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Spring Clean Your Kitchen

Now is a great time for spring cleaning. The kitchen is a good place to start. The refrigerator and pantry are where most food is stored, but these are often less frequently cleaned areas of

your home and that could be hazardous to you and your family's health.

Read on for tips on cleaning your refrigerator and pantry.

Refrigerator Cleaning

The refrigerator is one of the most important pieces of equipment in the kitchen. To keep your refrigerator healthy and safe:

- ◆ **Clean spills immediately.**
Clean surfaces thoroughly with warm, soapy water; then rinse. Do not use solvent cleaning agents or abrasives, as these may allow chemical fumes/tastes into your food and ice cubes and make them unsafe.
- ◆ **Store leftovers safely.**
Throw out perishable foods that have spoiled and no longer can be eaten. Leftovers like meatloaf, pizza or casseroles shouldn't be left in the refrigerator more than four days. Refrigerate raw poultry and ground meats for no more than one to two days.



Refrigerator Cleaning (continued)

Follow these suggestions for deep spring cleaning:

1. Remove everything from the fridge and put perishables in a cooler with some ice.
2. Toss any condiments that are past the “use by” date.
3. Remove the meat and vegetable drawers. Soak them in warm sudsy water.
4. While the drawers soak, wipe down the inside of the fridge, the door panels, the top of the fridge and the seals. Make a good cleaning solution with 2 tablespoons of baking soda and 1 quart of hot water.



5. Rinse everything you wiped down with a wet, clean cloth.
6. Rinse the vegetable and meat drawers with warm water, dry them and put them back into the fridge.

It is also important to clean the exterior. Keep your refrigerator free of dust and lint. Clean the condenser coil (located on the back of the refrigerator or across the bottom) with a brush or vacuum cleaner to remove dirt, lint or other buildups to ensure efficiency and maintain proper temperature.

Pantry Cleaning

Cleaning your pantry will save you money by keeping you aware of what you have and help you avoid a pantry insect infestation. It will also ensure your foods are safe to consume. Here are some tips for a clean, bug-free pantry.

- **Check your cans**—Discard cans that are leaking, rusted, bulging, or badly dented.

Never use food from cracked jars, jars with loose or budging lids, or any container that spurts liquid when you open it.

- **Throw out any food you suspect is spoiled**—Never taste food to determine its safety. Wipe off sticky containers, along with crumbs and spills on your pantry shelves with all purpose cleaner, vinegar, or warm soap and water.

- **Check the dates on your foods**—“Use by” date indicates that perishable products should be consumed by the date listed on

the package or discarded once the date has passed. “BEST if Used By” date informs

shoppers that after the specified date, the shelf-stable product is safe to use or consume, but has exceeded the window of its optimal taste and performance. High-acid canned food such as

tomatoes, grapefruit, and pineapple have a shelf life of 12 to 18 months beyond their listed dates. Low-acid canned food such as meat, poultry, fish, and most vegetables can be kept for 2 to 5 years beyond their listed dates, if the can remains in good condition and has been stored in a cool, clean, and dry place.

Spring is a good time to review your food safety practices and incorporate some new healthy habits into your daily routine.