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Your Frugal Fridge!

By Cyndi Roberts

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Now that it's summer, most of us start thinking about keeping our electric bill in bounds!

One way to do that is to keep your refrigerator and freezer, if you have one, running efficiently.

Be sure to vacuum the condenser coils on your refrigerator at least once a year. You may have to pull your appliance out from the wall to do this, but when the coils are dusty, it keeps the fridge from cooling efficiently.

If you have an older fridge, check the door gaskets to make sure you have a tight seal and aren't losing cold air around the doors.

Another "small" thing you can do: when you are putting away your groceries after a trip to the store, gather all your items for the fridge in one place. Then you can open the refrigerator one time and put everything inside.

If you don't have a frost-free freezer and there's more than 1/2 inch of frost built up, it's time to defrost. You can speed up the process by setting pans of hot water inside. Never use a knife to try to dislodge the frost and never use a hair dryer to melt it. Water and electricity do not mix!

Now that it's clean and defrosted, keep your freezer efficient by filling empty spaces with old milk jugs filled with water. These jugs also make good ice blocks for your picnic cooler!

Another good use for these jugs of ice: set one on the kitchen counter in the morning. As the ice melts, your children can have ice water to drink without opening the refrigerator door.

One last thing to remember, when there's lightning around, it might be safer to just unplug your fridge and freezer. Food in the freezer will stay frozen for up to 48 hours if the door is kept closed. Food in

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the refrigerator will keep up to 24 hours.

Cyndi Roberts is the editor of the bi-weekly newsletter "1 Frugal Friend 2 Another", bringing you practical, money-saving tips, recipes and ideas. Visit her online at

<http://www.cynroberts.com>

to

subscribe and receive the Free e-course, "Taming the Monster Grocery Bill".

editor@cynroberts.com

How To Choose The Perfect Refrigerator Or Freezer

By Rachel Harris

Ask any chef or commercial cook, and they will tell you that having the right amount of refrigerator and freezing space can make the difference between an efficient and well-run kitchen, and a disorganized wasteful one. Unfortunately for most of us, when we open our fridge or freezer door we are confronted with a mess of poorly organized and overstocked shelves. In fact, these days our fridges and freezers have become more of a cluttered "out of mind, out of sight" storage area, rather than an important implement we use to preserve our food.

When it comes to updating your refrigerator or freezer, you need to think about a number of things. The first and most obvious consideration is the size and capacity of both. The larger the family, naturally the larger the fridge and freezer will need to be.

That said, even if you are a couple, or live alone, your lifestyle might demand you get a bigger fridge and freezer. For example, if you entertain a lot, you will soon become frustrated with a small fridge that does not accommodate food prepared for large dinner parties.

Another obvious matter will be the size of your kitchen, and what size white goods it will accommodate. A very popular option is what is known as a "fridge-freezer" which combines the two appliances in one. Fridge freezers are generally available in three widths and a range of different heights. If space is not an issue, err on the side of caution by opting for a larger capacity model. This will always ensure you have enough room if your family grows or your circumstances change.

Make sure your fridge and freezer is easy to use and maintain. For instance by buying a Frost Free freezer you ensure you will never have to defrost your freezer again. Also, look out for easy to clean shelves and compartments, preferably with glass shelves that only need a simple one-off wipe down for cleaning. Auto-Defrost fridges are also recommended since they automatically adjust the internal temperature of your fridge to avoid frosts.

Finally, always consider the environmental credentials of a particular model and brand. After all, not

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only is an energy efficient refrigerator and freezer better for the environment, it is also much better for your wallet since you save money in energy costs!

Rachel Harris writes for

<http://www.kitchengrade.com>

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articles and

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