Extreme Makeover: Kitchen Edition

For a healthier household, give your fridge a fresh look.

August 22, 2006 By Lou Sackett

One of the best ways to help your family eat more healthfully is to make over your refrigerator and cupboards—their contents, that is. Here's how, using just the drain in your kitchen sink, a trash bag, a pen and a new shopping list.

CLEAR THE CLUTTER. If your seasonings and condiments are more than six months old, replace them. Out-of-date spices won't hurt you, but they do lose their flavor.

REFRESH YOUR FRIDGE. Even if they're refrigerated, foods like old ketchup, mustard and mayonnaise can get contaminated by bacteria from spoons and fingers. Old flour can get rancid or buggy. Buy only what you need, and store it in airtight containers or the freezer.

BECOME A JUNK BUSTER. Consider throwing out low-fiber, high-sodium, high-fat foods that cause so many health problems. Replace them with just as satisfying but more nutritious options, like below:

Toss This: Commercial lunch meats
Try This: Fresh turkey breast or lean beef
Here's Why: Commercial lunch meats are processed with a high-sodium nitrate brine. Such excess salt can contribute to high blood pressure, and nitrates are suspected of causing cancer. Replace it with fresh turkey breast or lean beef that you roast and slice at home yourself.

Toss This: Bacon grease
Try This: Cholesteral-free vegetable oil.
Here's Why: That can of bacon grease on the back of your stove is not only loaded with saturated fat and nitrates, it's a playground for bacteria. It's better to scramble your eggs in cholesterol-free vegetable oil. For that hint of smoky bacon flavor, add a drop of liquid smoke to the pan.

Toss This: Soda
Try This: All-natural fruit juice witrh sparkling water
Here's Why: Regular soda is loaded with high-fructose corn syrup, the leading culprit in rising obesity and diabetes rates, while diet soda contains artificial sweeteners. Instead, blend all-natural fruit juice with sparkling water for a less sweet, more refreshing beverage.

Toss This: Commercially made pizza
Try This: Making your own
Here's Why: Whether frozen or from the pizzeria, commercially made pizza often contains greasy high-fat cheeses and processed meats. Try making your own: Top whole-wheat pizza shells with low-sodium marinara; then sprinkle with low-fat shredded mozzarella and fresh veggies.

Toss This: Chips
Try This: Nuts
Here's Why: When you're searching for something to munch on, instead of a bag of chips, pick up a can of nuts. Ounce for ounce, most nuts have fewer calories than greasy, sodium-laden chips. Plus nuts are an excellent source of protein, fiber and essential dietary oils.

Toss This: Jolly Ranchers
Try This: Dried fruits and fruit leathers
Here's Why: Dried cherries instead of Jolly Ranchers will satisfy your sweet tooth while nourishing your body. Treats like dried fruits and fruit leathers (the all-natural version of fruit roll-ups) have fewer calories than candy and are packed with vitamins and minerals.

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