

#98 - The Lazy Genius Cleans Out the Fridge

Hey, everybody! You're listening to The Lazy Genius Podcast. I'm Kendra, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode 98 - The Lazy Genius Cleans Out the Fridge! This is one of those episodes we wish didn't exist but also need very badly. Don't worry. We'll spend a few minutes going over the steps, the tools, and a way to make this chore happen less often and definitely be less gross.

First, I wanted to let you know that this week - March 7th - is the very last day you can join our Lazy Genius meal planning community and get The Meal Plan system before the doors close for a good long while. There's no date set yet, but it will probably be late fall early winter of 2019. That's another six months of stressing out over what's for dinner, so if you have any desire to get a better handle on meal planning your way, not the Internet's way, jump on board. You get super helpful printables, a video masterclass with me on creating your own personal meal planning system and rhythm, and a private Facebook community that has already been extremely helpful to its members. I've seen folks exchange recipes, give ideas on how to use different ingredients, help with picky eaters, all of it. It's \$39, an amount you'll save in food waste in just a couple of weeks, or just one or two panic meals out when you can't figure out what's for dinner. It's such a great value and will change how you meal plan for sure. Check out the link in the show notes of this episode to see details, read testimonials from folks who have used it, and find a list of frequently asked questions if you're still on the fence. That website is store.thelazygeniuscollective.com/themealplan. Again, March 7th is the last day, so scoot.

Now, let's talk about cleaning out the fridge! It's a task no one looks forward to, but it's definitely one of those tasks that's beautiful when it's done. So let's go through the steps of cleaning out your fridge and then a couple of habits you can get into that keep those clean outs from happening as often.

You ready? Let's clean out the fridge. Step one: gather your tools. This is true for most chores. Go ahead and get everything you need to make this process as seamless and not annoying as possible. If you're weird about touching gross stuff, get some rubber gloves. You'll need a handful of rags or sponges, and try and grab at least one that has some grit to it for stubborn places. You'll need cleaner of some sort, and this is up to you. You can go hardcore with bleach, completely homemade with water and vinegar, or something in between. I tend to use Dawn dish soap and sometimes even follow with a glass cleaner if I want my shelves to get a crazy shine. The cleaner itself is less important than the order and method you clean, so choose whatever you like. Okay, let's keep gathering. If you anticipate a lot of stuff to throw away, grab a trash bag or at least pull your trash can over to your fridge to make tossing easy. Also, if you anticipate this process taking a really long time, grab a cooler to put any perishables in if you're nervous about that. I usually skip that step because cleaning my fridge doesn't take more than half an hour, but your situation might look different. No worries, just grab a cooler. And because we want this process to be as delightful as possible, please put on some music. Nothing melancholy, please. You need a beat to make this tolerable. So step one: gather your tools. Step two: take everything out. You probably knew this was coming, but still do it. You think it won't make that much of a difference to work around a few things here and there, but it's not

worth it. I promise you so hard it's not worth it. Take everything out, and put it on the counter. We'll come back to going through that food in a minute because now isn't the timer, but if you want to speed the process along when it *is* time, designate zones on your counter. One space is for stuff that's definitely going back in the fridge. One space could be by your sink or dishwasher for plastic Tupperware containers full of questionable contents. You don't need to dump the stuff now, but putting all of those containers in one spot will give you a leg up in sorting and dumping. You can also make a zone for foods that need to be eaten like right now before they go bad. And of course, you can just have a zone inside your trashcan of stuff you automatically know is bad. Because you're trying to be speedy, now isn't the time to assess each and every item that comes out. The zones are just for stuff that's obvious. If it's brown and gross, you don't need to decide; just throw it away. If you see mold on the lid of the plastic container, you don't need to decide. That container will need to eventually be relieved of its contents and then cleaned. But all of those actions are best done in batches, all at once. So sort by zones if it's easy, but it's better to just empty out the fridge as fast as you can. One motion to remove and set down and repeat. Don't go through each and every thing right now unless it's obvious, and in that case, put it in the right zone.

Step three: Wipe out the wetness and debris. This is kind of like that hack we learned when cleaning the bathroom. You need to dust the bathroom before you clean it. If you add wet cleaner to your dry sinks, you just end up moving dust around that is impossible to get up. The opposite is kind of true in your fridge. It's likely there are little pools of random liquids along with stems of parsley and dried grapes and all that stuff that's randomly been collecting in your drawers and shelves. If you start spraying before getting all that out, you'll be immensely frustrated by how little momentum you feel in actually getting the thing clean. You'll just move around junk. So soak up wetness with a rag, and get rid of all the weird food debris. You can do this with a hose attachment on your vacuum, assuming the fridge isn't sopping wet. You can use a bench scraper to at least get stuff off your shelves. It might not work so well in the fridge drawers since those are usually weird shapes and sometimes have those ridges on the bottom. Or you can just get another rag and collect all the gunk the old fashioned way by grabbing it until it's gone. But get up the wetness and food debris first.

Step four: Attack any stubborn stains. If a bottle of marinade leaked and now requires a power tool to get up, this is the time for that kind of stain. And here's how you get it up. Boil some water on the stove. If you use a kettle, take the actual kettle into your fridge, pour some on the stubborn stain, and then put a rag directly on top of it to trap in the heat and soften the dried food. Hot water breaks up just about anything, so be careful but use hot water. Get up those sticky stubborn stains before you clean any further.

Step five: Deal with the food on the counter while the hot water does its work. You can even spray some cleaner in the fridge to get it started, but let's use this little bit of dead time to tend to the food on the counter. You have three categories - keep, trash, and immediately use. If it's expired, you never use it, or it's a different color than when you bought it, trash. If it's not, keep. If it's on the verge, use it immediately. If this goes quickly and you have time, you can wash out all the disgusting Tupperware containers at once and then load all that stuff in the dishwasher or pile it into a soapy sink. One fell swoop. Leave your keep pile on the counter obviously; it'll go back in shortly. And for the use immediately pile, this is up to you. If you want some help on thinking through this, I have a blog post I'll link to in the show notes about Bizarro Meal Prep. It's essentially turning almost-bad food into food you'll eat. Roast the vegetables, make a quick compote out of wrinkly berries or throw them into muffins. The idea is to use stuff before it goes

bad in food you'll actually eat. If you put that food back in your fridge, you're probably not likely to actually make use of it, so if you know you're not going to cook up that food, go ahead and trash it. It's better than making your fridge full of rot again, and it's good information for the future. Maybe those aren't foods you need around as often if you don't have a specific plan to use them.

Step six: Wash the inside of your fridge. You've done all the hard work already. Now comes the fun part. Well, as fun as this gets really. The cleaning will be so much easier because you've already gotten up the debris and all the stubborn and suspicious liquids. You can take out the drawers and shelves if you have a sink big enough to hold them. If not, just spray and wipe. That works great, too. And don't go for perfection here. The fridge doesn't need to look like it could go back on the showroom floor at Lowe's. It just needs to be clean enough to make you feel like this process was worth it, and that's completely up to you. Again, you can use any cleaner you want. I would recommend using a thicker microfiber cloth or sturdy sponge to really get some friction as you clean. And use a dry rag at the end to go back over it and get up any tiny pools of water. If you put those bottles and jars back in the fridge with moisture, the gunk will just collect again because gunk likes water.

And now step seven: put everything back. I like have another rag - see why I said get a lot of rags? - to wipe off the bottoms of those bottles and jars as I put them back in the fridge, just so you're not adding gunky bottoms to a clean fridge. And that's it! So step one, gather your tools. Step two, take everything out. Step three, wipe out the wetness and debris. Step four, attack any stubborn stains. Step five, deal with the food while hot water and cleaners do their work. Step six, wash the inside of the fridge. Step seven, put everything back.

Now here are two ways you can avoid doing this chore as often. First, get in the habit of Bizarro Meal Prep every couple of weeks. Pull out what's struggling and cook it into something. You'll get in a habit of not having as much stuff going bad as often. And the second way to avoid a major disgusting fridge cleanout is to stop buying stuff you don't eat. I've done an episode about this before, but stop buying ingredients you don't use. Just because everyone says you should eat kale doesn't mean you have to keep buying and throwing away kale. Buy what you eat. If you listened to last week's episode about the one simple step that changes dinner forever, you'll know about brainless crowdpleasers. Stock your kitchen with ingredients for those meals, not all the ingredients you think you should have. You will avoid so much waste that way. And of course a practical way to avoid so much food waste is to plan your meals. That way you don't buy foods you don't need. And lucky for you, I have a great resource for you! Fancy that. Again, if you want to check out *The Meal Plan: The Lazy Genius Guide to Happy Dinners at Home*, the link is in the info for this episode, or you can go store.thelazygeniuscollective.com/themealplan. It's available until this Thursday, March 7th, and then the doors close. We can't do stragglers because our live video masterclass starts that next day, so it's Thursday or a solid six months from now. Don't miss it if you're even the slightest bit interested.

Okay, friends! That's it on cleaning out your fridge! I hope you're inspired to attack that fridge but also to start exercising some rhythms to keep it from getting to a hopeless state less often. Now you have a plan. I'd love to hear any questions you have this Thursday on Instagram. I'll be there live around 12:15pm EST, so follow me @thelazygenius. And I'll be happy to answer any questions you have about *The Meal Plan*, too, so be sure to join me live! That's it for today, guys. Thanks so much for listening. I'm Kendra, and until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. See you next week!