

"National Refrigerator Cleanout Day"

I read this week in an airline magazine, for me a treasure trove of really valuable information that today, November 20, is National Refrigerator Clean Out Day, a day set aside to coax us to reach into the nether regions of our fridge and to throw away those things the EPA suggests is no longer prudent to keep within a few hundreds yards of people or livestock.

National Refrigerator Clean Out Day was the brainchild of a major manufacturers of appliances, perhaps recognizing the marketing fall out if they were to be associated with big metal boxes in people's kitchens with their name on it, chock full of e coli bacteria.

I am embarrassed to say, I frequently find things in the refrigerator way-back that I don't even remember buying and like most people, hate throwing perfectly good food directly in to the garbage, and will often save a quarter of a sandwich or a few florets of broccoli, knowing in advance that I have no intention of ever eating them. Therefore, the refrigerator becomes a holding pen of sorts until the food gets just offensive enough that I no longer feel guilty about throwing it away.

Even the most fastidious, most compulsive among us will find objects inside that have changed shape...color or molecular structure. I found ---true story--- a cream based liquor on a lower rack that had mysteriously transformed into something I subsequently referred to as Harvey's Bristol Cheese. Most people are horrified to rediscover former foodstuffs., whose plant or animal origins are no longer determinable, that have somehow gone unnoticed, blocked by larger food. These far off regions are also the home for foods you purchased when you were really hungry that seemed so interesting at the time, like deviled fish or pork filled desserts.

Refrigerator Clean Out day coincides with the holiday season, a time we prepare the bulkiest food and need those few extra cubic feet of cold storage.

I remember my grandmothers' refrigerator never had this problem because she would routinely get us to consume leftovers just before they went toxic, by saying, "Eat this or I'm only going to throw it away." Not terribly encouraging. In some way that would be like my grandfather saying, "Here, put these bald snow tires on your car, or I'm just going to throw them away." As a result, I never learned appliance hygiene growing up.

Fortunately, my fridge is technologically advanced, with 4 or 5 temperature zones.... permitting foods to spoil one at a time rather than all at once. It can also expel ice and dispatch water directly from the door if I am too tired to walk the additional 36 inches to the sink. Technologically advanced as it is, the unit is 7 years old, which by the way is 49 in dog years. Unlike my technologically advanced stove, my refrigerator is regrettably not self cleaning.

So I appreciate the encouragement to tackle a project I would have otherwise hoped could to be reserved for prison inmates, perhaps in exchange for a reduction in sentence. As unpleasant as the task is. I will take heart, knowing that I am sharing a disgusting moment with millions of others.

My efforts will make room for my Thanksgiving turkey, whose leftovers, by my calculation, will probably be rediscovered somewhere around Memorial Day.

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