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How to Keep the Freezer Clean

Daily

- As with the refrigerator, everything you put into the freezer should be immaculate -- wipe drips and smudges off ice cream cartons and plastic storage containers.

Monthly

- Check packaged foods for expiration dates and throw out anything that's past its prime.

Annual Deep Cleaning

- Turn off the power at the circuit breaker or fuse box; put food in a cooler.
- Remove shelves or bins and bring them to room temperature so there's no danger of cracking as you wash them. Once they're at room temperature, soak in a solution of 2 tablespoons baking soda for every quart of warm water. Do not wash in the dishwasher. Dry thoroughly before placing them back in the freezer.
- Wipe down the interior with a solution of 2 tablespoons baking soda and 1 quart hot water. Rinse with a damp cloth, and then dry with a clean towel. Do not use soap or detergent to clean the freezer; they can leave behind fragrance, which will be absorbed by food. Do not use abrasive cleansers, ammonia, or bleach on any part of the freezer. These agents can scratch, crack, or discolor surfaces.
- To remove caked-on residue, begin by rehydrating it in the baking soda solution mentioned above. Apply the solution liberally to the residue with a wet towel. Leave the freezer door open, and let the residue soak in the solution for 10 minutes, or until it starts to crack or soften. If necessary, reapply the solution. Once the stain has softened, wipe it away with another clean, damp towel. If the stain won't come off, repeat the process with a mildly abrasive household cleanser -- one that does not contain bleach, such as Bon Ami -- and hot water. Dilute 1 tablespoon cleanser in 1 pint water to avoid scratching the freezer's plastic surfaces.