

Prewashing Dishes - Like it or not, the safest way to use a dishwasher is to rewash plates and pots that have built-up gunk where bacteria can grow. Your dishwasher may not be able to clean these thoroughly.

● **Soaking Dishes** - One way to cut back on prewash woes is to keep a sink full of soapy water where pots and pans can be deposited as soon as they come off the stove.

● **Check Water Temperature** - You need to make sure that the temperature inside your dishwasher is about 120 degrees. This will kill dangerous bacteria. It is easy enough to buy a thermometer that you can set in your utensil strainer during the wash cycle.

● **Boosting Dishwasher heat** - You may have to increase the temperature of your dishwasher by regulating the thermostat on your water heater.

● **Dishwasher Safety** - Everything you put in a dishwasher should be dishwasher safe. For safety's sake, try to keep plastics in the upper basket away from the heating element.

● **Care for Special Plates** - Plates with silver and gold trim often don't fare well in a dishwasher. Be sure to load them properly and don't stack them in the cupboard until they have cooled completely.

● **Cleaning Dishwashers** - Cleaning a dishwasher is a little like cleaning a coffee pot. If you see a film collecting inside the appliance, put a cup of household bleach in a bowl on the lower rack and run the dishwasher through the wash cycle, but stop it before it goes into the dry cycle. Now, fill the same bowl with vinegar and run the appliance through the entire cycle.

Ovens and Stovetops

● **Ammonia for Ovens** - Put a shallow pan or dish containing a cupful of ammonia in your oven overnight. This will greatly speed the removal of grease and stains when the internal surfaces are wiped in the morning. The fumes tend to loosen bakes-on stains. It will also help if you put a pot of boiling water on a shelf beneath the ammonia pan.

● **Microwave Magic** - Sometimes it's tough to clean the interior of a microwave oven that has been splattered with food. The job will be easier if you boil water in the microwave first. Steam loosens the dried gunk.

● **Wrap Those Oven Racks** - A good way to clean an oven rack is to wrap it up in an old towel, place it in your bath tub and soak the towel with a mixture of ammonia and water.

● **Immediate Oven Clean-up** - There are going to be boil-overs in the oven. That is a fact of life. But when you do get spills, be sure to clean immediately. Sprinkle salt on the spill.

Then, once the oven has cooled, brush away the powdery residue.

- **Cooking Safety** - Be sure to keep a fully-charged fire extinguisher in your pantry near the stove in case of fires. It does little good tucked away in the garage.
- **Cleaning Stove Tops** - If you are afraid of damaging the finish of your stove top with an abrasive cleanser, try vinegar. This does a good job and also removes odors.
- **Stove Fires** - Never try to put out a stove-top fire with water. Smother it with a pot lid or pour flour, salt or baking soda over it.
- **Removable Stove Parts** - Most of the removable stove parts, such as the burner grills and the filter inside the range hood can be cleaned in your dishwasher.
- **Microwave Smarts** - Because paper towels tend to blow off dishes in the microwave, try using crumpled wax paper. Creamy dishes tend to expand rapidly in a microwave and are a problem to clean up when they splatter or boil over. Heat such mixtures in containers that are about three times larger by volume. Also, be sure to cover these dishes.
- **Keep the Microwave Clean** - Make a habit of laying paper towels underneath dishes to be heated in your microwave oven. This will catch those spills that are such a mess to clean up later.
- **Baby's Bottle** - Whatever you do, don't warm a baby's bottle in the microwave oven. The container may hardly feel warm to the touch but the contents could be dangerously hot.

Refrigerators

- **Cleaning Interiors** - Clean your refrigerator about once a week to keep odors down. discard old or spoiled foods. Wash the inside walls with baking soda and warm water. Avoid using strong disinfectants as foods can pick up the odor.
- **Vinegar Rub Down** - After cleaning the interior of the refrigerator, rub it down with vinegar which helps to prevent mildew and nullifies odors. Then, wipe the surfaces clean with fresh water.
- **Avoiding Ice-Box Odor** - A box of baking soda or a coffee can filled with charcoal can keep ice box odors at bay.
- **Watch for Moisture** - Beads of moisture inside your refrigerator may indicate that you have a leaky gasket.
- **Avoid Cleaning with Bleach** - Bleach is a caustic chemical. It is best not to clean refrigerator interiors with this. For one thing, bleach can damage gaskets, causing them to become brittle and crack.
- **Pay Attention to the Coils** - Homeowners often ignore the condenser coils of their

refrigerators. It is advisable, however, to purchase a coil brush and clean these every six to eight months.

● **Defrosting Frozen Foods** - It is a wise practice to defrost frozen foods inside the refrigerator. Even though this takes more time, it reduces chances of spoilage or growth of bacteria.

● **Remove the Door** - Never get rid of a refrigerator without first removing the door. It can be a hazard to small children.

● **Cool Down and Save Dollars** - Allow hot foods to cool to room temperature before putting them inside the ice box. This will save you dollars in electricity bills.

● **Cleaning Refrigerators** - Three or four times a year, you may want to remove all the food in your refrigerator, switch it off, then wipe down all the surfaces. You may also want to defrost your freezer at the same time. You can use a hair drier to help with defrosting, but keep it away from plastic. You may also want to place a baking pan on the kitchen floor just outside the freezer to catch water drops or to drop pieces of frost that "peel away" from the freezer. You will also want to set an old towel on the floor of the refrigerator to catch any liquid.

● **Deodorizing a Refrigerator** - Place a bowl of cat litter or charcoal in the refrigerator while it is switched off to help absorb the smells. You can also place an open box of baking soda or a bowl of coffee grounds in your refrigerator to help absorb odors. You can also pour 4 or 5 drops of vanilla extract on a cotton ball. Next, place the cotton ball in a saucer and place the saucer on a shelf in the refrigerator. Do the same for your freezer. Replace several times a year.

Miscellaneous

● **Cleaning Pans** - Foods that have burned or stuck to your baking dishes will be easy to remove if the dishes are first soaked for a few minutes in warm water to which a tablespoon of baking soda has been added. Then, wash them as usual. For pans that have larger amounts of burned foods caked to the bottom, sprinkle liberally with baking soda. Add enough water to moisten and let this stand for several hours.

● **Clean While you Cook** - There is nothing harder to face than a stack of dirty pots and pans. Keep hot dishwater in the sink as you work so you can soak or even clean pots, pans, dishes, and utensils while you cook.

● **Brush Away Grime** - Use an old toothbrush to clean the blade of an electric can opener. Also, oil moving parts with a cotton swab dipped in vegetable oil.

● **Cleaning a Blender** - The fastest way to clean a blender is to fill it with hot water and a couple drops of detergent. Blend on high for a few seconds. Then rinse and dry.

● **Clean Lint Filters** - Clean the lint filter of a dryer after every use.

● **Getting the Smell out of the Disposal** - Grind citrus peels in a garbage disposal to reduce the smell.

● **Getting the Food out of the Disposal** - To clear food debris out of the garbage disposal, from time to time, pour a bucket of hot water with a handful of baking soda down the disposal.