

eco@home kitchens

SAVE ENERGY, MONEY, AND TIME AROUND THE HOUSE



Energy-Smart Cooking

5 Fridge Fixes

Save Water in the Kitchen

4 Dishwasher Dos

Since 2008, *eco@home* has provided readers like you with ways to save energy, water, and money around the house. And now we believe certain topics and rooms require special attention.


Take kitchens. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, cooking is responsible for around 4.5 percent of a home's energy use. Add in the power it takes to run your refrigerator, dishwasher, and water heater, and that number only increases.

In this issue, we're in the kitchen dishing up quick and easy ways to make this room more eco-conscious. For example, learn how to conserve energy while cooking, make your fridge more efficient, and run your dishwasher for maximum savings.

The kitchen is considered the heart of the home. Keep it beating strong and healthy with our energy- and water-saving tips.

did you know?

If you are in the market for a new range hood for your kitchen, purchase an ENERGY STAR®-qualified model. These use around 60 percent less energy and save more than \$60 in energy costs over their lifetime.



About 4.5% of household energy is used for cooking.



Energy-Smart Cooking

When you're in the throes of preparing a meal for your family, it's easy to forget the importance of **energy efficiency**. Here's how to conserve in your kitchen.

Keep It Clean.

Grime and spills zap energy **efficiency by absorbing heat**—that's why it's important to frequently clean your microwave interior and burner pans on electric stove tops.

Thaw Before Heating.

Decrease cook time by defrosting foods in the fridge before cooking.

Size Up Cookware.

Match pots and pans to the heating element, or you'll waste energy by heating empty space. Using a 6-inch pot on an 8-inch electric burner squanders more than 40 percent of the burner's heat.

Master Materials.

Cast iron pans retain heat well on the stove top, while foods in copper pans heat faster. When cooking in the oven with glass or ceramic pans you can reduce cooking temperatures by around 25 degrees without increasing cooking time.

Rethink Cooking Methods.

Microwave small- and medium-size meals—it's **faster and more efficient** than a conventional oven. So is pressure cooking, which slashes stove top energy consumption by 50 to 75 percent.

Suds Up.

If you hand-wash dishes, fill your sink to wash dishes rather than letting the water run. Using the dishwasher? Scrape food off dishes without pre-rinsing and fully load the racks.

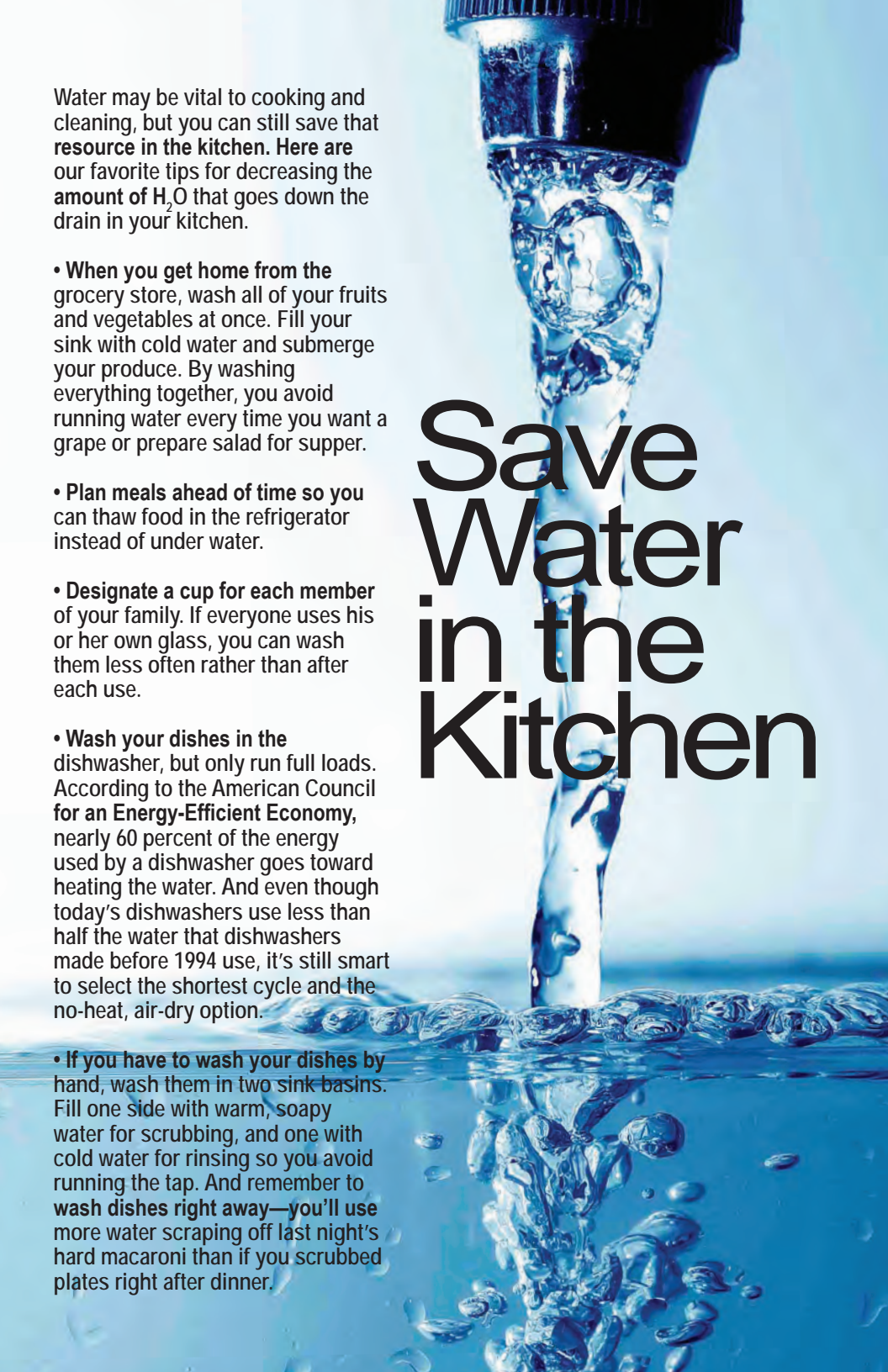
5 Fridge Fixes

try this today...

Fill your freezer for maximum efficiency. Don't have enough food? Place stacks of newspaper, bags of shipping peanuts, or plastic bags full of water in the freezer to eat up space.

Did you know that your refrigerator typically gobbles more energy than any other kitchen appliance? It's true. In fact, this food-storage favorite generally uses almost 14 percent of your home's electricity. To keep your energy bills in check, try these easy moves for ensuring your fridge is running as efficiently as possible.

- 1.) **Defrost it.** Frost buildup decreases the energy efficiency of your unit. Regularly defrost manual-defrost refrigerators and freezers to avoid ice buildup of more than one-quarter inch.
- 2.) **Position it.** Keep your fridge away from heat-producing appliances, including the dishwasher and oven. Also position the refrigerator slightly away from the wall so air can circulate behind it.
- 3.) **Inspect it.** Make certain your refrigerator door closes tightly by shutting the door over a piece of paper. If you can easily remove the paper with the door closed, it's time to replace the rubber gasket.
- 4.) **Clean it.** Vacuum your fridge's condenser coils twice every year to help it cool more efficiently and run less frequently.
- 5.) **Adjust it.** Keep your refrigerator compartment between 37 and 40 degrees Fahrenheit and your freezer at zero to 5 degrees Fahrenheit for optimal food storage temps and efficiency.



Water may be vital to cooking and cleaning, but you can still save that **resource in the kitchen**. Here are our favorite tips for decreasing the amount of H₂O that goes down the drain in your kitchen.

- **When you get home from the grocery store**, wash all of your fruits and vegetables at once. Fill your sink with cold water and submerge your produce. By washing everything together, you avoid running water every time you want a grape or prepare salad for supper.

- **Plan meals ahead of time** so you can thaw food in the refrigerator instead of under water.

- **Designate a cup for each member** of your family. If everyone uses his or her own glass, you can wash them less often rather than after each use.

- **Wash your dishes in the dishwasher**, but only run full loads. According to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, nearly 60 percent of the energy used by a dishwasher goes toward heating the water. And even though today's dishwashers use less than half the water that dishwashers made before 1994 use, it's still smart to select the shortest cycle and the no-heat, air-dry option.

- **If you have to wash your dishes by hand**, wash them in two sink basins. Fill one side with warm, soapy water for scrubbing, and one with cold water for rinsing so you avoid running the tap. And remember to **wash dishes right away**—you'll use more water scraping off last night's hard macaroni than if you scrubbed plates right after dinner.

Save Water in the Kitchen

4 Dishwasher Dos



Your dishwasher still has some life in it, so you're not ready to upgrade to a new energy-efficient model. But you can still make sure you're saving as much energy and water as possible. Here are four simple ways to make your dishwasher work for you:

1.} Before loading, thoroughly scrape dishes rather than rinsing them. Leaving the dirty work to your dishwasher can save as much as 20 gallons of water per cycle. If you must rinse dishes beforehand, use cold water and don't leave the water running.

2.} Only run full loads of dishes. An older dishwasher uses from 8 to 15 gallons per cycle, so maximize water and energy savings by loading yours to capacity. Be sure not to overload it though—water must properly circulate in order to get your dishes clean.

3.} Opt for the "air-dry" setting instead of the "heat-dry" setting. Doing so slashes energy consumption considerably. If your dishwasher doesn't have an air-dry setting and if it's not a hot or humid day, opening the door after the final rinse can help dishes dry faster.

4.} Run a short cycle if dishes aren't too dirty. Most of the energy used by a dishwasher goes toward heating the water, so using less water requires less energy.

try this today...

Load your dishwasher correctly. Face the dirty side of plates and pans toward the inside of the machine, so they're hit directly by water. Place large items at the back of the machine so they don't block detergent and water from reaching other dishes.