The pantry is hiding a weight-loss saboteur. If you are serious about losing weight in the coming year, it is high time you conducted a pantry raid. Trash those toxic faux-foods in your pantry. Those snack cakes aren't food. They are empty calories. Think of those potato chips you absentmindedly munch as really just a mixture of sugar and oil; they have very little nutritional value — little or no vitamins, minerals or fiber. Just as bad as the fact that these high calorie foods are completely nutrition free is the fact that they are pumped full of ingredients which are actually harmful — such as high fructose corn syrup, hydrogenated oils, artificial food dyes and preservatives.

As you conduct your pantry raid be ruthless. Throw out all those processed, packaged foods. Packaged baked snacks are just going to add calories, maybe fat, and very little nutritional value to your diet. If you need to munch — try carrots, celery, or other crunchy veggies. The nutritional value to diet-wrecking ratio of ice cream makes it a "not worth it" food.

If you want to indulge, start with simple, unprocessed, fresh, natural ingredients. This way, you are more apt to get a high nutrition snack. Even a snack higher in calories than you might think is optimal for weight loss is better than a processed, packaged snack. Make a banana, peanut butter and Greek yogurt sundae. Drizzle it with local honey. Throw on a few blueberries for an extra nutritional punch. Yes, the calorie count is pretty high. But so is the nutrition.

So if you want to placate your sweet tooth or love of succulent desserts, do it the nutritionally smart way. The up side to this way of eating is that the nutrient dense foods help you reduce your craving for junky, greasy, sugary, nutritionally empty snacks. Cravings are our bodies' way of shouting at us to give it the nutrition it needs. Educate your palate to enjoy and savor healthy, nutrient dense foods and your body will thank you.