

4 tips for spring cleaning your pantry and fridge



Just like you go through your closets to decide what to keep, donate or throw away, it's important to take stock of your food supplies. Here are four tips for spring cleaning your pantry and refrigerator.

1. Pull everything out of the pantry, fridge and freezer. This clears the way so you can clean shelves, interiors and individual items. Wipe off sticky containers, along with crumbs and spills, with all-purpose cleaner, vinegar, or warm soap and water. You can tackle each area at different times — and on different days — if doing all three at once is too draining.

2. Check every item. Discard cans that are leaking, rusted or bulging as well as cracked jars and jars with loose or bulging lids. Suspect your leftovers are too old to eat? Most meals keep for four days, while raw meat keeps for about two days, but if it smells off, throw it away.

3. Look at dates. There are two kinds of expiration dates on most food items: a “use by” date and “best if used by” date. “Use by” 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” indicates the product is safe to consume but has exceeded the window of its optimal taste. That means you can keep those “expired” canned tomatoes if you think you'll eat them in the next year, and that 2-year-old cinnamon may not taste as strong but is still OK to use. Use your best judgment on what to keep versus toss, and order cans by date so the oldest foods get eaten soonest.

4. Consider rehousing your food. Clear containers, rather than foil or opaque containers, can help keep food fresh, while also letting you see exactly what you have. This can help cut

down on food waste.