

Kitchen Cupboard Management

Spring is the perfect time to check foods stored in kitchen cupboards to see if they are still fresh or need to be tossed. Read on for tips to help decide whether to toss or save some common kitchen cupboard foods.

Give Spices and Herbs the “Sniff” Test: To see if a *ground spice* is potent, smell it. If its aroma is immediate, strong and spicy, it should still add flavor to foods. For a *whole spice*, such as a clove or cinnamon stick, break, crush or scrape the spice before smelling it. **Do Not** smell *pepper* or *chili powder* as they can irritate the nose. For *herbs*, crush a small amount and smell it. If the aroma is still fresh and pleasant, it can still flavor foods. If there is no smell or has an off smell, toss it.

Baking Powder Freshness Test: Mix 1 teaspoon baking powder with 1/3 cup hot water. If it foams vigorously, it still has rising power.

Baking Soda Test for Freshness: Place 1-1/2 teaspoons in a small bowl. Add 1 tablespoon vinegar. If it fizzes, then it will still help leaven a food. If it doesn't fizz, use it as an odor catcher in the refrigerator.

Now that food has been sorted or tossed, here are a few tips to take control of storing foods in the cupboard:

- If portions of expired foods are tossed, buy a smaller container next time.
- Keep a permanent marker pen in the kitchen and put the date – *month and year* – the food was purchased on the food container.
- Practice “first in, first out” for foods. If several containers of the same type of food are purchased, arrange the containers so the oldest package is used first.

To learn more about food storage, ask for the handout “Cleaning the Kitchen Cupboard:

Toss or Save?” at your local Nebraska Extension Office or available on the Internet at <http://food.unl.edu/documents/CleaningCupboard.pdf>.

Source: Brenda Aufdenkamp, Nebraska Extension in Lincoln, Logan, McPherson Counties.

