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Buying a new fridge

LISA JAFFE HUBBELL • MARCH 29, 2009

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1. Updating can cost less in the long run. "An Energy Star fridge uses 40% less energy than one made in 2001," says Frigidaire's Marty O'Gorman. With a 14-year average lifespan, that's a lot of electricity savings.

2. Four basic styles are available: a side-by-side; a two-door with a top- or bottom-mount freezer; a French door with two top doors and a bottom freezer drawer; and a new quad model with two doors on top and two freezer drawers beneath.

3. Careful measuring is key. Measure from the baseboards (not the wall) to the cabinet's edge: That quarter inch can make a difference, says Sears' Larry Costello. Also, decide whether you want the front to be flush with your countertops. Counter-depth models hold about 3 cubic feet less food, O'Gorman says.

4. Consider the finish. Stainless steel is popular, but it shows smudges. New faux-stainless finishes reduce the visibility of fingerprints.

5. Do some online research. Find out about costs, styles, options, finishes and energy efficiency. Most retailers will meet or beat competitor prices.

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