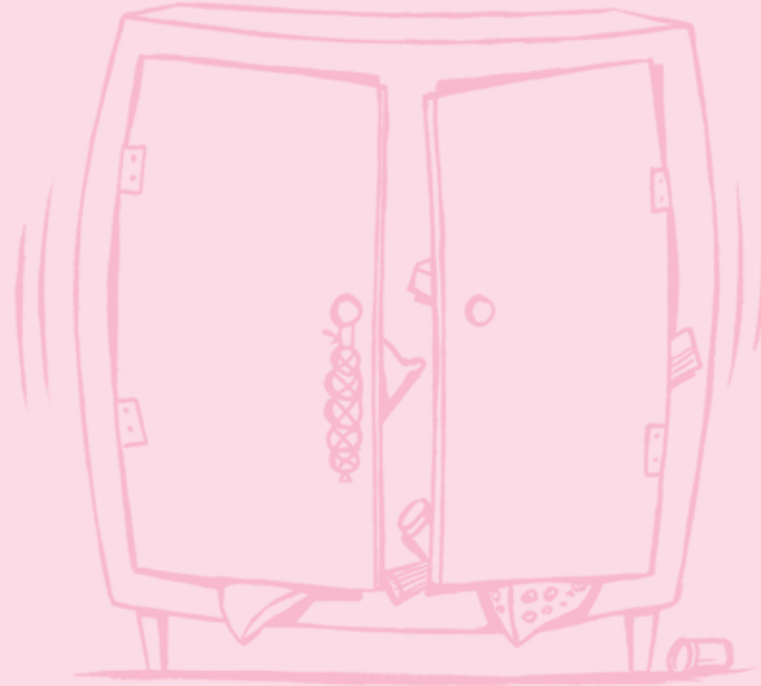


The Better Foodie store cupboard

definitive epicurean essentials

The quintessential litmus test for the Better Foodie is a highly considered store cupboard of definitive epicurean essentials for enjoying every meal to its utmost. It's never bare, far from it... Minimalism and the ferociously Foodie are wilfully incompatible. It's akin to investing in a wardrobe of classics. Why compromise the simplest spaghetti al limone with inferior pasta or eat vanilla ice cream without Madagascan vanilla pod seeds?



Better Foodies adore beans Tarbais from southwest France; haricot beans for cassoulet; dried or tinned borlotti; cannellini beans and chickpeas. And it's worth paying a bit more for jars of the plumpest Spanish beans.

Lentils Mottled teal Puy lentils; tiny, brown Castelluccio with a nutty, earthy flavour from Umbria; Black Beluga; Ustica (tiny and needing no prior soaking, these are cultivated entirely by hand).

Pearl barley (farro) Makes a good alternative risotto – for those Arnold Wesker moments.

More unusual grains Couscous; bulgar wheat for making tabbouleh; quinoa (pronounced keenwah) – both Charlie Trotter and Alain Ducasse are fans – and freekah, made from roasting young green wheat to give it a rich, smoky nutty taste – favoured in Middle Eastern dishes.

Top-quality dry pasta Even the best-intentioned Better Foodie doesn't always have time to make fresh pasta and knows that top-quality artisan dry pasta can be just as good. It's a question of paying a little more for a reputable name and looking out for slow-dried, where possible bronze die cut, durum wheat or egg pastas. Definitive spaghetti makes for good eating simply served *aglio olio*, with extra-virgin olive oil, garlic and chilli. For variety, offer chitarra, shaped after guitar strings, as a change from classic spaghetti. Keep penne rigate, too, with ridged quills to better hold the sauce, and a wide-ribbed papparadelle for chunkier sauces.

Flour Double 00, the finest grade Italian flour with exceptional elasticity for pasta, pizza and bread is non-negotiable. Alternatives like chestnut and chickpea or gram flour (for pakora) are useful stand-bys, too.