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Tips to Taper Energy Costs in the Kitchen

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Spend time in the kitchen without spending money on preventable home energy costs. With so many appliances in one room, the kitchen is a great place to begin saving. These simple suggestions can help you conserve energy and lower utility costs in the kitchen.

Refrigerators and Freezers

- Set your refrigerator temperature between 37 to 40 degrees F. and the freezer compartment at 5 degrees F. Free standing freezers used for long term storage can be set at 0 degrees. For maximum efficiency, frost build-up should be kept under ¼ inch thickness.
- To get accurate temperature readings in the refrigerator float a refrigerator thermometer in a covered container of water placed in the center of the food compartment. For the freezer, place the thermometer between two frozen items. Read after 24 hours.
- Condensers work hard to remove moisture and maintain cold temperatures. Seal all containers and cover drinks securely. Leave 2 inches of air space around the refrigerator exterior so air can circulate and help cool the coils. Don't place your refrigerator or freezer near a heat source or in direct sunlight. Avoid opening the door frequently or leaving the door open longer than necessary.
- Stock your shelves carefully. Air circulation in the refrigerator is essential for proper cooling, so leave space around shelved items and don't block vents. In the freezer, air space has to be cooled so tightly stocked shelves actually conserve energy.
- Consider using old-fashioned ice trays. It is estimated that an automatic icemaker increases energy consumption by 20 percent.
- Follow guidelines in the owner's manual. Periodically pull your refrigerator away from the wall and vacuum the coils. Be sure gaskets are clean and pliable—an airtight seal is essential for efficient operation.
- Older model appliances, especially refrigerators over 15 years old, can draw twice the power of new energy efficient models. Upgrading an old appliance can really pay off over time. You may be able to save from $35 to $70 dollars a year. Use the EPA/Energy Star calculator at the link below to evaluate costs. http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?fuseaction=refrig.calculator

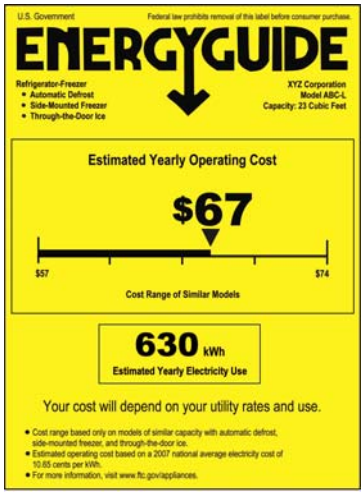
Ranges and Ovens

- Before heating a conventional oven, consider using a smaller appliance with lower surface-to-volume ratio such as a toaster oven, roasting oven, electric frying pan, pressure cooker, crockpot or portable convection oven. Microwave ovens also save energy because food cooks faster.

- When baking, open the oven door only as needed. Temperatures drop about 25 degrees each time the door is opened and that heat has to be regenerated.

- When cooking or warming foods, choose the smallest pan possible to get the job done and use lids to conserve heat. Pots and pans with flat bottoms and flat sides are more energy efficient. Be sure the base of your pan covers the burner, and keep reflectors and surfaces clean so heat radiates more efficiently.

Remember to shop for the EnergyStar when buying new appliances. This government rating is your guarantee of energy efficiency. Also look for and compare appliance models using the EnergyGuide label which provides estimated energy consumption and yearly operating costs of the appliances you may be interested in purchasing based on national averages. See information on how to read the EnergyGuide label at http://www1.eere.energy.gov/consumer/tips/energyguide.html



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