salad tongs for Thanksgiving. The final and most important step in the process though, is to load up the car with the trash, The Goods (things to be donated to Goodwill), and the food bank items and drop them off to their respective places. Then go out to eat as a reward—why mess up the kitchen again any sooner than you have to?

- *April Blake*, **BLOGGER**