

Your 7-Step Plan for Cleaning and Organizing Your Freezer

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Hot weather isn't just the time to trade your boots for sandals — it often means a change in your diet, too. "Lots of people eat differently in the summer than in the winter — they're grilling more, eating more fresh produce, or entertaining groups," says Darla Demorrow of [HeartWork Organizing](#). So it makes sense to refresh the freezer to make room for your change in food habits.

Beyond that, it's just a good idea to plan a seasonal clean-out for your freezer. Between buying food in bulk and holding on to things because you're afraid of running out of food, we tend to pack the freezer with food we're not, honestly, going to eat. And that's not only a waste of food ("The freezer is where good intentions go to die!" Demorrow says, sadly), but also a waste of money ("You could lose it all if there's a power outage, and your freezer can't perform well if you never clean it and it's packed full," she adds).

Plus, you need room for ice cream this time of year! Convinced it's time? Here's how to go about getting your freezer cleaned and organized.

Clean It Out! [How To Clean the Freezer](#)

1. Set a date.

Don't just start pulling things out of the freezer in a fit of rage the next time a wedge of frozen pizza attacks you on your way to the ice cream. "If you don't plan a week or two ahead, it's a much bigger project than it needs to be," says Demorrow. That's because you need some time to ...

2. Eat down the freezer.

Okay, this sounds a little weird, but it's an absolutely crucial step to save yourself time in the long run. Once you've got your date, inform your household that you'll only be eating freezer meals for the next few days.

"It's going to be weird. You're going to be eating egg rolls with burritos and Thai food," jokes Demorrow. But the goal is not only to clear out the freezer — so you have less to move around and organize — but also to get realistic about what you eat and don't eat. "Give yourself a break and toss that crusty frozen spinach or bizarro health food or whatever that you're never going to eat," says Demorrow. "And I know, people are afraid to do this because they think, if I eat everything in the freezer, I could starve — but let's be honest, you know where the nearest restaurant is, right?" says Demorrow.

Related: [5 Recipes to Help Clear out Your Freezer \(or Stock It!\)](#)

3. Start with the ice compartment.

Now that the freezer's at its leanest, it's time to begin. First step: Turn off the ice maker. "Take out the bin, toss all that weird brown ice at the bottom, then wash it with soap and water like you would any other dish," says Demorrow. Let it dry on the countertop while you do your next step.

4. Pull *everything* out.

Open a picnic cooler and stash the frozen food in there. "Don't worry — it's not going to defrost! You need a completely empty freezer," says Demorrow. Remove all your shelves and any bins and wash those in soapy water, being sure to get the tops and the bottoms. Stuff gets surprisingly dirty in there! (We don't want to place blame or anything, but we're looking at you, rogue Popsicles that melted and then refroze in a weird blob!)

Related: [The One Thing You Need to Clean Out Your Freezer](#)

5. Use hot water to wipe down the interior.

Using a food-safe spray (Demorrow does a 50/50 mixture of vinegar and water) and a sponge dipped in hot water, wipe down the interior of the freezer. "Hot, hot water on a regular sponge will lift just about anything in the freezer," she says.

6. Don't forget the gasket.

While you're in there, wipe down the gasket (that rubber bit that forms a seal between the freezer door and the rest of the fridge). "People always forget to do this," says Demorrow.

Once it's been cleaned, make sure it's still forming a good seal by using the dollar bill test: Place a dollar bill along the gasket and close the door. If you can slip it out, the seal isn't tight enough and your freezer is letting cold air escape — meaning you're wasting money on your energy bills and could have a food safety situation, too. Demorrow has ordered replacements from [Repair Clinic](#).

7. Put things back purposefully.

Load your ice bin and shelves back in place. Then, start getting your food back in there. But be mindful as you do it — all the frozen fruit together, all the meats near each other — so you can quickly find what you're looking for or need to take stock before heading to the grocery store. "If you want, use bins to group like items and label them, especially if you have kids who tend to root through the freezer," says Demorrow.

And make sure to leave room for that ice cream! (Remember: Ice cream comes in not-so-flexible tubs that you'll want to keep front and center!)

Ready to go? We'd love to see your clean and organized freezers on Instagram!