



# You May Be Organizing Your Spices All Wrong

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When I picture my dream spice cabinet, it's an orderly space with identical, labeled spice canisters lined up neatly in rows. It's the picture of Type-A organization, whether those canisters are clear cylinders with little metal lids, square plastic bins with shaker tops, or country-inspired mini Mason jars. The point is, they all match and line up perfectly. But shockingly, when I reached out to some organizing pros to confirm that this is the clearly the best way to organize your spices, they unilaterally shut me down.

Turns out, my spice organizing goals have been all wrong.



## The Worst Way to Organize Spices

"Decanting spices into matching jars is not only time-consuming, but it's also costly and wasteful!" says Darla Demorrow of [HeartWork](#)

[Organizing](#). "It may look beautiful in magazines, but it doesn't hold up in real life."

This blew my mind. I mean, wouldn't a professional organizer want your spices to look orderly? Um ... no. "This isn't the best solution because it takes time and patience that most people don't have. You lose spices out of the side of the funnel. And invariably your pretty spice container is *just* a little smaller than the spice jar you just bought, so you end up with a tiny amount of spice leftover in a jar that you're not going to toss, so you shove it in the back of the pantry and forget about it," says Demorrow. Not to mention, it's expensive! Each of those jars may only be a few dollars, but multiply that by 20 or so spices and you're spending a ton of money just on cute jars. Ouch! Just leave them in the containers they come in!

## **Another Bad Way to Do It**

Alphabetically! For a few reasons, starting with the fact that it doesn't exactly mesh with the way you cook. It's not like recipes are alphabetized. Plus, if you have multiple people in your family, that alphabetization will most likely go out the window pretty quickly.

## **The Best Way to Organize Spices**

Again, leave your spices in the containers they come in and don't think about how they look — think mostly about how many you have and how you use them. "I recommend a variety of methods based on how many spices people have, their space configuration, and what kind of cook they are," says Kate Varness of [Green Light Organizing](#). Tanya Whitford of [Organizing Wonders](#) agrees.

The key is to find a configuration that works for your real life. For some cooks, that might mean organizing their spices by use — say, putting all the grilling spices in one bin, and all the baking spices in another and then just pulling out the bin you need for a task. For other cooks, that might mean changing up the areas where you keep your spices (for example, if you always use cinnamon and nutmeg in

your oatmeal, group them near the microwave). You can also organize them by cuisine. "We keep all the Cajun, Italian, or Mexican spices together so we can just grab what we need when we're cooking," says Tonia Tomlin, professional organizer and founder of [Sorted Out](#).

The pros all agree that the real key is to have your spices where you'll use them, whether that means they're on a shelf, in a cabinet, or in a drawer. Of course, you want to keep your spices fairly decluttered so you can find the ones you need, avoid buying duplicates, and prevent them from expiring before you use them (many organizers recommend writing the date you open them on the bottom of the jar to keep track; most spices last three to four years). So, get rid of anything that's long expired and anything you know you won't use. And if there's a way to make the spices you're keeping more visible — either with a stepped riser in a cabinet, a pull-out-rack, or by laying them down in a drawer — by all means do it.

But as for organizing all those spices in matching containers? Just let it go.

*How do you organize your spices?*

