



A Look at Kitchen Cleaners and Sanitizers

Keeping your kitchen clean is an important step in preventing foodborne illness. The Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia reports that proper cleaning of hands and surfaces is the single most important step in preventing foodborne disease.

Two steps to kitchen cleanliness. There are two steps in having a clean and sanitary kitchen. The first step is to clean all surfaces with warm, soapy water; then rinse the surfaces with warm water to remove soap residue and remaining dirt. Soap isn't designed to kill bacteria, but it acts as a surfactant to lift dirt off of surfaces so that dirt can be rinsed away. Allow dishes and counter tops that have been cleaned to air dry, or use disposable paper towels. Cloth towels are notorious at harboring germs and transferring them from one surface to another, such as from hands to dishes.

The second step in having a clean and sanitary kitchen is to use a sanitizer or disinfectant to destroy any microorganisms that might remain on a cleaned surface. Kitchen sanitizers generally fall into two categories: bleach-based products and quaternary ammonium compounds. Let's take a look at each of these.

Bleach-based sanitizers. Bleach is easy and inexpensive to use as a sanitizer. For all kitchen surfaces such as counter tops, sinks and cutting boards, prepare a solution of 1 teaspoon bleach per quart of water. Wipe or spray surfaces with this solution and allow to stand for at least 30 seconds before removing any remaining moisture. Better yet, allow surfaces to air dry. Store this dilute bleach solution in a spray bottle with a snug top and it will remain effective for up to one week. If you happen to have a bottle of the new 'ultra' bleach that is on the market, prepare the bleach solution using only $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon bleach per quart of water. There is no need to use higher concentrations of bleach and, if you do, you will need to rinse all surfaces with clear water after applying the bleach solution.

Bleach-based commercial sanitizers or disinfectants are readily available and easy to use since they are already prepared. Look for products such as *Clorox Clean-Up® Cleaner with Bleach*, *Fantastic Spray with Bleach* and *Soft Scrub with Bleach*. The active ingredient in the product will be sodium hypochlorite if the product is a bleach-based disinfectant.

Quaternary ammonium sanitizers. Quaternary ammonium compounds, or quats, are widely available, and are also effective sanitizers. The active ingredient in this type of product is a mixture of compounds that would be noted as alkyl dimethyl ammonium chlorides on the product label. Commercial quats are sold under many different brand names, for instance: *Pine-Sol Cleaner and Antibacterial* and *Fantastik All Purpose Cleaner*. Unlike bleach and bleach-based compounds, quats can be used to both clean and sanitize a surface. However, quats need a much longer contact time with a soiled surface and, once sprayed on, should be allowed to remain for 10 minutes before being wiped off. Most household products require that surfaces treated with quats be rinsed before food is placed on the surface. Check product labels for directions for use.

Choose wisely. Either a bleach solution or a quaternary ammonium compound can serve as an effective sanitizer for kitchen surfaces. There are many different brands of each type of product on the market. Choose wisely and with care to avoid cluttering your closets with an overabundance of household products that all work in the same manner. And take care to follow label directions. When it comes to cleaning products, you can have too much of a good thing!