

# shelf life

An avalanche of pot lids. Granola bars gone MIA. Prehistoric spices. If your kitchen brings new meaning to “mess hall,” take heart. We’ve called in a professional to help.

## **contain yourself**

Canisters and bins are key to an organized pantry, says pro organizer Julia Purdy. “Mix two or three materials for visual interest, but not more, or it looks busy and cluttered.”



## **hidden assets**

Deep drawers are storage heroes—no rummaging through backs of cabinets. (Big-box stores sell kits to install pull-out shelves in cabinets for a similar effect.)



## **open and shut**

Whether you have a walk-in pantry or shelves hidden behind dated bifold doors, a sliding door with barn-style hardware ups the look.



As a Midwest regional manager for home organizing company Neat Method, Julia Purdy has seen it all—maybe even that holiday mulled-cider mix that you haven't seen since the Obama years. “The more efficient and organized your pantry,” Julia says, “the easier and more stress-free your day will be.” Here are her best tricks.



**size wise**

Julia tackles drawers with mix-and-match boxes or adjustable dividers, so every item has a right-sized home. When shopping for baskets, she says, be sure to consider what you'll be storing, so small items like food coloring or fruit-snack pouches don't fall through large openings.

**bottled up**

Julia sees a lot of water-bottle hoarding in client homes. She says to limit your stash to two bottles per person (resist freebies!) and stow them on a stackable wine rack.



**tall order**

Sleuth for vertical storage space on walls, under the sink, and behind or on the back of doors. For solutions to fit any nook, Julia loves The Container Store's Elfa system.

**JULIA'S GO-TO GEAR**

**TURNTABLES**  
(aka lazy Susans)  
Divided models are great for condiment bottles.

**BINS & BASKETS**  
To corral like-items and neaten up the space.

**CANISTERS**  
Choose clear and air-tight glass jars or OXO Good Grips POP Containers.

**COLLATORS**  
For vertical storage of cutting boards, platters and cookie sheets.

**DRAWER DIVIDERS**  
Spring-loaded or adjustable models fit any need or space.

**SHELF LINER**  
Turn wire shelves into “solid” ones with clear, nonadhesive heavy-duty liner.

**HOOKS**  
3M's Command line has more looks and sizes than ever.



**trade up**

If she only had \$50 to spend, Julia says, she'd put it toward using vertical space, like The Container Store's Expand-a-Shelf risers sized for spices or large cans.

**spice of life**

Decanting into matching jars keeps spices much tidier. To avoid packaging waste (or to buy a small amount of an herb you rarely use), shop bulk spices at a natural grocer.



**5 steps to fabulous**

*When Julia tackles a Neat Method client's pantry, her process is always the same.*

**EDIT**

“Organized clutter is still clutter, so the first step—always—is to empty the space or drawer and start sorting and purging. Check expiration dates and get rid of duplicate items.”

**GROUP**

“Group items by broad categories—baking or grab-and-go snacks. If you have children, think about if you want them to ‘self serve’ or not. That will play into the container you choose and where you place it.”

**MEASURE**

“A lot of well-intentioned people get so excited that they buy all these baskets and bins and canisters, which end up not fitting or suiting their needs. Hatch a plan for where you'll put your groups and measure all your shelves before buying anything.”

**SHOP**

“I have favorite gear (opposite), but be honest with yourself about what works for your family. That beautiful pic from Pinterest with all the items decanted may be too time consuming; simple bins or baskets may be a better fit.”

**LABEL**

“Labeling is the finishing touch that helps everyone know where things live and belong. I like adhesive chalk labels and a white Sharpie.”