

Chef Amy Shefman



Get Ready, Get Set, Get Cooking!

With a well stocked pantry, creating delicious dishes won't seem so overwhelming. The better quality ingredients you have, the better tasting your food will be! Here are some things that I always keep on hand, so that I can always whip up something without running out to the store.

Kosher Salt

What's the easiest way to improve your cooking? Switch from iodized salt to kosher! Kosher salt brings out the true flavor of the food, instead of tasting "salty." It also won't make your salad greens soggy, and is much cheaper than sea salt.

Fresh Pepper Berries

Pick whichever one you like; the important thing here is to get a pepper grinder and grind your own. That black powder in the shaker has no flavor! I like black Tellicherry for everyday cooking, and am fascinated by green peppercorns. These are fresh peppercorns packed in brine that come in a can and they make an awesome addition to sauces.

Extra Virgin Olive Oil

This is the oil that you reach for for salad dressings, to drizzle over hot greens, pasta or fish. Yes, this is more expensive oil, but you only use a little bit. You do NOT fry with this oil as it has a low flash point (meaning it will burn at a lower temp than other oils) and is expensive. Use it where it counts, where you will actually taste the oil. I buy my oil in gallon tins to save money, and usually only keep one or two in my pantry. Israeli and Spanish oils are usually cheaper and just as good as Italian ones; a good supermarket brand is Colavita. If you feel like splurging, you can even find estate oils that are really special.

Vinegars

I keep a variety of vinegars in my pantry. Balsamic, rice wine, red wine, white, and cider are all basic ones to keep on hand. Why so many? Because they all have different uses and flavors, and will keep your cooking exciting.

Asian Ingredients

These can always make a meal in a hurry, as stir fry is one of the fastest dishes around. Soy sauce is the most basic, and I use Kikkoman. Sesame oil is extremely flavorful, and a little goes a long way, so the cost is worth it. Fish Sauce sounds gross, and it doesn't smell all that great, but it creates a layer of flavor to so many Thai dishes. Speaking of Thai, Thai Kitchens is a great brand to keep on hand. Their sauces are all natural and taste great. Right now I have their coconut milk (for coconut rice), green chili paste and red chili paste. I also love Patak's Indian spice/sauce/curries. The Madras curry is really nice. These are wet spice pastes; fry them in oil to bring out their true flavors. Hoisin sauce, chinese hot mustard, mirin wine also can usually be found in my kitchen.

Real Parmesan Cheese

No green can here! Even though parmegiano reggiano is expensive, it is so worth it. One chunk (about 8oz) might run you \$10 but it will last at least a month, and maybe more. Grate some on top of sauteed greens, shave it over salads, or toss hot pasta and tomatoes in it. Make sure to salt AFTER you add the cheese and not before as it adds it's own saltiness to the dish.

Mustard

Dijon mustard is always needed for homemade vinaigrette; not only does it add flavor but it also helps create the emulsion that most dressings need. Whole grain mustard is also nice in dressings, especially over asparagus, leeks or potatoes. Chinese hot adds heat, and brown mustard is really good on Creswick Farms' sausages.

Tahini

This Middle Eastern sesame seed paste is the crucial ingredient in hummous and baba ganoush; I like to make salad dressings with it, too.

Miso

This fermented soy bean paste comes in several varieties, and adds a great flavor to dressings, stir fries, soups and marinades.

Other Basics

Fresh garlic and ginger are musts. Fresh lemons and limes add flavor without adding salt. Spices are best if used quickly, and toasting them really brings out the flavor. Fresh herbs are always great. I keep a steady supply of dried pasta, dried and canned beans as well as whole grains on hand at all times. Whole grains I keep in the fridge to extend shelf life. My favorites are quinoa, wheat berries and bulgar.



WWW.MEDIA-RARE.COM
616 248 0760

WKTV