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# HOME JOURNAL™

## Quick Cleaning Tips for the Kitchen

Does it seem like your work in the kitchen is never done? Spend less time cleaning with these quick fixes so you can relax:

- **Refrigerator odor** - if you have an unpleasant odor in your refrigerator, even after you've removed the source, the tried-and-true solution of placing an open box of baking soda inside your refrigerator will work, but coffee grinds will too. Just place a few tablespoons of leftover grinds from your morning brew into an open container, and leave them inside your refrigerator.
- **Messy microwave** - cooked on food can be difficult to remove, but if you place a mug of water into the microwave and heat it to a boil, the steam will help loosen debris so you can clean it.
- **Tower of glasses** - stacking glasses on top of each other may save room in your cabinets, but they may also be stuck together next time you try to use them. To get them apart, slightly heat a pot of water and place the bottom glass into the warm water. While it sits, pour cold water into the top glass. The cold water will cause the top glass to contract, and the heat will cause the bottom glass to expand. In moments, your glasses should separate. Just be careful not to heat the water too much or your glasses could crack.
- **Counter stains** - fruit juice, coffee and rust can discolor the countertops of even the most careful homeowners, but simple household products may help. Try toothpaste to remove rust stains; and a mild dishwashing detergent generally works on juice and coffee.

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## Your Passport to Energy Savings

The sun generates more than 10,000 times the amount of energy the entire world consumes annually ... for free. Utilizing this power can help to cut dependence on fossil fuels, reduce harmful CO2 emissions and dramatically lower your energy costs.

To take advantage of this "green" energy source, you could fit your home with solar panels (also known as photovoltaic cells or PV cells), install PV shingles on your roof or switch to a thermal water heater. Using the sun's energy to heat a swimming pool is another popular choice.

Because these options require the use of mechanical and electrical devices, like pumps, fans, or electrical controls to move the heat that they collect they are referred to as active solar systems.

Passive solar energy, on the other hand, relies on design techniques to capture, store and distribute the power of the sun, simply by making the best use of your home's exposure to it.

Here are some passive solar design techniques to consider. Some would be impractical to apply after your home is built, but others can be adapted to help you save money and the environment:

- **Orientation** - your home should be positioned so that living areas face to the south because that side receives the most sunlight throughout the day.
- **Insulation** - make sure your home is properly and thoroughly insulated.
- **Ventilation** - doors and windows should be opposite each other in order to allow a cooling breeze to flow through your house.
- **Windows** - the windows on the south side of your home should be larger so the sun's light can easily penetrate them and windows on the north side should be smaller to prevent heat loss at night. All windows should be high-quality with energy-saving features like double- or triple-panes and protective coatings.
- **Landscaping** - plant trees to provide shade in summer months, but that will lose their leaves in the wintertime. Arrange landscaping to direct the breeze toward your home.
- **Materials** - if you've ever left a metal object in the sun, then tried to pick it up, you know how quickly metal absorbs heat. For this reason, it's good to incorporate metal into your home design. Other materials that will hold the sun's heat are concrete, tile and brick. Dark colors also attract heat more than lighter hues.

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## Eat Your 5-a-Day

Are you eating at least five servings of delicious, nutritious fruits and vegetables each day? If not, here are some suggestions from the Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) and the National 5-A-Day Partnership to help you make healthy dining choices:

- Opt for a leafy, green salad rather than pasta or potato salad.
- Mix in spinach and other dark leafy greens with your iceberg lettuce to boost your salad's vitamin content.
- Instead of a baked potato loaded with butter and sour cream, select a baked sweet potato, which has just as much flavor without all the fat and calories. Also, sweet potato wedges can be an appetizing substitution for french fries.
- Replace the kids' PB and J with tasty, fun peanut butter and banana sandwiches.
- Cool off with a flavorful fruit sorbet instead of ice cream.
- For another sweet treat, try granola or yogurt topped with fresh fruit.

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## Touch of Honey Banana Smoothies

2 cups of 2-percent milk  
1 1/2 cups vanilla yogurt  
3 large bananas  
1/4 cup honey  
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract  
1/2 tsp. ground nutmeg

Pour milk into a blender. Add vanilla yogurt. Peel and slice banana; add to blender with milk and vanilla yogurt. Process until smooth; about 30 seconds.

Add honey, vanilla extract and nutmeg. Process just until combined; about 15 seconds more. Serve immediately. Dress up smoothies with a banana-slice garnish that has been sprinkled with nutmeg, if desired.

*Makes 4 servings.*



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## Question and Answer

**Q:** What is the purpose of a home inspection and what does it include?

**A:** There are many reasons to have a home inspected before purchasing it, but the two main reasons are to help secure financing and to provide peace of mind.

The National Association of Certified Home Inspectors sets the standard for inspection. They typically look at these areas:

- Basic structures, like the floors and walls
- Foundation
- Heating and cooling system
- Roof and water leaks
- Drainage
- Paint and tile
- Plumbing
- Wiring
- Fireplace, if applicable

After the inspection, you will receive a written report. This will include any maintenance recommendations, plus any major defects, problems that may hinder your ability to obtain financing or safety hazards.

If you are thinking of selling, you may want to have your home inspected so you can repair any defects prior to listing.

Call me today for answers to any of your real estate questions. I'm here to help you!

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