

Preparing for Fall: Healthy Kitchen Checklist

A practical reset for a plant-based pantry, freezer and weekly routine. Print this guide, tick what you finish and fill in the blanks before buying more.

1 / Clear space and shop your shelves

- ☐ Choose one shelf, one freezer section and one fridge drawer to reset first.
- ☐ Pull out everything; check packaging, damage, pests and freshness. Discard unsafe food.
- ☐ Wipe and dry shelves; group duplicates together and move older food to the front.
- ☐ Write a use-first list for open grains, produce and freezer meals.
- ☐ Check the fridge is at or below 40 F and freezer at 0 F with appliance thermometers.
- ☐ Choose two meals that use ingredients already on hand before shopping.

2 / Stock the fall cooking base

- ☐ Dry beans: choose 2 favorites (black, kidney, pinto or chickpeas).
- ☐ Lentils: choose quick-cooking red and sturdy green or brown.
- ☐ Grains: restock oats plus rice, quinoa or another grain you use weekly.
- ☐ Baking: check flour, baking powder, baking soda, yeast, sugar, oil and vanilla.
- ☐ Flavor: check dried thyme, oregano, cinnamon, cumin, paprika, garlic and ginger.
- ☐ Buy only the amount your household will use; date opened packages and seal them well.

Inventory / what to buy only after checking storage:

3 / Set up the freezer and fridge

- ☐ Keep frozen vegetables and fruit, cooked beans, bread and one prepared grain on hand.
- ☐ Make a small vegetable broth from clean, sound vegetable scraps; cool in shallow containers.
- ☐ Refrigerate broth promptly; use within 3-4 days or freeze in meal-sized portions.
- ☐ Label frozen items with name, date and amount; use older portions first.
- ☐ Check winter squash for bruises; store whole squash in a dry, ventilated place and inspect weekly.
- ☐ Store ripe produce according to its needs; avoid one catch-all produce drawer.
- ☐ Keep a discard-or-cook-first box in the fridge so good produce gets used.

4 / Keep projects small and safe

- ☐ For sourdough: keep a clean jar, flour, water and a simple feed log; use the separate GoHealthySC starter guide.
- ☐ For fermented vegetables: select a current tested Extension recipe and follow its salt, temperature and storage instructions.
- ☐ Keep refrigerator ferments and pickles chilled as directed; do not treat them as shelf-stable.
- ☐ For shelf-stable canning, use a current tested USDA or National Center for Home Food Preservation recipe exactly.

Freezer label template

ITEM: _____ DATE: _____ AMOUNT: _____ USE FOR: _____

Foods to use first this week:

5 / One hour of weekly fall meal prep

- ☐ Choose two meal anchors: one bowl or soup, plus one handheld or baked meal.
- ☐ Cook one pot of beans or lentils and one grain; cool and refrigerate promptly.
- ☐ Wash and prep two vegetables; cook one tray of seasonal produce.
- ☐ Make one sauce or dressing and portion washed herbs for easy use.
- ☐ Assemble only what you will eat soon; freeze extra portions early.
- ☐ Choose one use-first meal to finish remaining produce before the next shop.

A simple rotation

Monday: grain bowl with roast vegetables and beans. **Wednesday:** soup with greens and bread. **Friday:** freezer portions or leftovers, checked for safe storage.

This week - two meal anchors and one use-first ingredient:

Reliable references

FoodSafety.gov Cold Food Storage Chart: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/food-safety-charts/cold-food-storage-charts>

FoodSafety.gov FoodKeeper: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>

NCHFP tested preservation guides: <https://nchfp.uga.edu/>

Practical household checklist. Follow current tested guidance for fermenting and canning.