



CLEANLINESS FACTS

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

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BUYING APPLIANCES

Making A Wise Purchasing Decision

For most consumers, a major appliance is a large item in their budget. To keep satisfaction high and disappointment low, The Soap and Detergent Association offers the following pointers.

First, study all the dealer's available printed materials. Specification sheets will help you compare different features, designs and capacities on different makes and models. Check the warranty to find out how long the coverage is in effect, if it covers the entire product or only certain parts, and if labor is included. The appliance manual gives you "hidden" information, such as how the product operates and any special care required.

Compare what you have learned with your personal requirements. What features will you really use? Will the use justify any extra cost? Will this model allow you to add on features in the future? Does the size meet your family's lifestyle requirements? Will the appliance fit where you plan to install it....with sufficient clearance to open doors or accommodate family traffic patterns? Does your home have adequate electrical service for the appliance receptacles? Clearly establish the cost of delivery and installation. Does this include removal of your old appliance? How much will that cost? Does the dealer service the appliances he sells? If not, find the nearest location for authorized factory service.

Once you receive that new appliance, don't wait until it's too late to discover that something doesn't work properly. Warranties are based on time, not usage. Since most defects show up during the first few uses, make a point of trying out each feature and testing the controls in the early stages of ownership. If you should have a problem, contact the dealer or service agency

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immediately. If they don't handle the problem to your satisfaction, contact the manufacturer. Keep a "paper trail," i.e. put your complaints in writing, then keep a copy of all correspondence and service receipts, including no-charge, in-warranty calls. This type of documentation will help settle any conflicts that might arise. ■





FABRIC SOFTENERS

Keeping Up with New Developments

Fabric softeners were the outgrowth of the enormous success of detergents. While the latter cleaned more thoroughly than their soap predecessors, they also removed some natural oils from fibers. As a result, many fabrics, particularly synthetics, ended up clean but scratchy and vulnerable to negative ionic charges that cause static cling.

Fabric softeners coat textile fibers with cationic (positively charged) fatty compounds that soften fabrics and free laundry items from static cling. While rinse-cycle softeners continue to be the most popular, other alternatives are also available. These include dryer sheets imbedded with softeners as well as combination detergent/softener products, including all-in-one liquids and washer-to-dryer packets.

Many softeners perform other functions besides softening. Optical brighteners counteract the dinginess that is sometimes a side effect of the coating action of softeners. Because polyester and polyester blends are particularly difficult to clean, these fabrics may benefit from softeners that also include a special stain-resisting agent. While the agent does not help existing stains, it does treat fibers so it is easier for water and detergent to remove new stains in the next wash. Fragrance, once a popular attribute for softeners, is losing its attraction for consumers.

The Soap and Detergent Association comments that environmental developments are important in the fabric softener market. Concentrates are particularly popular because they use less packaging material. One versatile version can be used in the washing machine or sprayed on a washcloth and tossed in the dryer. Another is available in a concentrated form which can be reconstituted with water.

Some companies are using recycled materials in their liquid softener bottles and dryer sheet boxes. Others have taken advantage of the "bag-in-box" technology to offer liquid softener packaged in a thin plastic liner. The liner is protected by an outer corrugated cardboard carton which is widely recyclable.■

WALL COVERINGS

Small Details Create Exciting Effects

Today's wall coverings are more than just a background for furniture and window treatments. New innovations have turned them into decorative elements that create special effects or provide the illusion of architectural details.

Some of the most exciting new wall coverings are the "interactive" ones designed for youngsters. Characters from sources familiar to children, such as Sesame Street and Disney World, are available in a peel-and-stick format. Other motifs include a write-and-erase blackboard and a computer terminal. These washable decorations work on any smooth surface and can be endlessly rearranged without harming the paint underneath. The manufacturer claims they have a life expectancy of up to 15 years of playtime.

Another company offers 20½" wide scenic borders with restickable elements, such as a barnyard scene with animals, dollhouses with rearrangeable furniture and a cityscape with cars, pedestrians and stores. Hung at child height, they give hours of imaginative play.

Borders, designed to stand alone or with companion wallcoverings, are plentiful and are now one of the hottest categories in wall coverings, reports The Soap and Detergent Association. Available in a variety of widths, they can be used to emphasize existing elements in a room or as an inexpensive way to create details where none exist. Because they are easy on the budget and easy to handle, even home owners who wouldn't dream of hanging their own wallpaper find border installation a snap.

As a general trend, Victorian themes are gradually being replaced by a more traditional European look. While the most popular country designs continue to be influenced by French, English and American motifs, a new, more global Country is gradually emerging - one strongly influenced by ethnic folk patterns and colors of Scandinavia, Africa, South America, the American Southwest and the tropics. Pure white walls are being replaced by wall coverings with subtle pigmentation, such as color washes, watercolor effects and perlescent colors.■

COPPER AND BRASS**Keeping These Kindred Metals Beautiful**

Copper and brass may be as decorative as silver and gold, but when it comes to function, they are infinitely more practical. Early on, man discovered that if copper was alloyed with other metals, it became harder and more durable. Zinc was added...and brass was born.

Copper and brass are durable kindred metals that can withstand daily use. However, since both are subject to tarnish, corrosion, dents and natural deterioration, The Soap and Detergent Association emphasizes that regular maintenance and preventative care are important to preserve the longevity and beauty of the pieces.

To remove tarnish and corrosive elements, pieces should be cleaned and polished as needed. The type of cleaning required depends on whether or not the piece has a lacquer coating. Most new pieces, even those intended for food use, are coated. To be sure, rub the piece with your fingertips or apply a tiny bit of commercial metal cleaner in an inconspicuous area. If neither one makes an impression on the piece, it is coated. If either alters the surface, it is not coated. Before cleaning a lacquered piece, check to make sure the coating has not cracked or worn off. If it is intact, simply dust with a soft cloth or wash with a solution of hand dishwashing detergent and warm water. Rinse with warm water and dry with a soft cloth. Avoid metal polish or hot water, as either may break down the lacquer. If the lacquer is damaged, remove it completely before cleaning and polishing. Water-based lacquer can be removed with hot, soapy water. Oil-based lacquer can be removed with mineral spirits. After removing the lacquer, thoroughly rinse and dry the piece, then apply a cleaner specially formulated for brass or copper.

If the uncoated surface is corroded or unevenly worn, smooth it out by rubbing with fine steel wool dipped in a solution of ¼ cup table salt and 1 quart white vinegar. Because any residue will cause additional corrosion, finish by washing with warm water and hand dishwashing detergent. Rinse and dry thoroughly. Since cleaning can dim the shine, finish up by applying a polish specially formulated for copper

and brass. Remove all the polish residue, then buff with a soft, clean, all-cotton cloth. Antique or extremely valuable pieces may be an exception to the previous instructions. Before cleaning or attempting to remove any finishes, it would be wise to consult a metalsmith or metal conservator. The piece might have a finish that adds to its historic or intrinsic value.■

STAINLESS STEEL COOKWARE**Taking Care of the Immaculate Metal**

Cookware made from stainless steel is both durable and scratch resistant. With proper care, stainless pots and pans will retain their beauty and high performance features for many years.

For everyday maintenance, wash the cookware in warm, soapy water and rinse with clean water. To prevent water spots, dry thoroughly with a soft, clean towel. If desired, stainless steel cookware can be cleaned in an automatic dishwasher. To avoid discoloration, don't let food deposits, particularly those with a fat or salt content, sit in the cookware overnight. Whether cooking or cleaning, be careful to avoid sudden temperature changes, cautions The Soap and Detergent Association. They may warp the metal. Let the pan cool before cleaning. When cooking, never put hot water into a cold pan. Cook over a medium or a low heat setting. In addition to wasting energy, high heat settings may stain the metal and burn food.

If food does burn or stick to the pan, let it cool, then fill the pan with water until all the food residue is covered. Then heat the water to boiling, reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Remove the pan from heat. Once the water has cooled, loosen the food particles with a rubber scraper, then pour the water out. To remove the remaining stains, scrub with a thick paste of a few drops of water and a stainless steel cleanser applied to a tightly folded paper towel. Rinse the pan thoroughly and dry with a towel.

If stainless steel is used for frozen vegetables, white spots may appear. The culprits are the salts and preservatives used in the freezing process. To remove the spots, moisten a paper towel with a generous amount of white vinegar and rub vigorously or apply a stainless steel cleanser.■





MISCELLANY

Better Organization

When space is at a premium, The Soap and Detergent Association suggests that better organized closets are one way consumers can increase the amount of storage. Special, easy-to-install closet systems can convert the traditional open closet into a practical configuration of adjustable shelves and hanging spaces customized to the length of the clothes. Several of the newest systems include support posts or walls, so that no drilling is required when installing the system. Another space maker is a free-standing unit that creates a sports closet wherever it is assembled. The unit is designed to hold everything, from tennis rackets to bicycles, in a safe, accessible, compact manner. The center can be adjusted so the units form a tower or fit side by side; the wood grain shelf can be placed anywhere in the unit. Adjustable bar supports can be set to any height to accommodate just about any type of hanging equipment.

Stone Age Cooking for Modern Times

A proliferation of products that enhance the ability of the conventional oven, such as stone baking tiles and barbecue pizza bakers that can be used in the oven as well as on the barbecue grill, are gaining in popularity, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

One line of bakeware consists of a specially designed square aluminum tray and fire-clay tiles. Unlike bread baked on metal, the moisture in the dough is absorbed by the bricks during baking. Consumers appreciate the results - lighter, flakier crusts on doughs, cookies and breads.

Consumer interest has also been sparked by products with fire-clay tiles that simulate the traditional pizza oven. Offerings include a pizza baker that can be used with gas or charcoal barbecues, as well as in a traditional kitchen oven. Another does dual duty as an accessory for a grill designed for fireplaces and campfires or in a conventional oven.

Options Galore in Cooking Appliances

Faced with a bewildering assortment of modes, styles and features in cooking appliances, consumers tend to focus on four characteristics - performance, styling, cost and cleanability. Among serious cooks, gas remains the mode of choice. With only one producer in the marketplace, the popularity of radiant and halogen cooking through ceramic glass is inhibited by its cost. However, manufacturers of solid disks have borrowed the concept of a light ring around an element to warn of residual heat.

The Soap and Detergent Association notes that the desire for convenience and easy clean features has prompted sealed burners, glass smoothtops and upswept surfaces on gas ranges. One-button operations, visible graphics and easily gripped knobs are also popular.

Oven capacity is another selling point, with some gas ranges going as large 4.4 cubic feet. Although even wall ovens are getting bigger, the majority of sales in the cooking appliance field still revolve around the 30", free-standing range.

Getting All Soaped Up

In our progress from the days of soapmaking at home to the abundance of soaps on drugstore and supermarket shelves, The Soap and Detergent Association observes that consumers have become more interested in quality, specialty soaps.

New anti-bacterial liquid soaps address consumers' concerns regarding health and hygiene. By adding moisturizers and controlling the amount of the active agent, these new soaps are milder than their forerunners which were primarily used by health care professionals. Heavily scented soaps particularly appeal to young adult men, provided the soaps also have the benefit of deodorant properties. Other segments of the market are attracted to fragrance-free bars and liquids.

In general, consumers are responding to soaps that are milder than ordinary deodorant soaps. Three-in-one soaps that clean, moisturize and provide deodorant protection, are formulated to be suitable for both the face and the body.

Washable Rugs

As a result of new dyeing and tufting techniques, fashionable yardage rugs with rubber backs are available in a proliferation of colors and designs. Now, the rug in the hall can be as beautiful as the traditional rug in the living room, but as washable as the accent rug in the bathroom.

Today's washable, latex-backed accent rugs, in sizes up to 30" X 50", are coordinated to current decorating trends throughout the home. Orientals, Southwest patterns, primitives, geometrics, florals, paisleys, plaids, stonewashed fibers, tone-on-tones and Victorian motifs are among the designs spotted by The Soap and Detergent Association. In addition to the easy maintenance, consumers are attracted by their fashionable appearance and low cost.

Fragrant Fabrics

The newest fabric technology from Japan includes fibers that contain fragrances, deodorants and anti-bacterial agents, reports The Soap and Detergent Association.

These additives are incorporated into synthetic fibers either as a mixture with a thermoplastic polymer or by microencapsulation. In the latter process, small quantities of an agent are trapped in a small capsule. Then the capsule is added to the substances making up the synthetic fiber.

Hanging A Suit

A good way to avoid a wrinkled suit is to be sure it is properly hung, advises The Soap and Detergent Association.

Choose a shaped hanger that is sturdy enough to support the weight of the jacket. Center the jacket on the hanger and adjust the shoulders to the proper position. Let the suit air thoroughly for several hours before hanging it in the closet. This allows wrinkles to hang out and permits any body heat trapped in the fabric during wearing to escape. For best results, store the suit in the closet in its own garment bag or make sure there is sufficient room between hangers to prevent crushing. Storing it in a plastic bag can prevent wrinkles, providing the suit has been thoroughly aired first. ■

WHAT'S NEW?

Sashades is a convenient, attractive alternative to "make-do" window coverings such as sheets and newspapers. It's an inexpensive way for new homeowners to obtain privacy while waiting for their curtains or for those who are remodeling or cleaning window treatments. The non-woven polyester comes on 24' long X 50" wide rolls, packaged with double-sided adhesive.

(Sashades, Inc.; 1/2 Riverside Drive, Suite 326; Toluca Lake, CA 91602)

Thanks to Pot Mate, there is now a practical place to rest pot lids while checking on simmering dishes. This dishwasher-safe rack holds one pot lid neatly and securely, with a reservoir to catch drippings and a built-in spoon rest. It takes up a minimum of counter space and will hold almost any size lid.

(Chris Payne International; P.O. Box 1813; Walnut, CA 91789)

Busy cooks will appreciate perfect rice in just ten minutes with Micro Rice, an attractive black oven-to-tabletop microwave rice cooker. It can be used for all types of rice, including wild rice, plus oatmeal, beans and peas. The family size cooker makes eight servings and comes complete with recipes. A carbon steel core with bonded aluminum layers on the outside eliminates the problems of sticking or burning. (Nordic Ware, Division of Northland Aluminum Products, Inc.; Highway #7 at #100; Minneapolis, MN 55416)

Inspired by requests for longer sheets to fit high-profile, padded mattresses, one manufacturer is offering luxury length blankets. These blankets are 96" long, up from 90". The longer versions will retail for the same price as their regular length counterparts. Special packaging will alert the consumer to the difference in size.

(Minette Mills, Inc.; P.O. Box 49; Grover, NC 28073) ■





"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS

When washing heavier items such as pillows or jeans, put towels in to balance the load. This will help prevent an unbalanced load from shutting the washer off before it's done.

Be sure to use enough stain remover or detergent when pretreating a stain. Adequate remover or detergent is needed to hold the loosened soil in suspension until the wash water carries it away. When too little laundry product is used, the stain moves to the edge of the treated area, leaving a ring around the stain. If a ring appears around a pretreated stain, re-treat the stain and wash the garment again.

Use rubbing alcohol to help remove ink stains. Hair spray is not very effective for removing ink because the additives in the hair spray will hold the stain down instead of helping to remove it.

To remove those holiday beverage stains such as coffee, tea, soft drinks or wine, immediately sponge or soak the stain in cool water. Then, pretreat with a prewash stain remover or liquid laundry detergent. Launder using chlorine bleach if it is safe for the fabric, otherwise use a color-safe bleach. If the stain has set for some time, presoak in a product containing enzymes, then launder.

For best results when cleaning comforters, sleeping bags, coats and other cold weather garments made with down or fiberfill, follow the care label. Many can be laundered at home but some may be too large for a home washing machine. They can be taken to a commercial laundromat where larger washers are available. To keep down or fiberfill looking its best, clean the item at least once during its wearing season and again before it is stored. Do not store these items in plastic bags. ■

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