

Consumer Corner

Food, Ice And Water: Shopping Smartly For Your Next Refrigerator

(NAPSA)—According to the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers, the refrigerator is the most used appliance in the home. And if you haven't shopped for one in a while, you might be surprised at the variety of configurations and multitude of new features available. Shoppers can find everything from the standard style refrigerator with the freezer on the top to the latest French-door, bottom-freezer configuration. Here are some insights to help you find a refrigerator that is dependable, fits your lifestyle and works great from the inside out.

Do Your Homework. Observe how your family uses your refrigerator, the size and shape of containers you use and the type of food you store. Take measurements—height, width and depth—of the space where your refrigerator will be placed, and the width of doorways you'll need to get through on the way in.

"We hear from our retailers that people return appliances all the time because they get them home and discover that they're too big to fit through a doorway or into the designated space," said Philip Pejovich, vice president of refrigeration for the North American region and Maytag brand. "One of the most important homework assignments is to simply take measurements of your home before you start shopping."

Form, Function and Dependability. If you demand style and function, you may



already know about the French-door-style refrigerator. This configuration has double doors at eye level that open completely to one, wide refrigerator compartment. The freezer is found in a slide-out drawer below. Look for heavy-duty sliders on the freezer drawer, and an insulated center "flipper" to seal the two refrigerator doors.

Flexible Food Storage. When entertaining, it's nice to have a wider space to store large serving platters. Consider customizable shelving systems that allow you to easily move shelves depending on immediate needs.

Smaller, But Loaded. Some of the newest refrigerators on the market offer big features that fit smaller spaces. Maytag brand recently introduced a 22-cu.-ft. version of its popular Ice2O refrigerator. This newest member of the French-door family is the first to

offer external ice and water in a refrigerator that fits into a 33-inch opening.

Energy Efficiency. According to industry experts, the average family refrigerator is opened dozens of times a day. To help with "temperature recovery," look for insulated, locking magnetic door seals. Some manufacturers also offer an energy-saving vacation mode for periods of low usage. Look for a unit that is ENERGY STAR[®]-rated.

Ice Makers Say a Lot. Because it's an opportunity to see some of the inner components, a look at the ice maker can indicate overall durability. Some models include a durable stainless steel, zigzag-shaped ice auger. Check for a power outage guard to keep melting ice from running onto the floor. And if you entertain a lot, check the ice production; it can range from four to eight pounds per day.

Water Purification Benefits. A good filtration system can remove lead from your tap water. Most refrigerator filters must be changed every six months, but some models use filters that last a full year. Some manufacturers also offer a program that automatically ships a new filter to your home when you need it.

Armed with an understanding of your lifestyle, space, available features, durability and energy considerations, you'll be sure to bring home a refrigerator that you can depend on for years to come.