FREE BOOK

ENZO MANCINI

My Father's Toolbox

Six cheap house fixes, one page each



by Enzo Mancini

41 years a butcher in Newark, New Jersey

Open the book ›



What is inside

Six cheap house fixes, one page each



Eleven house rules, ten minutes a night

The shop's closing order, at home

Rule 1 ›



Baking soda: the oven, the drain, the fridge

One dollar fifty, and what it cannot do

Rule 2 ›



Vinegar on the seal, never in the drum

A musty washer for $2 a month

Rule 3 ›



Your dryer needs two cycles: the $10 fix

Heat does not dry clothes. Moving air does.

Rule 4 ›



Stainless steel: with the grain, never bleach

Sink, fridge door, cooktop, no scratch

Rule 5 ›



Organize the garage in one Saturday

The car chooses first

Rule 6 ›

The Saturday reset and never mix

Screenshot me. Keep me on your phone.

Keep it ›

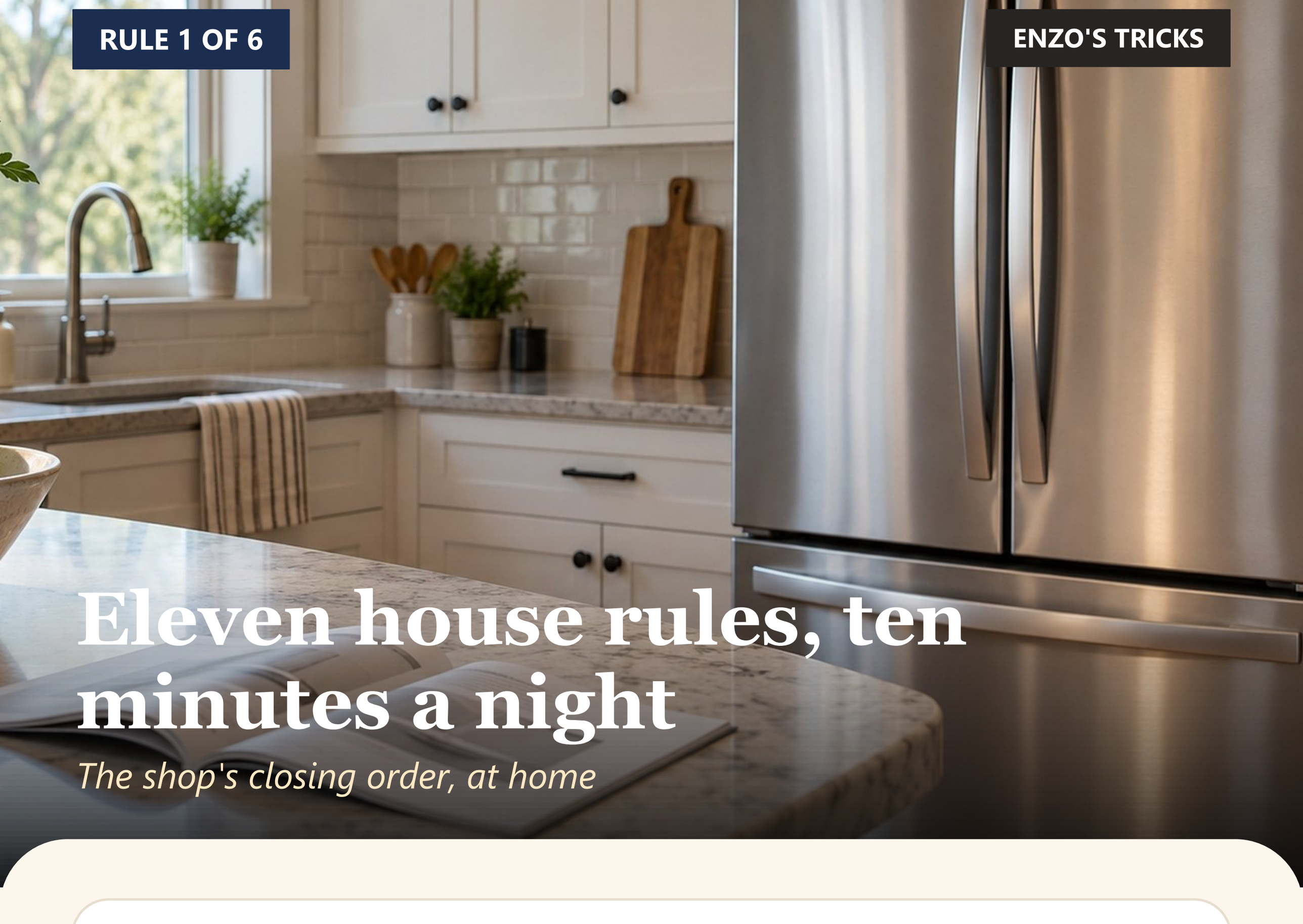


My father's toolbox

Small habits, not big jobs

My father kept a toolbox, a few cheap bottles and a lot of patience. A house, he said, is kept by small habits, not big jobs. Here are six fixes from that toolbox with the prices written next to them, and a card to keep on your phone. Fix one thing today.

Do one rule this week. Piano, piano.



Eleven house rules, ten minutes a night

The shop's closing order, at home

THE MISTAKE

You clean all Saturday until the house looks like a magazine. By Tuesday the mail is back on the counter and a jacket hangs on every chair. You ask what is wrong with you. Nothing is wrong with you. Your house has no rules.

THE BUTCHER'S REASON

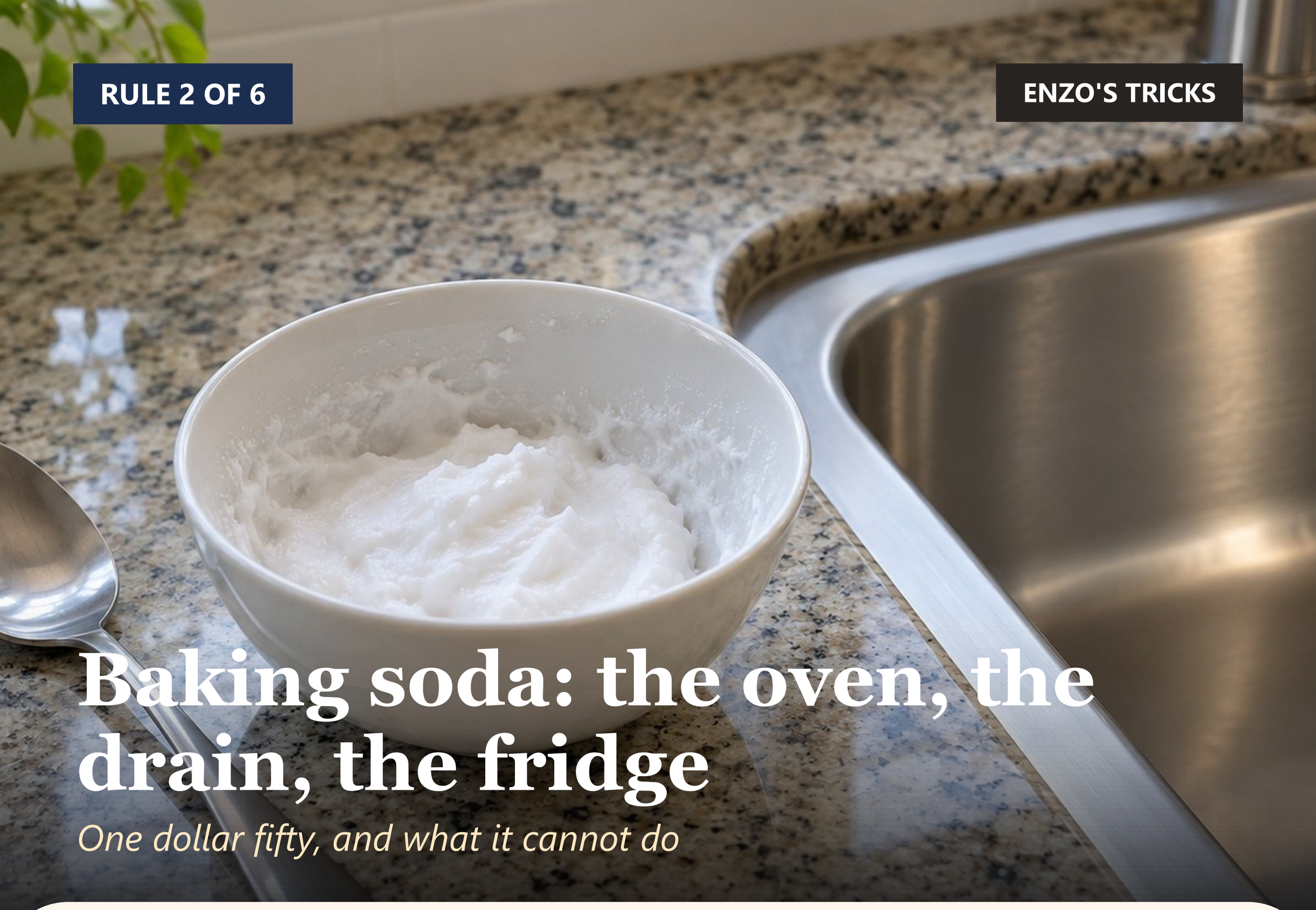
My shop passed inspection any morning for 41 years, and not because I worked harder. The closing order never changed: knives, block, cases, floor. Hands learn an order; they never learn a mood. Every tool had one address drawn on the board. Two places is the same as zero places.

DO THIS

1. Pick a closing order; a 10-minute timer, stop when it rings
2. Give scissors, keys and glasses one address each, and tell the house
3. A broken thing gets three days: fix it, call somebody, or out

REMEMBER

Same order, one address, three days.



Baking soda: the oven, the drain, the fridge

One dollar fifty, and what it cannot do

THE MISTAKE

You shake the dry powder over the sink like a snowstorm, scrub, and watch gray soup run down the drain. Then you pour vinegar on top for the volcano and call the drain clean. You used half a box and cleaned nothing.

THE BUTCHER'S REASON

Pure sodium bicarbonate, a mild base, a gentle scrubber, about $1.50 a pound at Walmart. A paste goes where you put it; a powder goes everywhere. The fizz with vinegar is carbon dioxide, and what is left is salty water. The fridge box works 30 days. It is not a disinfectant.

DO THIS

1. Paste: three spoons soda, one water; soft sponge, rinse
2. Oven: 1 lb / 450 g soda, a spoon of salt, two of water; cold oven, racks out, overnight, plastic spatula
3. Drain: half a cup weekly, hot water; never soda and vinegar in a closed bottle

REMEMBER

Patience does the scrubbing. You do the wiping.



Vinegar on the seal, never in the drum

A musty washer for $2 a month

THE MISTAKE

You pull the towels out of a fresh wash, put your face in them, and smell a basement. So you shut the door, add more softener, and blame the machine. It was never the machine. It was wet, closed up, and soapy.

THE BUTCHER'S REASON

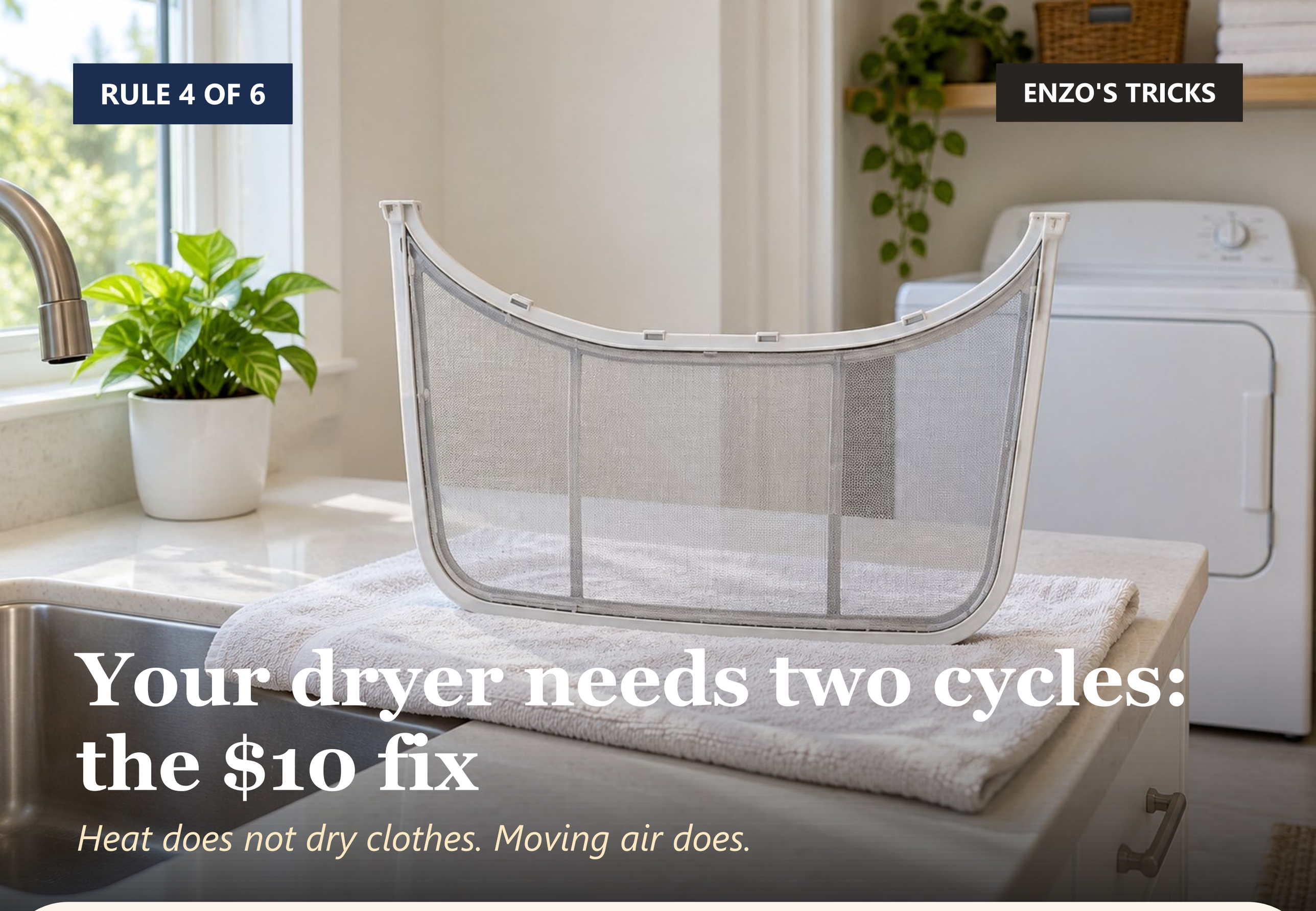
Leftover soap is what the smell grows on, in the seal, the drawer, the outer tub you never see. White vinegar cuts the film on rubber, but one maker warns acidic cleaners in the drum can corrode the machine. So vinegar wipes, it never washes. A monthly cleaner tablet runs a little over $2.

DO THIS

1. Door open, wet clothes out at once
2. Seal: three parts water, one white vinegar on a cloth, then plain water, dry; never a knife
3. One tablet a month, empty drum, nothing else added
4. Soap to the line, half the softener or none

REMEMBER

Vinegar wipes the rubber. It never rides in the drum.



Your dryer needs two cycles: the $10 fix

Heat does not dry clothes. Moving air does.

THE MISTAKE

The towels come out damp, so you run them again. Two extra cycles a week is around $40 a year at 35 to 50 cents a load. You think the dryer is dying. Nobody is cheating you. It is quieter than that.

THE BUTCHER'S REASON

Heat does not dry clothes; moving air does, and every rule gives the air a way out. Softener sheets leave a waxy film on the lint screen; water beads instead of falling through. The foil hose holds lint in its ridges like felt. A rigid metal duct costs about $10. Gas dryer: call a professional.

DO THIS

1. Water test the lint screen; dish soap, toothbrush, dry fully
2. Replace the foil hose with 4 inch metal duct, metal clamps, gentle curve
3. Unplug; brush the wall pipe both ends, $10 kit, vacuum
4. Outside, the flap should swing wide; clear nests by hand

REMEMBER

Same heat. Give the air a way out.



Stainless steel: with the grain, never bleach

Sink, fridge door, cooktop, no scratch

THE MISTAKE

You scrub the fridge door in circles with the green pad, you leave the cast iron pan in the sink overnight, and you splash bleach to finish. A door that costs over $1,000, and you sanded it with a cloth.

THE BUTCHER'S REASON

Stainless has a thin chromium-oxide skin that heals itself in air. Everything that hurts it hurts that skin: steel bits that rust into orange freckles, iron left wet, chlorine that pits forever. The cure is boring: soft cloth, dish soap, warm water, dry towel, the grain. Never bleach on steel. Never vinegar near bleach.

DO THIS

1. With the grain, long strokes, warm soapy water, then dry microfiber the same way
2. Sink is for water, not storage; dry it after dinner
3. Water spots: half white vinegar, half water, wipe, rinse, dry
4. Cooktop cold: baking soda paste 15 minutes, plastic scraper with the grain

REMEMBER

Soft cloth, soap, dry towel, and the grain.



Organize the garage in one Saturday

The car chooses first

THE MISTAKE

The bicycles nobody rides lean on the lawnmower, the move boxes still say kitchen, and the most expensive thing you own sleeps in the driveway. In the 1996 blizzard I dug out the car with a dustpan. The shovel was lost inside.

THE BUTCHER'S REASON

The garage was built for a car, so the car chooses first. A heavy hook goes into a wood stud, never drywall alone; one 50 lb / 23 kg hook is about $7. Heavy low, light high, same bin, named on two sides. Never run the car inside; propane never sleeps in the garage.

DO THIS

1. Driveway day: keep, give, trash; giveaway rides in the trunk by five
2. Tape a line around the parked car plus one foot; nothing inside it
3. Hooks into studs; same bins, about $10, never misc
4. Door test monthly: a 2x4 under it must reverse; springs, never

REMEMBER

Blue tape, a pencil, one Saturday.



KEEP IT ON YOUR PHONE

The Saturday reset and never mix

Screenshot me. Keep me on your phone.

- Saturday hour: one big job from the list, then stop
- Half a cup of baking soda down the kitchen drain, hot water
- Shake both doormats hard outside; wipe the washer seal dry
- Wash the lint screen; empty the vacuum before the line
- Five minutes in the shower: warm water, dish soap, top to bottom
- Flashlight walk: droppings, drips, daylight under doors
- Never bleach with ammonia
- Never bleach with vinegar
- Never peroxide and vinegar in one bottle
- Never two cleaners in one bucket
- Open a window. One bottle at a time.

REMEMBER

One cleaner, rinse, air. The next one another day.

BEFORE YOU GO

Notes and picture credits

I am Enzo, a retired butcher from Newark, New Jersey. I am not a chef and not a doctor. These are the habits of my family, general guidance only. Prices are about prices from U.S. stores seen in October 2026 and change from store to store. For your health, ask your doctor. Gas, electrical or structural trouble: call a professional.

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The whole notebook

Everything my family and I know

If these six fixes helped around your house, my friend, there is a bigger book.

It is called Enzo's Notebook. It holds everything my family and I know, in one place: the kitchen, the ledger, the toolbox and Carmela's own pages, one rule on each page, with the numbers we really use. I wrote it slowly and carefully, from 41 years behind the counter. If you would like it, scan the code or visit enzosbook.com. If not, keep this little book and do one rule this week. Thank you for reading, my friend.

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See the full notebook ›