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Kitchen Clean Up

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I'm not talking about sweeping, wiping cupboard shelves (although mine could certainly use a dusting!) or disinfecting the sink. My concern with your clean-up efforts goes far beyond those basics. In this instance, it's the items we remove from the shelves and put into our mouths that make for either a clean or not-so-sparkly kitchen.

A little dust never killed anyone, but the sad statistics show that the foods we stock up with can.

So let's tidy up the nutrition in your kitchen!

Start by taking stock. Look through your kitchen cabinets, fridge and freezer. What do you see? Lots of boxed foods? Do your produce drawers overflow or are they barren baring that moldy onion

still sitting at the bottom? Do cereals come in colorful shapes or do more natural colors adorn the shelves? Any homemade treats or do cookies come in packages and neatly circular rows? What about bread and snacks? White or 100 percent whole grain? Any oats overflowing from a canister or only little paper packages yielding as much sweetener as cereal? We must not forget to look for those lovely legumes...hello...are you there?

Now you know your starting place. No worries, guilt or regret and no boasting of perfection. We are all here together hoping to either clean up a long time, processed mess or perhaps to freshen up on some forgotten real food kitchen essentials. Regardless of where you are today on the cleanliness continuum remember: Friends hold hands in our efforts to live and eat happily whole. So, here I am, holding your hand!

First and foremost, let me offer a prelude: If you're familiar with my food philosophy, you already know **I believe eating is a pleasure and not a rule-based pain**. That means you can look at my list of suggestions taking ones that suite you and your family leaving others for later (or never). Gradually incorporate the following ideas to build a more real-food-filled kitchen. Experiment at your own pace knowing that each step is in the direction of better health, improved energy and overall whole living.

And above all, **learn to eat intuitively** as you try new foods and flavors! If you are anything like me, food unapologetically pleases your palate. It's okay to love eating and it's possible to develop a love for real, naturally wholesome foods. I do and I have!

So, let's get at it. Roll up your sleeves and start scrubbing.....

1. **REAL foods are more a product of nature than of industry.** This is just a general idea to keep in mind as you start sorting. And, yes, that means that boxed versions of a certain kind of 'Helper' and sweet 'Auntie's' syrup might find a home elsewhere.
2. **Be on guard for LONG lists of unrecognizable ingredients.** If you don't know what you are eating, perhaps you should find out! If I am buying food in a box, I like 5 or fewer ingredients listed (unless, of course, the ingredients are whole foods like nuts and seeds).
3. **Get out a piece of paper and pencil** to note the items you want to purchase on your next trip to the grocery store (where you will, at this time, commit to doing at least 80% of your shopping on the periphery, staying out of certain boxed lined aisles altogether).
4. **Check out your grains.** Look at labels of anything made with grain or flour. If the ingredients list 'enriched' flours as opposed to 100% whole grains, consider purchasing an unprocessed counterpart. Processed/refined and enriched grains fall FAR short of what nature intended them to be. I know, I know...'enriched' sounds so nice. It's not. In a post on another time, I will explain why. For now, keep grains WHOLE.
5. **Look for Legumes.** If they are not there, add them to your list. Garbanzo beans, black beans, navy beans, lentils, kidney beans, etc. These are all plant based nutritional powerhouses also containing lots of heart healthy fiber and plant proteins. An added bonus is their low cost. I love buying dried beans. Simply soak overnight and, according to package instructions, rinse and cook.
6. **Rainbow Bright!** No, not the old-school TV character! This is how your produce bins should shine...BRIGHT. Nutrients play out, in large part, by the color of the plant. So, the more colors your fruits and veggies bear, the more nutrients you consume. Consider buying and trying some new varieties. Make it a family grocery store game!
7. **A note on artificial sweeteners:** Get. Them. Out. That's all.
8. **Meat.** If you are a meat eater, consider committing to locally raised animals and preferably in moderation. Omit highly processed, pressed lunch meats and meat alternatives (yes, even when they tout 'health' because so many are made with genetically modified soy. YUCK.).

9. **Dairy. Acceptable.** I prefer organic and, when possible raw because of high processing, pasturization, hormones and pesticides in the conventionally raised animals' foods and the low nutrient, genetically modified crops they eat. For our family, I also choose goat dairy most often (more on that later). Remember, you are what you eat....or, in this case, *you are what you are eating eats*. Hummmmm....gotta think about that one. Basically, when you eat animal products, you consume what they consume. So, consume wisely. A cow might not just be a cow, afterall.
10. **Beverages.** To keep it 'real' cleanse your kitchen of all except water, milk (see above suggestion), almond or coconut milk, tea, coffee (I like organic, fair trade because coffee is a highly sprayed crop) and 100% all natural juice for the occasional treat. Oh, and yes, wine made with organic grapes and without added sulfites when available.

It always feels so good to get a mess cleaned up, doesn't it? And when cleaning up your kitchen by getting processed foods out, you are cleaning up more than your shelves. You are cleaning up from the inside out! It will feel GOOD, I promise.

What will your first step in the clean-up process be? Do tell!

Live From Katie's Clean Eating Kitchen,

Katie



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