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Six Tips for Organizing Your Refrigerator

By Stacey Agin Murray

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Have you taken a good look in your refrigerator, lately? Your mother-in-law's Meatloaf Surprise started living up to it's name two weeks ago. Month-old leftovers are now candidates for Junior's next science project.

Don't let your food decay behind the Brita pitcher! Follow these tips to save you time, space, and wasted food:

Purge

Grab your garbage can, position it next to your refrigerator and purge it of all spoiled food. Look for tin foil sculptures and anything that wasn't green BEFORE you bought it. Keep repeating to yourself, 'When in doubt, throw it out.'

Make it shine!

Use some elbow grease and give those shelves, drawers, and crisper a good cleaning. It's not easy to organize jars and containers if they're sticking to the shelf... Clean one shelf at a time, starting with the top one. All crumbs, liquid, and unidentifiable objects that don't make it into your paper towel will land on the shelf below, which you will be cleaning next. Once you've finished cleaning the bottom shelf/drawer, continue with the inside door until you're satisfied with the job.

Group `em

Group similar foods together. For example, place drinks on one shelf, small snacks in a drawer, and fruits/veggies/salad products in the crisper so you are not constantly 'hunting down' the food you want/need at that moment. This arrangement saves you time and makes retrieving food come mealtime a less arduous task.

Six Tips for Organizing Your Refrigerator

* Pay attention to the height of your jars and bottles. It is easier to spot your food and drink if you put large/tall jars towards the back of the refrigerator and smaller ones in the front. You'll never see that container of yogurt if it's trapped behind a family-sized jar of spaghetti sauce. That's money (and spoiled yogurt) down the drain...

Give `em a home

Growing up, our refrigerator always had what I called 'The Cheese Box.' Instead of having that flat package of Swiss cheese teetering atop a jar or the shredded mozzarella accidentally flattened by a side of beef, all the cheeses would 'live' together in one plastic container. We always knew where to find them and whether or not we were running low. This is a perfect solution if you have small, like items floating around your fridge. If you have young children, you can create a similar container for each child and fill it with healthy snacks, punch boxes, or a loving note. This keeps 'little fingers' from

rummaging the shelves and you can control what goes into their 'snack box.'

Give `em a quality home

Whether they hold groupings of food or greasy leftovers, your containers should work for you and not against you. Consider spending a few cents more for quality containers. Lids are less likely to get stuck or fly off. You don't want to spend your time cleaning the floor or removing stains from your shirt because your container failed to do its job. Choose transparent or translucent containers—they allow you to see exactly what's inside—no surprises!

Give `em the same home

Keep your refrigerator organized by making your best attempt to return food and drink to the 'home' you've created for it. Haphazardly throwing your groceries in the fridge may save you time when you come back from the store but it will cost you precious minutes at meal planning and preparation time.

In order to keep it clean and uncluttered, purge your refrigerator as part of your weekly routine. I recommend tackling this task on the night before your garbage pick-up day. Regularly disposing of smelly substances, rotting vegetables, and other items that have overstayed their welcome will keep your fridge in tip-top shape. With determination, patience, and the right tools your refrigerator can become an organized and functional area of your home.

Stacey Agin Murray, professional organizer and owner of Organized Artistry, LLC, transforms 'mess' into 'masterpiece' with patience, organizing know-how, and a sense of humor. For more articles and to get your FREE e-list of 'Top Ten Tips for Organized Living' visit

How to Motivate Yourself to Organize

By Barbara Myers

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Organizing is probably not at the top of your list of fun things to do, is it? If your clutter is overwhelming, it's especially difficult to get started. Here are some easy tips to motivate yourself to organize.

1. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just just take the first step." You don't have to organize your whole house today. Just work on one small area-- a drawer or a cabinet.
2. Buy a good organizing book. Once you begin reading it, you'll feel compelled to start organizing.
3. Forget embarrassment. Invite an organized friend to help you. Hire a professional. It's easier to organize when you can talk through the clutter.
4. Set the mood. Put on some fun music. Open the windows. Choose a starting point and just do it.
5. "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence," said Calvin Coolidge. Keep trying. Do a little bit daily or weekly and you'll soon find that you are more organized than you ever thought possible!

Free time management tips booklet, meal planner, and daily organizing checklist at <http://www.ineedmoretime.com>.

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