

Spring Clean Your Kitchen

According to the American Cleaning Institute survey a few years ago, 72 percent of the respondents said they spring clean every year. Bedrooms and kitchens were the top priority for areas to do spring cleaning.

In a kitchen, you have the potential for food safety issues. Bacteria, including salmonella and E.coli, easily can spread from meat to other surfaces such as cutting boards, your hands, counter tops and plates. Cross-contamination is a leading cause of foodborne illness.

Cleaning removes food, soil and other visible contaminants from various kitchen surfaces. Sanitizing takes the process one step further and reduces the number of invisible contaminants, including bacteria and other potential illness-causing organisms.

For example, after cleaning cutting boards in hot, soapy water and rinsing those with plain water don't forget to sanitize them. Make a bleach solution in your sink with 1 tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water. Immerse the clean cutting board in the solution for at least seven seconds. Remove, but don't rinse again and allow to air dry.

Cleaners may be abrasive or nonabrasive. Abrasive cleaners help remove burned-on or dried food particles, but they may scratch or otherwise damage kitchen surfaces, including countertops and appliances, permanently. Nonabrasive cleaners are best used on satin or high-gloss finishes.

Always read and follow the directions and precautions on all types of cleaners. You can use some common household "kitchen ingredients" as cleaners. Vinegar and water can function as a quick floor cleaner, and baking soda can work as a mild abrasive.

For kitchen drawers and cabinets, pull out all items. Sort into keep, trash, and donate. Wipe out drawers. If you have drawer liners replace or clean any drawer organizers. Place them back neatly. Wipe down drawer fronts and knobs.

For the pantry, take out all items. Throw away expired, old, stale or inedible food. Donate any unexpired, unopened foods that you don't want. Combine half used containers. Wipe down shelves, clean and place items back neatly.

For countertops empty out utensil jars. Wipe down small appliances. Store any appliances that you don't use often. Clean out toaster crumb tray. Clean coffee maker or kettle. Clean microwave inside and out. Wipe down knife block, and sharpen knives. Wipe down paper towel holders, counters and backsplashes.

Ovens and cooktops should be cleaned inside and out. Remove all knobs and grates and wash. Clean inside and outside of the range hood.

For the refrigerator and freezer, pull out all food. Throw away all expired or old food. Wipe down shelves and bins. Vacuum refrigerator coils.

Sink and dishwasher, clean drains and garbage disposal should be scrubbed. Polish sink, faucet and knobs. Run dishwasher empty on a high-heat sanitizing cycle.

Everything else, clean stools, tables and chairs and islands. Spot clean or wash any chair cushions. Wash windows and windowsills. Clean switch plates and knobs. Dust and wipe down light fixtures. Vacuum vents from vent covers. Sweep floor. Scrub any stains, Mop floors, clean trashcans.