

Our Mission

The Cornell Cooperative Extension educational system enables people to improve their lives and communities through partnerships that put experience and research knowledge to work.

THE HEALTHY FRIDGE

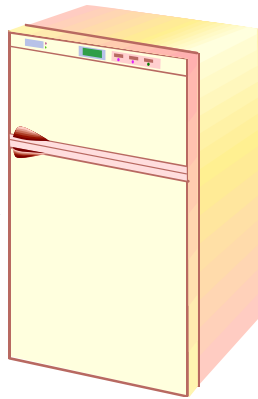
Follow this plan for organizing your refrigerator and food will stay fresher, longer.



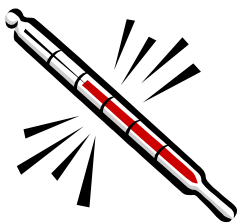
Some people have more to hide in their refrigerators than in their closets. In the spirit of spring cleaning, we're encouraging you to get over it. Believe it or not, there is a reason for putting the cheese here, the milk there, and keeping the meat away from all that. But before we lay out the map of

fridge logic, here are some cold, hard facts as well as some cool-headed advice for keeping your fridge clean and happy:

✓ Icebox technology has come a long way. Not only are newer models more energy efficient, but they also do a far better job of circulating air and stabilizing temperature.



✓ The ideal temperature for the main body of the refrigerator is about 37° F. Keep a thermometer in the fridge and make sure it never climbs above 40° F. Also, don't crowd contents. Air circulation is key for keeping foods cold.



✓ Give the inside of your fridge a good cleaning every season. Most manufacturers recommend using hot, soapy water or a solution of hot water and baking soda with a soft, clean cloth to wash inner shelves and walls. Rinse with clean, warm water and wipe dry. Avoid strong detergents or cleaners, they often leave behind an odor that doesn't smell so good when absorbed in foods.



✓ Clean the door handle often. After all, that's what your hands touch every time you reach for something inside.

✓ Clean spills right away. New models have shelves that prevent spills from dripping on food below.

✓ Refer to instructions in the owners manual for cleaning other parts such as door gaskets and condenser coils and for manual defrosting.

✓ Label everything with an expiration date, including leftovers.



EGGS:

Where: Forget the egg holders. Leave eggs in the original cartons and put in the coldest part of your refrigerator, away from meat and produce.

Why: Eggs absorb odor and lose moisture when exposed. The cartons allow enough ventilation for eggs to breathe while giving them protection.

FRUITS & VEGGIES:

Where: In fruit and vegetable crisper.

Why: Humidity-control features help produce retain moisture. Different types of produce stay fresher with different levels of humidity:

High Humidity: Leafy Vegetables

Medium Humidity: Apples, Grapes, and Other Thin-Skinned Fruits and Vegetables.

Low Humidity: Citrus Fruit

Storage Tips: Don't wash fruits and vegetables until use. Make sure lettuce and other leafy vegetables are dry. Washing before storing strips produce of natural protection and adds extra moisture to bin, which in turn hastens decay.



To absorb extra moisture, line the crisper with paper towels and change weekly. Certain foods don't fare well in the refrigerator, such as tomatoes and cucumbers (they get mealy) and potatoes (they rot sooner).



MILK:

Where: In the main compartment, never on the door.

Why: Temperature on the door tends to be a degree or two warmer than the rest of the refrigerator. This area is also more vulnerable to temperature fluctuation because of opening and closing.

The Exception: Some newer models have beverage chillers on the door, which keeps temperatures about 5° cooler.

UNCOOKED MEATS:

Where: In the coldest part of the refrigerator. Some models have a special meat drawer that can be set at a cooler temperature.

Why: Meat doesn't freeze until 28° F; colder temperatures extend shelf life.

Storage Tips: Butter absorbs odors from other foods, so keep covered or wrapped tightly. Use within a week or two. For long-term storage, keep in freezer for up to nine months.

DELI MEATS:

Where: In the coldest part of the refrigerator or in the deli drawer.

Why: See Uncooked Meats.

Storage Tips: Wrap well to prevent drying.

CONDIMENTS, SODA, AND JUICES:

Where: On door

Why: Ideal for quick-grab items that aren't as perishable.



CHEESES:

Where: Cheese or deli drawer that is in the main part of the refrigerator.

Why: Cheeses absorb odors from other foods and prefer a slightly warmer climate.

Storage Tips: Dry cheeses like Parmesan cheese should be wrapped well in plastic or wax paper to prevent drying out. Camembert should be wrapped loosely to allow them to breathe.

