

Prep for the School Year: De-clutter Your Pantry in Five Simple Steps



By Shannon E. Brewer Rooney

Busy school days are almost upon us. You'll need easy sack lunches and afterschool snacks at the ready. An organized pantry can be your key to smoothly run weekday mornings.

What You'll Need

Before you start, professional organizer Lauren Bower, owner of BowerBird Home Organizing in Columbia City, recommends investing



in a selection of baskets, lazy Susans and airtight containers. "There are many choices available and you are sure to find the perfect look for your needs, style and budget," said Bower.

For example, all your baking supplies can go into one basket and your spice packets in another. You can also use separate baskets for candy, baking items, fruit snacks or small lunchbox goodies. Rotating shelves are helpful too, making it easy to grab smaller items without moving around the entire contents of a shelf.

Getting Started

With the above tools and a little elbow grease, Bower says your pantry can be prepped for action with these five easy steps.

Step 1: Start by setting aside time and clearing a workspace. Your pantry project will take about two hours and you will want to have a counter cleared off to work from.



Move your recycling bin and a large garbage can next to your workspace and turn on some upbeat music.

Step 2: Take everything out of your pantry. Toss expired foods as you go and remove any excess packaging. Create groups on your workspace for similar items. For example, put hot breakfast foods in one group and cold cereal in another group.

Step 3: After everything is out of the pantry, wipe down the pantry shelves and sweep the floor. This will give you fresh, clean surfaces to work with.

Step 4: Put each category of items into a basket or other container. Make sure the container has extra room for new supplies.

Step 5: Your last step is to choose a place in your pantry for each kind of food. Arrange things in a way that makes sense to you and makes your day-to-day life easiest. Things that you don't use often can sit on an upper shelf and items you use most often can be at eye level.

You're all set! To keep afterschool snack and school lunch items handy and organized, Bower recommends grouping them together into one container or basket, then putting them



in the middle of an eye-level shelf. "This keeps them all in one spot and also lets you know when to restock," said Bower. "When the basket is getting empty, you know you have to pick more up during your next grocery run."

You'll save yourself from time-consuming future pantry purges if you clean as you go.

"Put things back where they belong after using them," Bower said. "Spend a few minutes every week straightening items and removing extra packaging materials." When you come home from grocery shopping, take time to put things away properly. If you find your initial set-up isn't working for you, move containers around until everything is just the way you want it. These small extra steps will save time and keep your pantry stocked and organized throughout the school year so you can better focus on band practice and science fair projects. 🏠

