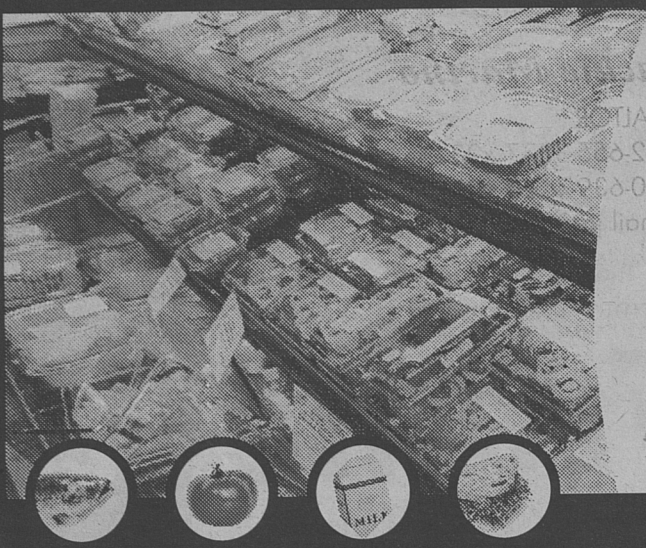


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** (GLEARN reading- Sunday June 1st, 3-5 PM "Stonewall: recollections/repercussions")

Views: The Big Chill

What is it with dykes and home improvement? Can science explain why lesbians love to peruse aisles of ventilation fans and vinyl flooring? Do we have a uniquely Sapphic hypothalamus that predisposes us to a fascination with switchplates and spackle, an instinctual drive to wander among sink faucets and screen doors? Is it inborn, or do we choose this lifestyle? Perhaps, in lieu of full access to legally recognized marriage, we are trying to confirm our commitments with tub caulk.

Unfulfilled by lesser projects, we eventually graduate to the harder stuff, such as major appliances. The high can be instant and long-lasting. Last weekend my domestic partner and I partnered up for a seriously domestic activity – we went shopping for a new refrigerator. Out of the closet and into the showroom!

Up and down the rows we strolled. We inspected vegetable crispers and peered into freezer compartments. We checked energy ratings and warranties, all the while utterly oblivious to such niggling concerns as rising gasoline prices and World War III.

All afternoon we ogled the floor models and compared features. We immersed ourselves in the domain of ice-makers and humidity controls, slide-out shelves and butter bins. We succumbed to the seduction of refrigerator design vocabulary, which is clearly intended to lull lesbian shoppers into an altered state. *Side by side*, *bottom mount* and *top mount* – who would have guessed these terms flourish beyond the boudoir!

In a euphoria brought on by so many possibilities, we wandered from model to model, opened each door and stood there discussing our options. Naturally, we had to deliberate over every feature. The wine rack is standard on some models, but we don't drink, unless you count Passover's four glasses of Manischewitz, which comes in a square bottle anyway. Considering that we already own a ten-dollar Brita, we don't really need the built-in water filter, which costs as much as a small nuclear power plant and is just as dubious. We agreed we could continue filling our own freezer trays and avoid having to live with the insufferable contradiction of calling those frozen half rounds from the automatic ice-makers "ice cubes."

As much as Sweetie and I like to think we're beyond appearances, we had to at least consider the issue of looks. The almond one with the contour

sally sheklow

door is glamorous but also the most expensive. The boxy white one is stodgy but energy-efficient and has a light in the freezer. The stainless one reminds me too much of the morgue in *Crossing Jordan*.

We fantasized bringing the different styles home for a trial run until we were sure we had a match. I wanted to com-

We checked energy ratings and warranties, all the while utterly oblivious to such niggling concerns as rising gasoline prices and World War III.

pare each one's effects on the illuminated profile of my naked girlfriend during a midnight snack attack.

But those were unrealistic thoughts and sooner or later we were going to have to get our heads out of the refrigerant and make a decision. Sales people approached to give us details about various specials, rebates and home delivery offers. But they politely backed off when they realized they couldn't help with our interpersonal deliberations.

We debated for hours, exercising our best communications skills and being conscientious about using "I" statements. "I feel that a chilled meat drawer is an unnecessary luxury for tofu." "I hear you saying the spill-catcher shelves will prevent leaky take-out containers from dribbling garlic eggplant onto the sponge cake." We went to such lengths to make our final choice that if any TV producers happened to overhear us they would have come up with an edge-of-your-seat sequel to *Joe Millionaire* called *Jo Frigidaire*.

I can just imagine the sales staff complaining about us in their break room. "Another couple of >>