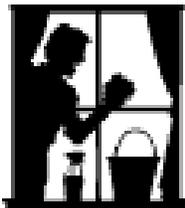


Cleaning Your Kitchen on a Budget



Keeping your kitchen clean is one important way to fight the germs that can cause foodborne illness or food spoilage. But you don't have to spend a lot of money on fancy cleaners to get the job done. Having these five common products in your kitchen will help you deal with many cleaning tasks: detergent or dish soap, vinegar, baking soda, ammonia, and bleach. Here are a few suggestions on how to economically clean your kitchen 'on a shoestring'.

WARNING: Never mix chlorine bleach and ammonia. Toxic fumes can be produced if chlorine and ammonia are mixed together. This warning also applies to any product containing chlorine bleach, such as a cleanser, and ammonia.

Vinegar can add sparkle to your kitchen. Vinegar is a mild acid, and it can certainly come in handy in the kitchen. Mix a solution of equal amounts of white vinegar and water to perk up your coffee pot. Add the vinegar/water mixture to the water reservoir of your coffee pot and run through one brew cycle. Rinse the coffee carafe and then add an equal amount of clear, cool water to the water reservoir and brew again.

Use vinegar to perk up your dishes too. Add a few drops of vinegar to your dishwashing water to cut grease and leave dishes sparkling clean.

And vinegar can come in handy to clean kitchen floors. Use 1 Tablespoon vinegar per quart of warm water to clean wood floors. To remove animal stains from a carpet or rug, prepare a solution of $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white vinegar and 1 quart warm water. Apply with a damp sponge to the carpet or rug and allow to stand a few minutes. Wipe clean. Always test a hidden area first to be sure that the floor covering is colorfast.

Use vinegar to help eliminate cooking odors. Boil a teaspoon of white vinegar mixed in a cup of water to eliminate unpleasant cooking odors. Or rub a little white vinegar on your fingers before and after slicing onions to quickly remove the onion odor.

Kitchen windows can also be cleaned with a solution of 2 Tablespoons of vinegar to 1 quart of water. Remove built-up dirt with a soft cloth, and then apply the vinegar/water solution. Rub dry with newspaper or cloth.

Baking soda as an all-purpose cleaner. Baking soda is a mild alkali. A good all-purpose cleaner for kitchen appliances can be prepared by mixing 2 Tablespoons of baking soda with 1 quart of warm water. Use this cleaner to clean inside the refrigerator, the microwave oven and other small appliances. Wipe with a clean, dry cloth. Soap will leave an odor, so do not use soap inside the refrigerator.

Use the baking soda/water cleaner to remove odor and stains from plastic containers. Pour a quantity of cleaner into a plastic container and swirl. Let stand if necessary to remove lingering stains and odors. Rinse with clear water and dry.

Use baking soda to scour the kitchen sink without scratching the surface. Sprinkle baking soda on a damp sponge and scrub gently. Use a sponge sprinkled with baking soda to gently remove coffee and tea stains from cups.

Place an open box of baking soda on the back shelf of the refrigerator to remove food odors. After 2 months, place a new box of baking soda in the refrigerator, and dispose of the old box by pouring it down the drain in the kitchen sink to keep things smelling sweet.

Baked-on food can often be removed from pots and pans using baking soda. Sprinkle the food with baking soda, add a few cups of water to the pot and simmer for several minutes. Usually the burned-on food will lift right off the pan surface.

Ammonia can be a handy kitchen-cleaning product. Prepare an all-purpose cleaner by mixing 1 Tablespoon ammonia, 1 Tablespoon liquid detergent and 2 cups of water. Use to wipe clean countertops and woodwork. Dry with a soft cloth.

Use ammonia in place of caustic aerosols to clean a greasy oven. Pour $\frac{1}{2}$ cup full strength ammonia in a small glass bowl. Place the bowl into a cool oven, close the door, and leave overnight. The next morning, wipe the inside of the oven with a cloth dipped in hot, soapy water. Use fine steel wool to remove any remaining baked-on food.

Use bleach to sanitize your kitchen. Bleach can be used in your kitchen not as a cleaning product, but as a sanitizer. Use bleach on surfaces that have first been washed and rinsed to remove dirt. As a sanitizer, bleach will kill bacteria that may remain on a countertop, cutting board, or sink. Mix a dilute bleach solution using 1 teaspoon of bleach added to 1 quart of water. This solution can be stored in a spray bottle and used to sanitize countertops and cutting boards. Refresh a bleach sanitizing solution once a week. If you use the newer 'ultra' bleach, use just $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon per quart of water.

While vinegar and baking soda can be effective in cleaning a kitchen on a budget, research has shown that they are not as effective at disinfecting or sanitizing surfaces.

Carefully label all products. Be sure to carefully label all cleaning compounds or sanitizers that you prepare. Keep all chemicals out of reach of children. And remember that homemade cleaning products may require a bit more 'elbow grease' to be effective, but the result can be a kitchen cleaned to a sparkling shine on a budget.