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How poor food storage in your fridge could be costing you money

By James de Graaff | 3 days ago

Today COOKING

How poor food storage could be costing you money

- How poor food storage could be costing you money
- How to properly clean your fridge on National Clean Out Your Fridge Day
- Experts caution against TikTok hack that uses foil tray in air fryer
- How to make roast potatoes Christmas

PRICES DROPPED for Christmas

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We all have to eat. It's not only a universal truth, but one of the great joys of living. It is also, by default, one of the most expensive things we do, by sheer dint of the fact we do it for our whole lives.

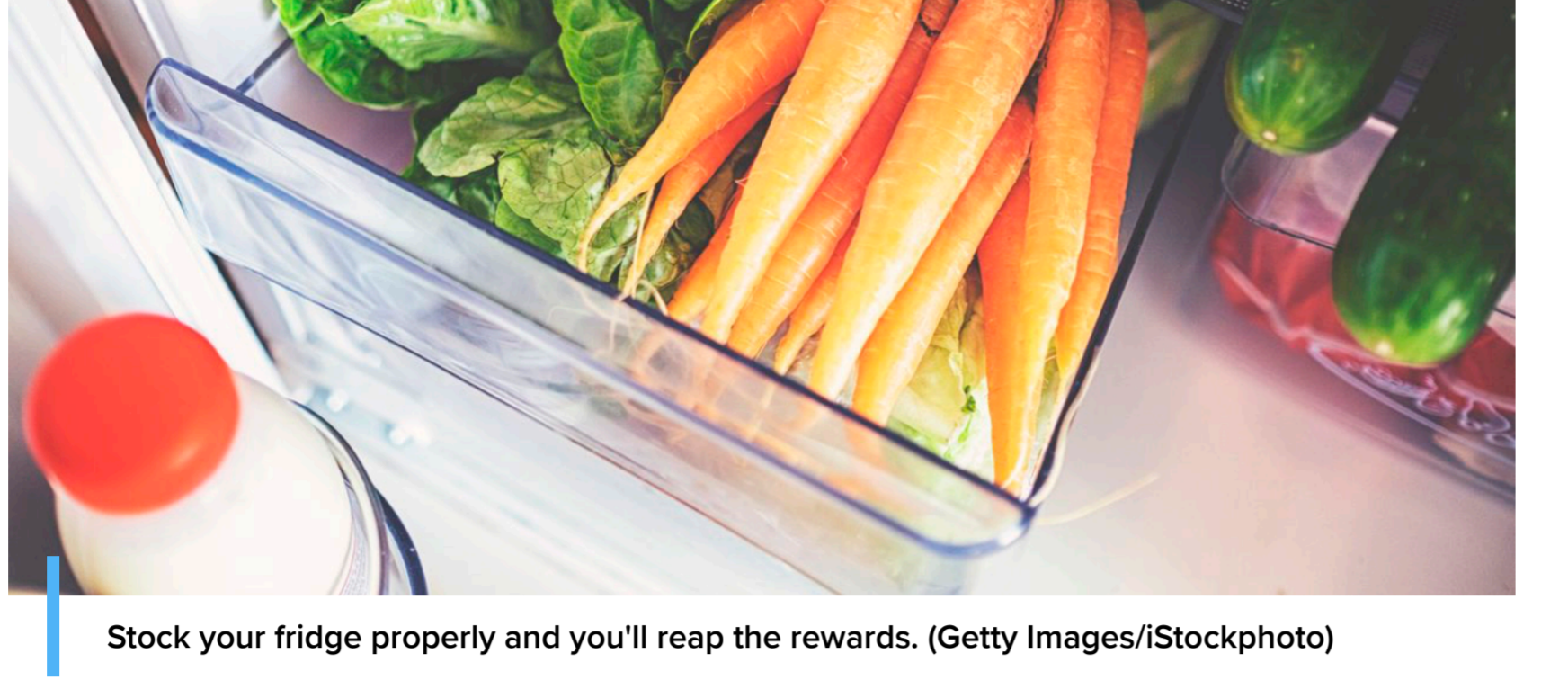
So, when you're spending your hard-earned \$\$ to nourish yourself and those you love, and we're all already trying our best to make our money go further, it makes perfect sense to want to get the most out of our food.

One of the best starting points is to make sure we are storing it correctly. After all, if you bring food home and then leave it un-cared-for on the bench or in a bag it simply won't last, and when you go to get it out you might as well have thrown that money in the bin.

READ MORE: [The trick that'll transform a store-bought pavlova into a stunning Christmas centrepiece](#)

Storing food correctly and well will save you waste, time and at the end of the day, money. Even better, it will help your food taste better for longer. November 15 is International Clean Out Your Fridge Day, so in honour of this sacred event, here's how to make the most of your fridge.

Watch the video above to learn how.



Stock your fridge properly and you'll reap the rewards. (Getty Images/Stockphoto)

Store dairy products at the back of the fridge

A lot of us just open the fridge, see the convenient door pockets and pop our bottle of milk right in there. But this is the part of the fridge most prone to temperature changes as we open and close the door. This is terrible for our milk and dairy products, which will spoil faster if their temperature goes up and down a lot.

Keep the door pocket for wine, soft drink and sauce bottles and move your milk and dairy to the back of the fridge. It's colder and more stable at the back and with less temperature variation, your dairy will last longer.

Put meat on the bottom shelf

Raw meat can cross contaminate other products if it comes into contact with them, so the last thing you want is meat juice dripping from one shelf to another if there are any pooled liquids or spills. This is particularly true of meat that is defrosting.

So, the best place to keep it in the fridge is on the bottom shelf and on a plate with raised edges to collect any moisture. You don't want to ruin your cake/vegetables/pasta with spilled meat juices.



Avoid cross-contamination drips by defrosting meat on the bottom fridge shelf (Supplied)

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The same can be said for cooked meat. Just keep it on the bottom shelf to avoid the problem. This way if it leaks as it defrosts etc, it won't leak on other food and contaminate it. And yes, use a plate with the raised edged to avoid spills and contamination.

Treat your fresh herbs like a bunch of flowers

If you've ever spent lots of money on a bunch of fresh herbs (and they are an expensive ingredient), and then found them all wilted before you can use them, here's a great tip: treat them like a bunch of flowers to get more out of them. Just trim the bottom of the stems, pop them upright in a tall glass of water and place a light plastic bag or some plastic wrap over the top. This helps regulate the moisture they're exposed to and will keep them fresher, longer.

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Know where to store fruits and vegetables

One of the biggest fresh produce wasters is not knowing your fridge. First, do a good spring clean of the fridge and know what's in there. Then take a look at all the settings.

Modern fridges have moisture control tabs for different drawers so that you can set less moisture for fruits, a little more for veg and keep them both fresher longer. So have a look at the compartments, make sure you've got the settings right for what's in there and find out if your fridge has any extra fresh food features.

How to curb 'terrible' habit of forgetting veggies in fridge

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Use paper towels to keep greens dry

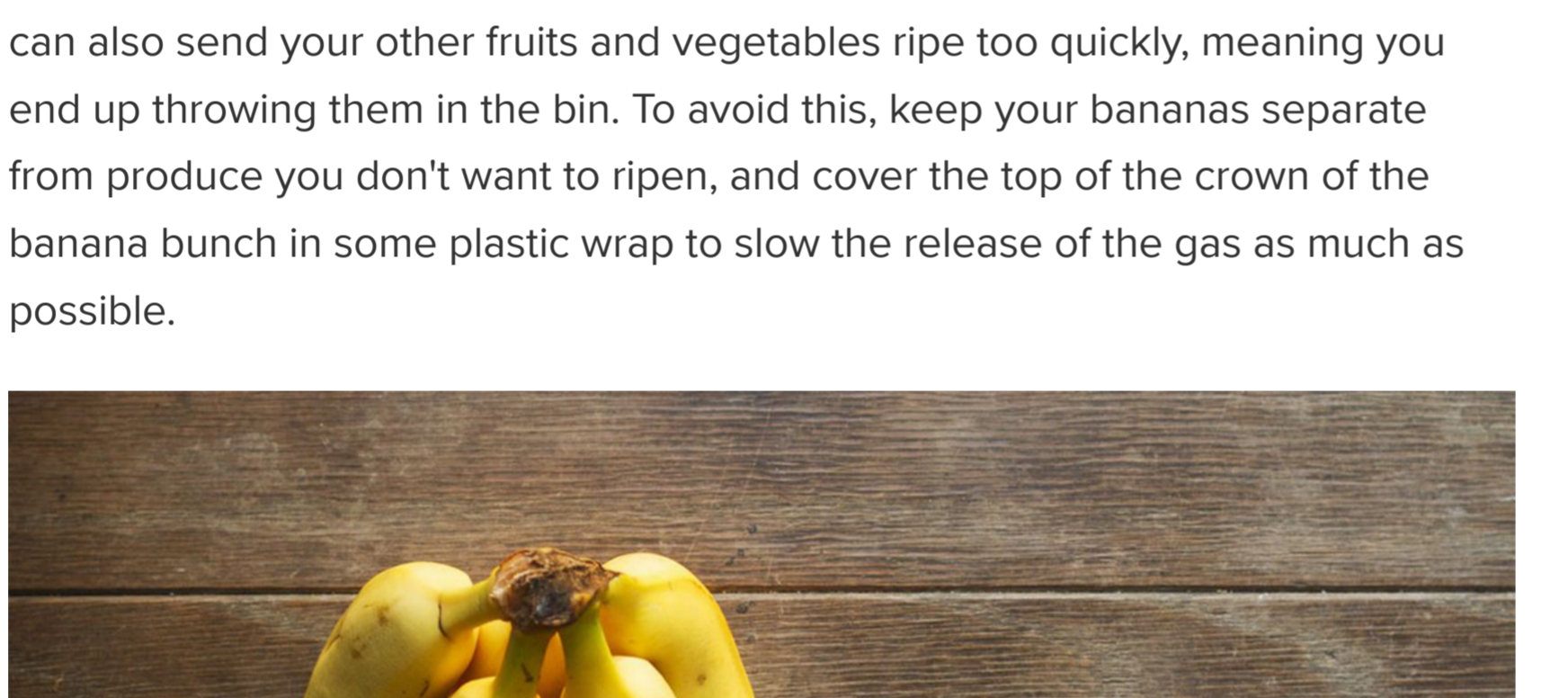
Moisture is a big killer for fresh greens in the fridge. But it's a moist environment, so to prevent slimy residue from pooling in your bag of lettuce or other leafy green vegetables, open the bag, pop a folded piece of paper towel flat inside and leave it there to soak up excess moisture. You can do the same with leftover salad greens in containers in the fridge too.

Or look for products like The Swag that minimise moisture in the fridge for your veg and also let them breathe, which means they stay fresher, longer.

You can also find products like Fresh Paper at the supermarket, which are infused with natural herbs and spices and enzymes that inhibit bacteria growth and keep your veggie drawers fresher.

Wrap your banana tips

Bananas release ethylene gas as they ripen and can be used to ripen other under-ripe fruit and vegetables just by sitting them in the same bowl. But this can also send your other fruits and vegetables ripe too quickly, meaning you end up throwing them in the bin. To avoid this, keep your bananas separate from produce you don't want to ripen, and cover the top of the crown of the banana bunch in some plastic wrap to slow the release of the gas as much as possible.



Wrap those banana tips before putting them in the fridge. (Stock)

Only wash produce as you need it...

Plenty of people wash their produce as they bring it home and then put it in the fridge, thinking that they'll save time when they want to use it. But any leftover moisture on the fruit and veg will make it spoil quicker, encouraging mould to grow. Just put your veg away and only wash it as you need it. This reduces the chance of mould growing on damp produce.

... except for berries

The only exception to the above 'no wash until needed' rule is berries. If you give these a quick rinse in one litre of water with a couple of teaspoons of apple cider vinegar mixed in and thoroughly dry them, it will stop mould growing on the lovely naturally moist berries, meaning less unexpected fluffy mould prompting you to throw them in the bin.

Store bulk buys in air-tight containers

Buying in bulk is a great way to save money. But I know I've been guilty of just leaving that big bag of rice or oats in the cupboard without checking it's airtight. Then when you get around to using it, you'll find it musty, filled with bugs and potentially ruined before you even get started. There's no point in saving money with a bulk buy if you're going to lose the lot.

So, break bulk buys down into smaller, useable portions and make sure you place them in suitable (airtight) containers so the product keeps for its full storage life on the shelf.

Double-check your fridge temperature

As mentioned above, checking all settings in your fridge will get more out of your produce storage. But even more importantly, check the general temperature of your fridge to make sure most items are sitting below their cold storage temperatures.

A fridge thermometer is great for this – either the inbuilt one that comes with the fridge or grab one from a supermarket or cookware store. They're cheap and they save you lots of waste. The ideal temperature for most cold items is below 4°C.

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