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Fresh start

CHEFS SHARE REFRIGERATOR TRICKS FOR HEALTHY, CONVENIENT EATING

By SCOTT KEARNAN

Many have made food-related New Year's resolutions to eat healthier, save money by cooking at home or hone their skills in the kitchen. Set the stage for success by resetting your fridge — clearing out useless, soured clutter and restocking it like a well-equipped epicure's armory. We tapped some experts to tell us what to keep, what to toss and what to do differently in 2018.

FIRST, THROW OUT anything with ingredients you can't pronounce, says J.J. Gonson, chef-founder of Cuisine en Locale, a Somerville-based service delivering prepared meals made with locally farmed products. "If you don't recognize half the words, and every other letter is an x," you probably shouldn't be consuming that edible chemistry set, Gonson said.

MOVE HERBS to the kitchen counter, keeping them in a water-filled vase (like fresh-cut flowers) to maintain freshness, says Laurin Mills, founder of The Dinner Daily, a Westford-based service that provides personalized family meal plans and shopping lists based on the weekly deals and discounts available at your preferred local supermarket. Besides adding color and fragrance to the kitchen, keeping them out will remind you to use them before they become "a

soggy mess in your crisper."

BE TRANSPARENT in general, adds Mills, who only uses clear storage solutions such as glass containers or Ziploc bags labeled and dated with Sharpie pens. Opaque Tupperware containers are spoilage traps, because "if you can't see it, you'll never use it," Mills said.

PREP ONCE A WEEK. Dedicating a couple hours one day a week will save you countless more during the week, says Andrea Nordby, head chef at The Purple Carrot, a Needham-based business delivering plant-based meal kits. "At the start of a week, cook a big batch of grains — brown rice, quinoa or farro for something different — and a big batch of beans or lentils," Nordby said. "You can add both to soups, salads, wraps or turn them into a quick grain bowl with condiments and whatever veg you have. For breakfast, prep overnight oats or chia pudding in big batches. They'll both easily last four to five days in the fridge. In the morning, top with fresh and dried fruit, seeds and nut butter for a quick breakfast."

PAY ATTENTION to where you put things and your chosen settings, says Gonson. Many of us just toss our produce wherever they'll fit, but those drawers do serve a purpose in extending freshness. When storing fruits and veggies, the maxim is to keep things that wilt (such as leafy greens) in a

high-humidity drawer; things that rot (such as avocados) in a low-humidity drawer.

ALWAYS KEEP certain multipurpose staples on hand — and we don't just mean milk and eggs. Our experts agree Greek yogurt is a great, healthful replacement for sour cream, mayo and many other creamy ingredients. Lemon is a must for adding a little acid to flat home cooking. (Wipe the pulpy side on a grater to dislodge stuck food, says the Dinner Daily's Mills.) Post 390's Nick Deutmeyer says soy sauce imbues substantial umami flavor to dishes that lack animal protein, while Greek cooking guru Diane Kochilas, consulting chef at the Seaport restaurant Committee, swears by capers to add easy zing.

PRACTICE PORTION CONTROL for convenient storage. Amanda Mayo, chief gastronomic officer for Just Add Cooking, a Boston-based meal kit subscription plan that uses New England-sourced products, freezes homemade broth in muffin tins; each is a perfect half-cup portion. Before herbs spoil, Purple Carrot's Nordby makes pesto and freezes it in ice cube trays. Rebecca Arnold, chef and co-owner of Allston's vegan-friendly, fast-casual eatery Whole Heart Provisions, which opens two Cambridge locations this year, freezes tomato paste in plastic-wrapped tablespoon-sized portions to easily unwrap and add to a pot.



STAFF PHOTOS BY CHRISTOPHER EVANS
YOU SEE IT, YOU EAT IT: Laurin Mills, founder of The Dinner Daily, likes to store food in transparent containers.

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