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In Praise of Trays

Trays are handy throughout the house, but our all-time favorite use for them is as a home base for sink-side and stove-side essentials. The appeal ranges from the practical (trays are portable and easy to clean) to the aesthetic (grouped as an ensemble, humble tools on a tray become a Giorgio Morandi-esque still life). Note that there's no need to stop at just one: trays within trays create visual order and make it easy to organize small items.



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STEAL THIS LOOK

The Medicine Cabinet as Vanity

We all long for a bathroom that feels like a spa. Unattainable in a small bath? Not entirely; you can create your own moment of Zen beauty in your medicine cabinet. All you have to do is remove the pileup of unused things and medicine bottles (in fact, it's actually better to store medicine at room temperature and away from moisture). Instead, devote the cabinet to your grooming arsenal: makeup, perfume, even jewelry. And whenever you open the cabinet, it will make you happy. Here's why this one works.

- 1 An outlet on the inside of the cabinet is ideal for electric toothbrushes, razors, and hair dryers.
- 2 Shelves organized according to purpose: beauty products on one shelf, skin care items on another, and dental care items on the easiest-to-access bottom tier.
- 3 No excess—and no searching required; what's here is a distillation of favorites.
- 4 A variety of pretty vessels, such as labware-style glass containers and a vintage silver cup, ensure that nothing is loose or untethered.
- 5 A travel clock keeps you on schedule.
- 6 Vetiver root bundles (from Bell'Occhio) offer a surprise hint of fragrance every time you open the cabinet.
- 7 An over-the-door metal rack (by Yamazaki) puts the inside of the mirror to good use as hanging jewelry storage.

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EXPERT ADVICE

Think Like a Foodie

Good cooks care about the way kitchen staples are stored. How to tame the jungle inside our refrigerators? **Karen Mordechai**, food photographer, founder of Sunday Suppers, and cookbook author, has six smart answers.

- 1 **Buy in smaller quantities and avoid overcrowding.** "I've learned over the years to purchase food in a more thoughtful manner," says Mordechai, "but I'm okay with that. Sometimes that means shopping more frequently, but it's more approachable and inspiring." I love having a refrigerator that feels approachable and inspiring.
- 2 **Establish distinct storage zones.** To avoid a free-for-all, store like with like to introduce predictability and order. In most fridges, the bottom shelf is the coldest zone, making it ideal for meat; beverages do well on the top shelf; vinegar-based condiments (such as ketchup and mustard) belong in the door compartments, which are less chilly. Leftovers, meanwhile, should be clustered at eye level where they're sure to be noticed.
- 3 **Practice first in, first out.** Adopted from grocers and other retailers, the FIFO approach ensures that what needs to be used first, such as milk that will soon expire, is stocked up front.
- 4 **Commit to a once-a-week fridge cleanup and clear-out.** "I find this very therapeutic," says Mordechai. "It always inspires a kitchen-sink meal or two, such as a frittata, a soup, and a big salad."
- 5 **Use enamel, ceramic, and glass containers.** Unlike plastic, they can go directly from fridge to oven to table (and your food doesn't have to mingle with things like BPA and phthalates). Label containers with washi tape to keep track of contents and dates.
- 6 **Store produce in reusable cloth and mesh bags (instead of plastic).** For sources, see page 182. And use your fridge properly: The high-humidity drawer is for things that wilt, such as greens, herbs, and strawberries. Oranges, apples, stone fruits, avocados, and other ethylene producers go in the low-humidity drawer.

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