Are you worried about going to the store, finding yourself with more time, or looking for a distraction? Consider starting your own garden. Whether you have a huge yard or a spot by a sunny window, there are ways to bring some fresh food to your home.

Plants that are easy to start from seed include snap peas, lettuce, arugula, and radishes. Other plants can be trickier to start from seed. This time of year there are often seedlings for sale at local farms or farmer markets. If you are new to growing, you may want to look for these.

You can use SNAP benefits to buy food seeds and seedlings at any SNAP retailer.

Window Gardening
If you don’t have outdoor space you can still grow herbs. Herbs like basil, chives, thyme, oregano, and rosemary can grow well in a warm, sunny window. While herbs won’t fill you up, adding their fresh taste and flavor will help make canned or frozen foods more appealing and add variety to your dishes.

Porch Gardening
If you have a bit of outdoor space you can try growing potted plants. Tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, and all of the herbs mentioned above can grow well in pots outside.

Backyard gardening
If you have a sunny spot in your yard you can start a larger garden. You may need to put more work in at the beginning to prepare the ground but you can get more food from it.
Indian Vegetable and Rice Skillet

Check the back of your pantry and freezer to see if you have these ingredients already in your house.

**Ingredients:**

- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon ginger, ground
- 1/2 teaspoon turmeric, ground
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin, ground
- 2 cups mixed vegetables (chopped cauliflower, peppers, carrots, or peas)
- 1 large russet potato, diced
- 1 cup rice, white, uncooked
- 2 1/2 cups water
- 1 15-ounce can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (optional)

**Directions:**

1. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat.
2. Add onion, ginger, turmeric, and cumin, and stir while cooking for 1 minute.
3. Add remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil, cover, and reduce heat.

*Makes 8 servings*
What You Should Do With … Groceries?

Are you worried about COVID-19 coming home with you from the grocery store or pantry? Read on for tips on how to make sure you’re being safe without doing too much extra work.

There is currently no evidence of food (including fresh, frozen, and packaged) or food packaging being associated with transmission of the coronavirus that causes COVID-19. Fresh produce, meat and dairy products contain vitamins that help the body respond to infection, so don’t be afraid to keep bringing home fresh food.

For extra peace of mind, here are a few tips to keep yourself and others safe:

1. Wear a face covering or mask while you shop.
2. Wipe down the handles of shopping carts or baskets before you use them.
3. Practice social distancing while shopping or picking up food.
4. Wash your hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds when you get home and again after you put away groceries.
5. Again, there is no evidence that food packaging can transmit COVID-19 but you can wipe down product packaging and allow it to air dry. This step isn’t necessary but may be a good idea for high risk populations and families with children.
6. As always, wash produce before you eat it or cook with it.

Black Bean Salsa

**Ingredients:**
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 11-ounce can corn, rinsed
- 1 small red bell pepper, chopped
- 1 small Serrano chili, seeded and finely chopped (or jalapeno)
- 1/4 cup red onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar (or apple cider vinegar)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt

**Directions**
1. Mix all ingredients in a bowl.
2. Cover and refrigerate at least one hour before serving.
Expiration Dates: What do they mean?

Are you thinking of using those cans in the way back of your cabinets? Their expiration date has come and gone, but are they still safe to use?

What do expiration dates mean?

Expiration dates have nothing to do with safety. Product dating is voluntary and is the manufacturer’s best guess as to when the product will no longer be at peak quality. Food manufacturers tend to be conservative with these dates.

Dried beans, spices, sugar, and white flour will be safe for years past their expiration.

Most canned foods are also safe for years past their expiration date. For canned fruits and vegetables, you can feel comfortable adding 18 months to the date. For canned beans and meat (like canned tuna and chicken) you can add up to 5 years.

Items that are stored in the freezer are safe forever as long as they were kept frozen. If they have signs of defrosting and refreezing you should throw them away.

Check out FoodSafety.gov’s FoodKeeper App for more info on expiration dates and food safety.