

How to Clean Your Fridge: Step by Step

Step 1: Take everything out

Take everything out of your fridge and freezer and put it on the counter.

Step 2: Toss expired items

Go through your items and throw away anything that's:

- Spoiled or expired
- Freezer-burned
- Old enough you want to sniff it

Not sure if something is okay? Go to StillTasty.com. Enter the food in the search box to find out whether you should keep or toss. Stash everything you're keeping in a cooler.

Step 3: Remove shelves and wipe down inside of fridge

Unplug your fridge if you can. Brush out crumbs. Make a baking soda solution of:

- 1 quart warm water
- 1 Tbsp baking soda

Wipe the inside surfaces with a sponge or cloth soaked in this solution. Rinse and dry. (Don't use dishwashing liquid; plastic can absorb the smell, making your Puttanesca taste like Palmolive.)

Step 4: Wash shelves and drawers

Using the same baking soda solution, wash plastic drawers first, then glass shelves. This gives glass shelves time to warm up so they don't crack when you wash them. Rinse and dry.

Step 5: Replace drawers and shelves

Put the shelves and drawers back in. If you have multiple crisper drawers, set your fruit drawer to low humidity and your vegetable drawer to high humidity. This helps produce last longer and saves you money.

Plug fridge back in.



Step 6: Clean the door gasket

The gasket—that squishy plastic that outlines your fridge door—is a gunk magnet. Use a toothpick to gently dislodge crumbs, then wipe with a wet cloth and dry. Check the seal, too; cold air can leak out through a cracked gasket. Apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly to the gasket on the hinge side of the door only. This helps prevent the gasket from sticking to the fridge when you open the door and extends the life of the gasket.

Step 7: Vacuum the coils

If you can reach them, vacuum your fridge condenser coils. They're usually underneath or behind the fridge. The coils release heat, and dust buildup makes your fridge work harder. That costs you money!

Step 8: Replace food

Here's the safest way to store food in your fridge:

- **Upper shelves:** Ready-to-eat items and leftovers. Since you won't be cooking them, putting these up top reduces the risk that they could get dripped on or contaminated.
- **Lower shelves:** Ingredients you're going to cook, like tofu, chopped veggies, etc.
- **Crisper drawers:** Fruits and vegetables, each in their own drawer.
- **Door:** Condiments. This is the warmest part of the fridge, so don't put anything there that's prone to spoilage.

A word about animal products: Raw meat, poultry, fish, and eggs are a food safety risk. If you eat them, store them in their own drawer or hard plastic bin in the lowest part of the fridge. (So they don't drip on other foods.) My advice: Skip the meat for cancer-fighting beans and tofu!

Step 9: Wipe down the outside

Remove all papers, works of art, and shopping lists. Using a food-safe, all-purpose cleaner, wipe the top, handles, and outer surfaces, then dry.

Step 10: Bling it

Replace only items you love on the front of your fridge, like a favorite drawing, that pretty card a friend sent you, or a funny magnet. Enjoy your clean fridge!

References: "[Clean Your Fridge](#)" (MarthaStewart.com); GE [Top-Freezer Refrigerator Manual](#); "[The Best Way to Organize Your Refrigerator](#)" (TheKitchn.com)

