



# What's in my cupboard?

**Five healthy foods to keep on hand, and some “on the go” options.**

My last post detailed the healthy foods that I keep stocked in the fridge. This time, I'm opening up the cupboard for a look at some healthy staples I keep on hand.

## 1. Nuts and Seeds:

Roasted almonds are a staple, but I also try to have mixes of pecans, cashews, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, dried blueberries etc. These are great portable snacks.

Nutrition: good fats, protein, calcium, magnesium, zinc

Serving size: 1/4 cup or 1 small portable salad dressing container full.

## 2. Whole grains: Steel Cut Oats, Quinoa, Brown Rice, Wild Rice

**Steel Cut Oats** - great for breakfast served with frozen berries and hemp seeds or sliced almonds. If you don't have time in the morning to make this, consider setting up the slow-cooker to make a pot overnight - simply get up and serve! There are lots of good seasonal slow-cooker oatmeal recipes. The Pumpkin Pie Oatmeal is a favourite at our house in the Fall.

I also use large flake oats/rolled oats for Protein ball recipes and muffins.

Nutrition: Protein, Rich in fibre, good source of non-processed nutrients. Good nutrition on a budget!

**Quinoa**: great for salads, or a side dish and perfect to take for lunch. Served hot or cold. It has a slightly nutty flavour but takes on the flavour of the dish. Our family favourite is Zesty Black Bean Quinoa Salad.

Nutrition: Protein, Fiber, Magnesium, Zinc, Phosphorus, Manganese

**Brown & Wild Rice**: to serve with stir-fries, curries, or Thai dishes. A lower glycemic load than white rice, with higher fibre.



Healthy snacks are better snacks!

## 3. Beans & Legumes:

Lentils, Split peas, Chick peas, Kidney beans and Black Beans

Excellent to have on hand for Fall/Winter slow-cooker curries, soups, chilies and stews or for Summer salads!

Nutrition: Protein & Fibre. Some research indicates that they may inhibit cancer cell growth. Another "good nutrition on a budget" food group!

#### 4. Oils: Avocado, Olive, Coconut

The world of oils can be confusing! These are my choices for the healthiest oils to use in cooking. Make sure to choose oils that are cold-pressed, extra virgin, unrefined & ideally organic.

**Olive oil** - monounsaturated fat (a good fat) containing antioxidants including Vitamin E. For low temperatures only. Best used in salad dressings.

**Avocado oil** - another monounsaturated fat containing antioxidants. Very similar profile to olive oil, but it can be used for high temperature cooking/baking.

**Coconut oil** - contains saturated fats but they are in the form of medium chain triglycerides (good fat) which can easily be used by the body for energy. Can be used at low - moderate temperatures. I use this for the pan when cooking eggs.



#### 5. Protein Powder:

Either plant-based (usually a pea/brown rice or hemp based protein), or whey/dairy based (whey isolate is the best). Good for adding to a breakfast smoothie or post-workout protein snack. It's also helpful to have around for increasing the protein content in oatmeal, non-dairy yogurts etc.

## What about the snack stuff in the cupboard?

Ideally, our family makes muffins, protein balls, popcorn etc. for snacks and lunches, but this doesn't always happen, so these are a few of the things on hand in the cupboard...

- 1) Popcorn kernels - pop it yourself with avocado oil. Add drizzled organic butter or Earth Balance (dairy-free), to lower the glycemic load and give it a tasty flavour.
- 2) Mary's organic crackers - good with hummus, nut butter, soft goat cheese, avocado etc. Higher in fibre than regular crackers, and no junk in the ingredients. Pricey though, so a once or twice per month purchase.

- 3) Granola bars (for kids' lunches/snack bags) -Ideally, we make our own bars or protein balls with some protein, fibre, and healthy fats but for when that doesn't happen I have Made Good bars and Enjoy Life (gluten free) bars on hand. These are school safe, have less than 9g sugar per bar and no colours, preservatives or other surprises. The adult/high schooler brands we keep on hand are Kind bars and Kashi Bars.
- 4) Unsalted Brown rice cakes & crackers - good with nut butter & banana, avocado, soft goat cheese or hummus. Never eat them alone, as they are too quickly broken down to sugar in the body (i.e. high glycemic)!
- 5) Chips: Blue corn tortilla, Terra root vegetable, Kettle Valley Chili Lime/Himalayan Sea Salt

My kids complain that they “don't get anything good” because I'm a Naturopathic Doctor. Not true, of course! They get chips on many occasions as part of an after-school snack (after they eat the healthy food on their plates), and I stick to the “healthiest” versions I can find. The tortilla chips are served with guacamole & salsa.

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Dr. Corlyss Hagarty currently practices in a solo practice at the South Guelph Naturopathic Clinic and in an integrative office at Achieve Balance in Breslau. She offers naturopathic services to all members of the family with special interests in pediatrics, women's health, complementary cancer care and sports medicine. Corlyss has a passion for Naturopathic medicine and loves to empower individuals with the information necessary to maximize their health, the health of their families, the health of the community and the health of the environment at large.

Corlyss graduated from the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine and received her license to practice in 2001. She holds a Bachelor of Science with honours (biology/environmental studies) from the University of Victoria and a naturopathic medicine degree from CCNM. She is a member of the Ontario Association of Naturopathic Doctors (OAND), the Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors (CAND) and the Oncology Association of Naturopathic Physicians (ONCANP) [www.southguelphnaturopathic.ca](http://www.southguelphnaturopathic.ca)