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Can your fridge freezer's holiday mode really save you money?

Holiday mode is a little-known fridge freezer setting manufacturers say will save money on your energy bills while you're away in the sunshine. But is it worth using? Which? investigates

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 [Christina Woodger](#)
Senior researcher & writer



If you're heading away over the summer, manufacturers recommend switching your fridge freezer into holiday mode to save energy and money.

But our recent test shows that holiday mode (or vacation mode as some manufacturers call it) promises more than it delivers and might not be worth the effort.

Read on for our findings, plus more useful energy-saving fridge freezer tips.

Just want to know which fridge freezers aced our tests? Discover the [best fridge freezers](#).

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How holiday mode works



Holiday mode is designed to save you money while you're not using the appliance.

It allows the fridge's temperature to climb much higher than its usual temperature of 4°C or less. Depending on the brand and model, this could be anywhere from 14-17°C. As the fridge is no longer cooling, it should, theoretically, save electricity.

Most manufacturers say that you need to empty your fridge entirely before using the setting.

Holiday mode shouldn't change the temperature of your freezer, so you can still store items in there.





Not all fridge freezers have holiday mode. If yours does and you go away a lot, is it worth using?

Our [fridge freezer reviews](#) can tell you which are the best for cooling, freezing, energy use, staying stable in hot weather and more





What we learned from our holiday mode test



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We tested 10 fridge freezers in holiday mode, first in a 23°C chamber, then in a 35°C chamber.

After selecting the setting, we placed some test foods into the freezer to simulate how you might decide to freeze a few items you haven't eaten before you go away.

We compared how much energy the fridge freezers used in this mode with how much they used in normal operation.

We also measured how long it took the appliances to restabilise once the mode was deselected.

We chose models from a range of brands that performed well in our regular testing. We didn't test models we already knew to be poor, as you shouldn't consider buying those anyway.

The results were disappointing

Our tests showed that it's probably not worth putting your fridge freezer into holiday mode, and here's why:

- **You're unlikely to save a meaningful amount of money** Even over a four-week period, the maximum cost saving was just £1. The average cost saving was less than 37p in a 23°C kitchen and 43p in a 35°C kitchen.
- **You may actually spend fractionally more on energy** In our hot weather simulation, several appliances cost even more to run in holiday mode than they did in normal mode - up to 65p more over four weeks.
- **It's a lot of hassle** To use holiday mode correctly, you need to totally empty your fridge. Realistically, most of us still have a few items left in the fridge when we go on holiday, such as jam, chutney or condiments, so this just isn't practical. If you throw these items away unfinished, you'll lose money on these, too.
- **You risk coming back to a mouldy fridge** In our tests, fridge temperatures climbed as high as 20°C. While mould can grow at any temperature from 0°C to 50°C, higher temperatures combined with moisture provide a perfect breeding ground, especially if your appliance isn't totally clean. If there are any remnants of food left inside (spills or flecks of salad, for example) they're likely to go mouldy while you're away. Of course, you should clean your fridge freezer regularly (here's [how to deep-clean yours](#)). But who has time for fridge cleaning while packing for a holiday?
- **Your fridge freezer could take a while to return to normal once you've switched off holiday mode** Only one out of 10 fridge freezers tested were ready for normal use again after 10 hours, while two needed almost two days to return to their usual temperature. That's annoying if you planned to swing by a supermarket on the way home to stock up.

Are you making the most of your fridge freezer? Find out what your different [fridge freezer features](#) do

Money-saving fridge freezer tips



To save money in summer and across the year, follow this proven advice instead:

- **Choose an appropriate fridge freezer size for your household** Don't waste money (in upfront costs or ongoing running costs) on a larger model than you need.
- **Choose an energy-efficient fridge freezer** [Which? Eco Buy fridge freezers](#) marry good chilling and freezing with lower-than-average energy use for the type and size of appliance.
- **Don't overfill your fridge freezer** The cool air needs to circulate to keep food cold - if it's packed in tightly against the walls, it will block the airflow.
- **Follow our tips for [making food last longer](#)** and avoid throwing groceries away before you've had chance to eat them.
- **Choose a fridge freezer that copes well in hot weather** We simulate a heatwave in our lab tests to ferret out the models whose insides go haywire when the mercury rises. Find out more about [how to keep your fridge-freezer cold in hot weather](#).

You could turn your fridge freezer off completely if you're going away for a long holiday. Beko says it's worth doing this if you'll be away for more than a month.

By our calculations, you'd save between £2.80 and £10 over 31 days or an average of almost £6, based on the [average annual running cost of a freestanding fridge freezer](#).

You'll still need to completely empty it first (both compartments) so that you don't come home to rotten food. Drain the water tank, if you have one, clean it and leave the doors open to prevent mould or unpleasant smells.

Christina Woodger, Which? fridge freezer expert, says:



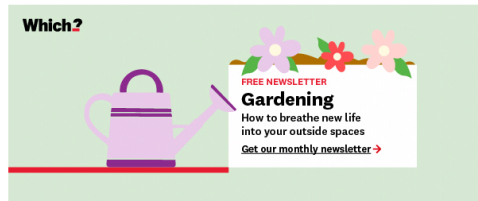
“Buying an energy-efficient fridge freezer will save you money on bills in the long-run. Which? Eco Buy fridge freezers cool and chill your food well while using less energy than average.”

Christina Woodger
Fridge freezers expert

Find out more about how the best [energy-efficient fridge freezers](#) can save you money

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