

First Things First: 3 Rules to Live By

1. Address fresh splatters right away

Whether it's oil from frying something on the stove or cake batter from the Kitchen Aid, wipe these kinds of messes immediately for easiest clean-up. (Being aware of them is more than half the battle.)

2. Add cabinet-cleaning to your regular kitchen cleaning routine

Incorporating a light but regular cabinet cleaning habit into your deep kitchen cleaning routine will help maintain your cabinets and at least slow down build-up on cabinet exteriors.

3. Deep clean cabinet exteriors at least annually

Much of the grime found on kitchen cabinets is the result of months or even years of gradual accumulation of body oils, unnoticed splatters, and a general veneer of dirt caused by humidity and dust. Depending on their location and how heavily your kitchen is used, kitchen cabinet exteriors should be cleaned annually or semi-annually.

How to Clean, According to Your Cabinet Type

Follow these cleaning solution guidelines according to the types of cabinets you have. Especially with less hardy finishes, always test an inconspicuous area of the cabinets before proceeding with your cleaning.

Wood Cabinets and Laminates

You have a bevy of options for cleaning common wood cabinets.

Use oil soap wood cleaner, such as Murphy's Oil or Howard Orange Oil. Check out this post for more about cleaning wood cabinets with oil soap.

Use dish or laundry detergent mixed with water to de-grease.

A vinegar and water solution also helps cut through grease and grime.

For tougher dirt, make a baking soda paste. Dab on and scrub with a toothbrush. (More on an even tougher baking soda paste below.)

Painted Cabinets

Cabinets painted with oil-based paints can stand up to heavy cleaning. You can use any of the cleaning solutions listed above. You can also use an all-purpose spray for maintenance cleaning.

Cabinets painted with water-based latex paint require more gentle cleaning. Don't use baking soda because it might scratch the surface. Wipe cabinets gently with a rag and stick to all-purpose cleaner or warm water and dish soap to de-grease.

How to Remove Stubborn Grime

If you need something stronger than a water-baking soda paste, consider making a Goo-like solution with coconut oil and baking soda. This DIY cleaner gets labels off jars with ease and it'll work magic on your grimy cabinet doors. Wipe it onto your cabinets and let it sit for a few minutes before scrubbing with a toothbrush or soft cleaning brush.

Cleaning Cabinet Hardware

Cabinet hardware can be cleaned with a rag moistened with a vinegar and water solution or a dish soap



One More Thing:

For Preventative Maintenance, Consider Shelf Paper

Not everyone uses shelf and drawer liner, and I myself saw no need to use it in my own kitchen after we built our home. However, many wouldn't think of unpacking a kitchen without lining drawers and shelves with paper first.

Shelf paper can be used as a layer of "cleanliness" between previous occupants' belongings and where you'll put yours, but can also be used to keep things from sliding around or as an added layer of protection for the wood under dishes or whatever your cabinets contain.

Choose shelf liner material according to function first. For instance, in a deep floor cabinet that houses pots and pans, you'd likely want classic shelf paper so you can slide items around easily to retrieve them and put them away. On the other hand, you could use rubber or cork to purposefully keep things from sliding around in a drawer that houses kitchen tools. If you store oils for cooking in a cabinet, you might want to use plastic shelf liner underneath them so you can wipe up residue easily. Felt protects delicate glassware.

A Sample Plan for Kitchen Cabinet Maintenance AS NEEDED

wipe fresh splatters with a rag and all-purpose cleaner.

DURING DEEP CLEANS, MONTHLY

wipe down cabinet door exteriors with a rag and all-purpose cleaner.

ANNUALLY

Empty cabinets and wipe down shelves. Empty drawers and wipe them out. De-clutter kitchen items as you're putting them away. Clean exteriors according to directions above.