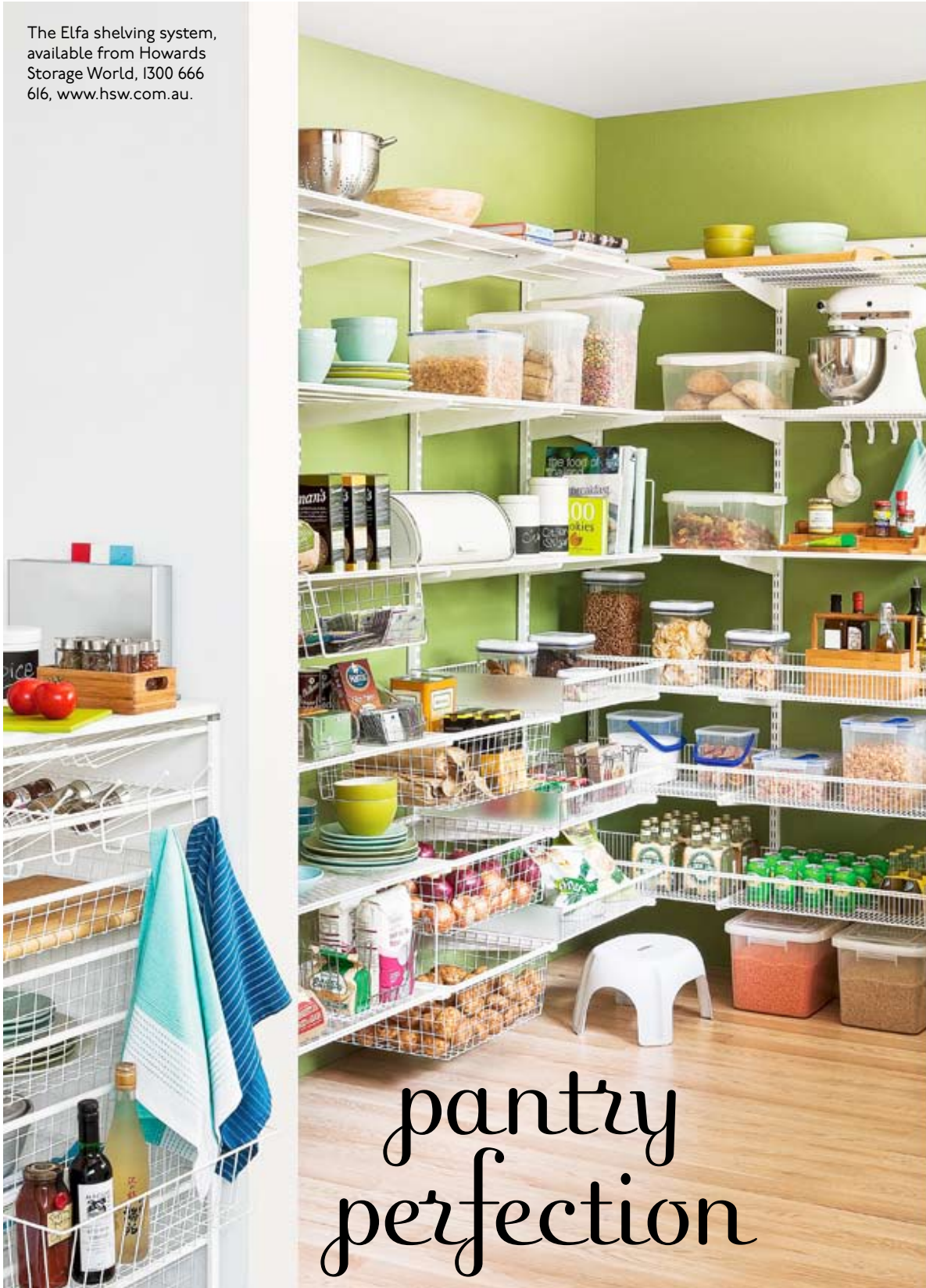


The Elfa shelving system, available from Howards Storage World, 1300 666 616, www.hsw.com.au.



pantry perfection

A pantry can be as compact as a bookcase or as large as a walk-in wardrobe, but no matter what the size, the key to making it work is order. Here are nine nifty ideas for keeping everything at your fingertips

WORDS KERRY RAMSEY



Choose matching containers for shelves on show.

FITTING CHOICE

When designing or remodelling your pantry, the essential features of the space are good ventilation, low humidity and a relatively cool temperature. The range of shapes and sizes available – whether your pantry is walk-in or pull-out, or comprises cupboards, deep drawers or open shelves – can be tailored to suit all budgets.

Innovative storage systems utilise all the pantry space available. By installing a pull-out cupboard in a narrow gap or a rotating lazy susan in a corner, once-empty spaces can become more functional. “Under-bench pantry units come in various configurations and can be retrofitted,” suggests interior designer Mia Asker of White Design.

2 ON THE INSIDE

“When you look in the pantry, you need to see everything at a glance,” says Carol Posener of Get Organised. “The perimeter of each shelf should store all the stackable jars and cans, while the surface in the middle should keep all small food items.”

According to Carol, a common mistake is having too much space between shelves. While many new pantries provide adjustable shelves, older units need a little extra help. She suggests ordering a matching melamine shelf, cut to size at Bunnings Warehouse, and fixing it with pegs or brackets between two existing shelves.

For extra storage, racks can be fitted snugly to the side walls of a pantry or the inside of the door, while baskets are functional and fabulous. Ikea and Howards Storage World both have a wide range.

“When you LOOK IN THE PANTRY, YOU NEED TO SEE EVERYTHING AT A GLANCE”
 ~ CAROL POSENER OF GET ORGANISED



Create a customised combination of drawers and cupboards for easy access.



3 ORDER IN THE HOUSE

To find items in a flash, they need to be clearly visible and easily accessible. Store similar products together; for example, group baking essentials in one corner or sort your pantry into cuisines you like to cook. Most food items keep best in plastic or transparent glass containers. It’s worth investing in containers with airtight lids to keep insects at bay.

4 KID-FRIENDLY CORNER

To give children some independence, create a snack shelf at the correct height for mini-munchers. Parents need to be judicious – anything high in fat or sugar should be placed higher up. Not only will it prevent kids from ruining their dinners, it can keep sweet-toothed adults on the straight and narrow!



Use racks or trays to group related products together.



A revolving unit makes corner cupboards more accessible.



Load a trolley with equipment for uber-organised baking.



Pull-out shelves keep everything within reach.

HOT TIP

Maximise your pantry space with well-chosen containers. "Square jars are better than round ones, as they can be stacked and there's no wasted space," suggests Carol, whose favourite options include the glass Anchor Hocking range from Accoutrement. Other handy containers include Tupperware's stackable 'Modular Mates' collection.

"Give your PANTRY A GOOD CLEAN AND REORDER IT TWICE A YEAR. IF FOOD ITEMS HAVE BEEN STORED FOR MORE THAN SIX MONTHS, THEY'RE ONLY TAKING UP SPACE" ~ CHEF STEFANO MANFREDI

5 REGULAR ROTATION

Without taking time to peruse your pantry before shopping, it's easy to accidentally overstock and end up wasting food. "Many cans and jars are often buried deeply in the pantry and are past their expiration dates," warns Carol.

To prevent these throw-outs, it's important to regularly rotate food items. After buying new products, place them behind or below previous items, making sure the older stock is used first.

Chef Stefano Manfredi recommends regular cleaning sprees for the pantry. "Give your pantry a good clean and reorder it twice a year," he says, adding, "If food items have been stored for more than six months, they're only taking up space." Things like flour, rice and other grains should be bought in small quantities because they tend to attract weevils, especially in summer. Nuts and many seeds, such as sesame, go rancid easily so buy in small batches as needed.

6 SIP AND STORE

To embrace the silly season, a refreshment area at the bottom of the pantry is an instant party-starter. "A big plastic tub from Bunnings could be placed at the bottom of the pantry to store alcohol, soft drinks and mineral water," says Carol. "It's good for storing a sizable stash of bottles before they go into the fridge." >



7 MAKE IT STICK

"It's important to label items for easy access," says Mia Asker of White Design. It's also worth marking the purchase date so you can spot any products past their prime. As a rule of thumb, keep dry goods for up to a year, bottled oils and vinegars for six months and spices for up to 18 months. Carol Posener of Get Organised suggests using labels to mark foodstuffs by category: "Use unobtrusive clear tape with black writing to code different food groups," she says. "You could even label the shelves."

Tupperware offers printed labels for most herbs, spices and pantry staples, or you can make your own with a Brother 'P-touch' electronic labeller, which uses durable laminated tapes.

8 SPICE OF LIFE


Repackaging is the best solution for storing herbs and spices, which can otherwise be an unnavigable jumble of mismatched packaging. All Things Special has a great range of spice carousels to appeal to dedicated cooks; visit www.allthingspecial.com.au.

"I keep spices in combinations of small jars and snap-lock sachets," says chef Stefano Manfredi. "I like sachets because I can see what I'm looking for by the colour, even when they are lined up together."

To avoid mess, try storing sachets in an alphabetically indexed CD box or even a desktop organiser; Kikki.K has several stylish options.

9 GUESS WHO'S COMING TO NIBBLE?

With a slew of guests visiting throughout summer – friends staying overnight, kids having sleepovers and relatives settling in for the Christmas break – it's worth demarcating a shelf for storing guests' personal staples, especially if they have special dietary requirements.

Unexpected guests also need to be accommodated. Keep a party basket on hand, filled with nuts, crackers, potato chips and other non-perishable nibbles, which will transform a casual drop-in into a festive celebration. 

Make open shelves into a focal point with a wallpaper backdrop.



Ikea's 'Rationell' organisers put drawers to work.



This Mitre 10 pull-out pantry slots into a narrow space.



Dress up your pantry with pretty containers and labels.

HOT TIP

With a walk-in pantry, lighting is a key issue. Chef Stefano Manfredi prefers automatic lighting that works with a sensor. "It turns itself off if the sensor detects no movement for a few seconds," he explains. This hands-free option is also a good eco solution, preventing lights from being accidentally left on behind the closed pantry door.