

Removing Odors from Refrigerators and Freezers after Food has Spoiled

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The Texas A&M University System*

If food has spoiled in a refrigerator or freezer because of a power failure or some other reason, undesirable odors can develop. To eliminate these odors:

- ◆ Remove the food.
- ◆ Wash the inside of the refrigerator or freezer with 1 tablespoon of baking soda in a quart of tap water or with 1 cup of vinegar in a gallon of tap water.
- ◆ Let the surface dry.

If the odor still persists, use activated charcoal. This type of charcoal is extra dry and absorbs odors more quickly than does charcoal used for cooking. It is sold at drug stores and pet supply stores. To use activate charcoal:

- ◆ Unplug the freezer or refrigerator.
- ◆ Put the charcoal in pans or on paper in the bottom of the freezer or refrigerator, and leave it there for several days.
- ◆ If the odor remains, put in new charcoal.
- ◆ When the odor is gone, rinse and dry the inside of the freezer or refrigerator.
- ◆ Turn on the freezer or refrigerator and it is ready for food.

If the odor gets into the freezer's insulation, contact the manufacturer for suggestions on solving the problem. However, sometimes nothing can be done to eliminate the odor.

This information was excerpted and adapted from *Food Safety in Hurricanes and Floods*, by P. H. Schmutz, HGIC Information Specialist, and E. H. Hoyle, Extension Food Safety Specialist, Clemson University.

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