CLEANLINESS FACTS
TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION
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TALKING TURKEY
Guidelines for Safe Defrosting and Stuffing

A succulent turkey overflowing with stuffing presents a Thanksgiving portrait worthy of Norman Rockwell. But behind that beautiful picture lurks the potential for foodborne illness. To prevent this, here are some basic safety guidelines for thawing and stuffing the turkey.

The Soap and Detergent Association reminds consumers to always wash their hands after handling raw turkey, and thoroughly clean all the kitchen surfaces that the turkey touches. This rule applies for both thawing and stuffing. Clean and disinfect countertops and cutting boards. Use a disinfectant cleaner or a bleach and water solution, following the label directions to use the product properly and get the best results.

While frozen, a turkey is safe indefinitely. However, once it begins to defrost, any bacteria that may have been present prior to freezing is set free to grow again. A frozen turkey should go directly from the grocery store to the freezer or the refrigerator. Do not leave it in the car, on the back porch or anyplace else where a safe temperature cannot be exactly monitored and ensured.

Countertop thawing is not a viable defrosting method. The outer layer of a package of frozen meat or poultry left thawing on a countertop for more than two hours reaches between 40 and 140°F. This is the danger zone — the temperature range in which foodborne bacteria can multiply rapidly.

The safe alternatives for defrosting a turkey are:

1) in the refrigerator,
2) in cold water,
3) in the microwave.

The refrigerator method is the slowest, but the easiest - it's the only method that safely permits refreezing without cooking. In a refrigerator set at 40°F, allow approximately 24 hours for every five pounds of turkey.

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The microwave method is quick, but has two drawbacks. First, the size of the microwave limits the turkey size. Second, because some areas of the food may warm and begin to cook during microwaving, the turkey must be cooked immediately after thawing.

Cold water thawing requires about 30 minutes per pound. Before thawing, make sure the turkey is in a leak-proof package or plastic bag. Otherwise, bacteria from the surrounding environment could be introduced into the food or the turkey could

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absorb water, resulting in an unsatisfactory texture after cooking. Submerge the turkey in cold tap water. Check frequently to be sure it stays cold. Change the water every 30 minutes until the turkey is thawed.

Unless prepared, cooked, and handled properly, stuffing, too, can be a source of foodborne illness. Bacteria can survive in stuffing that has not reached the safe temperature of 165°F. Even if the turkey itself has reached the proper internal temperature of 180°F in the innermost part of the thigh, this does not mean that the stuffing inside the bird's cavity has reached a sufficiently high temperature to kill the bacteria. In order to make sure the stuffing is safe, the turkey may end up overcooked. For optimum safety and satisfaction, it is best to cook the stuffing separately from the bird.

If cooking the stuffing in the bird is still your preference, take these precautions. Make the stuffing just before it goes into the bird. You can also prepare the wet and dry ingredients separately at an earlier time and chill them. Remove from the refrigerator and mix together just before stuffing and roasting the bird.

Stuff the bird loosely. As a guide, use about three-quarters cup of stuffing per pound of turkey. Immediately after stuffing, place the turkey in an oven set no lower than 325°F. Using a conventional meat thermometer to test in several places, cook until the thermometer measures at least 180°F in the innermost part of the thigh, the juices run clear and the center of the stuffing inside the turkey reaches 165°F. Let the turkey stand twenty minutes, then remove all the stuffing and carve the bird.

Within two hours of cooking, carve any remaining turkey off the bones. Refrigerate stuffing and turkey separately in shallow containers. Discard leftovers after four days. ■

HEARTHS ABOUND
Keeping All the Home Fires Burning

Gas and electric fireplaces, freestanding stoves, outdoor grills and outdoor room appliances are all experiencing a surge in popularity, thanks to the improved realism of gas burning devices and the heavy focus on outdoor rooms.

Ducted gas fireplaces are one of the hearth product industry's hottest trends, observes The Soap and Detergent Association. Some versions can serve as both fireplace and fully-operable central heat/air-conditioning units, making it possible to simultaneously enjoy the ambience of a fire and the cooling breezes of air conditioning. These units are particularly suited to new homes, renovations, apartments or condominiums where both primary or supplemental heating and cooling is necessary.

Demand for wood stoves is increasing, particularly among consumers who fear that Y2K events may bring about a fuel shortage. Heating capabilities allow the homeowner to operate independently of the electric power system when necessary. Some models come with upper warming cabinets and hot water reservoirs with a tap.

Gas fireplaces and inserts have gone stylish, incorporating details such as gold-plated doors, expansive front glass views and brickaded interior panels with valves and screws completely concealed. Peninsula, see-through and corner styles are available.

Patios and backyards are being transformed into outdoor rooms with fireplaces, built-in barbecues and firepits. Innovations include stainless steel construction for protection against harsh elements, moisture-draining systems to steer water away from the firebox, cooling systems to prevent heat emission and portable units that look like expensive built-ins. At least one manufacturer offers a combination fireplace and grill with a glass door so there's no need to lift the hood to check grilling food for excess charring. Another is offering a stainless steel refrigerated beer tap — the perfect companion to the outdoor kitchen! ■

CLEANING IN HARMONY
Survey Uncovers the Dirt

Money may be the major cause of arguments in a marriage, but cleaning isn't far behind according to a survey conducted by The Soap and Detergent Association.

Almost half (46 percent) of all couples who make a home together argue about cleaning. Issues under contention are who should do the cleaning, how often to clean and the best way to clean. Women claim they do 79 percent of their household's cleaning, while men admit they do only 35 percent. If there are children in the household, the incidence of arguments over cleaning goes up to 55 percent.

Approximately two-thirds of those surveyed felt their partner's cleaning skills were less than perfect. Major complaints include not cleaning often enough, vacuuming or dusting around items without moving them, failing to clean up after using the kitchen and disregarding the need to clean the bathroom.

When asked to rate their partner's ability to clean, 55 percent of men gave their mates the highest rating, while women generally scored their mates as average. Using a 1 to 5 scale where 1 is "extremely poor" and 5 is "extremely well," women rated the men in their lives a "3."

When it comes to doing the laundry or cleaning the kitchen or bathroom, women definitely believe they do it better than their partners. Twenty-two percent of the males feel that they do a better job vacuuming, while 25 percent said they could not top their mate in any cleaning task.

Some of the disparity in attitudes seems to stem from the fact that the two sexes don't notice dirt in the same way. Women value the need for thorough cleaning to get rid of dirt and germs. Men generally see no problem with cutting corners as long as things *look* clean.

As couples get older, arguments about cleaning decline. Only 34 percent of couples age 55 and over find cleaning a source of discord. ■

BIG BUSINESS IN CHILDREN'S ROOMS
It's a Boom in Babyland

The ever-growing interest in home décor and the trends toward having smaller families and starting them later in life means a proliferation of late-blooming nurseries and a desire to furnish them in style, notes The Soap and Detergent Association.

Children often get the smallest bedroom but that bedroom contains more toys, more electronics and more equipment than ever before. The natural pairing of kids and clutter has prompted several manufacturers to expand their lines of juvenile storage items. Closet extenders, wall racks, hooks, hanging baskets, over-the-door organizers and under-the-bed storage containers are available in cartoon character motifs and other designs that have high kid-appeal. Two basic color schemes — primary red, blue and green or pink and lavender — are often used to provide boy/girl differentiation to the same in-line assortment.

In the bedding area, one of the most interesting innovations is the Nordic Sac, a top-of-the-bed duvet cover that zips onto the bottom sheet of a twin bed. No more covers tossed off in the night or struggling and straining to make the bed in the morning. It unzips to double as a sleeping bag or a separate comforter — great for sleepovers at home or away. Matching bed ruffles and pillow shams are available.

Lighting comes in for some special attention with licensed designs featuring, among others, the gang from Peanuts, Looney Tunes and Disney, adorning table lamps, gooseneck desk lamps and nightlights. Several manufacturers offer lamps coordinated to their bedding lines.

Novelty telephones appear to be targeted to the kid market, but the reality is somewhat different. Because the characters are familiar to children, they are the ones who often initiate the purchase. Once in the home, it ends up being a family phone. Interestingly, college kids appreciate the "camp" quality of these phones, making them a popular addition to dorm rooms. ■

MISCELLANY

Colds and Flu Take a Toll on Busy Women

"It's only a cold" or "just the flu" doesn't reflect the seriousness of the problem or the toll these illnesses take on the workforce. Each year, they cause American women to miss over 46 million days of work.

The Soap and Detergent Association reminds everyone that regular hand washing and avoiding close contact with people who are sick are the best preventatives. Once a cold or flu takes hold, there is no magical cure.

To relieve cold discomfort or the aches and fever of flu, acetaminophen is less likely to irritate the stomach than aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs. Increased fluid intake, such as water and juice, helps prevent dryness of the nose and throat. Smoking increases the risk of colds and flu. Both primary and secondary smoke irritate the air passages, thus prolonging the symptoms. For additional information, visit the American Lung Association's web site at http://www.lungusa.org.

Leather on the Rise

Leather is the new darling of the home furnishings arena. High fashion colors, exciting new finishes and more affordable price ranges are making today's décor-conscious consumers take notice. These new colors are coordinated to the best selling colors in fabrics, paints and carpets. Colors like porcelain rose, peach, orange and lavender join the traditional black, brown and red offerings. Even basic brown isn't so basic anymore. At least one manufacturer is offering 22 different shades.

In terms of style, leather furniture has gone beyond the traditional couch and club chair to encompass modern seating and bedroom furniture. And within an upholstered piece, embossed leather is often combined with soft fabrics, such as velvet and chenille, for a look that is visually and texturally appealing.

To keep these leather pieces looking great, The Soap and Detergent Association recommends cleaning them with a product formulated for leather. Follow the manufacturer's directions and test in an inconspicuous area before using.

Trends in the Housewares Market

Looking for an interesting gift or a pick-me-up item for the home? Either way, there is something that is sure to please among new offerings in the housewares market.

Soft, toned-down colors — antidotes to stressful, high-tech living — predominate in dinnerware. New glazes and finishes provide texture and depth. The resurgence of Fiesta ware has inspired many other versions of solid color, mix-and-match dinnerware.

Upscale stainless steel flatware is becoming more popular, while gold- and silver-plated flatware is loosing favor. It's part of a trend toward easy maintenance and casual living.

Whimsical teapots, stackable cookware and anodized polished cookware, in fact anything that smacks of gourmet, is popular in kitchenware. Ergonomically designed handles on cookware and utensils are getting good customer response. Interesting accessories, such as oil misters, citrus reamers, ceramic spice grinders and combination blenders/food processors, are available at a multitude of price points.

Consumers are embracing a more casual lifestyle and products are reflecting this trend — formal is out and relaxed, casual and fun are in. Begging-to-be-touched looks, such as raised designs, retroglaze and matte-glossy combinations are popular.

Renewed interest in artisan design is evident in chunky, irregular glassware and dinnerware with handpainted designs. The Soap and Detergent Association reminds consumers to check the care instructions, as these items should usually be hand washed, not placed in an automatic dishwasher.

Other trends include country looks with rustic and nature-inspired themes. Licensed products, including Mickey Mouse, Winnie the Pooh and Looney Tunes, offer fun looks but with a decidedly adult orientation.

Q & A
SDA Answers Your Questions

Q: I just moved into a home that has wood floors. What is the best way to care for them?
A: Keep your wood floors clean by sweeping or vacuuming regularly. Sealed wood floors can be cleaned with a sponge mop dampened with a solution of water and a liquid wood cleaner. Follow the label directions on the cleaner. This type of cleaner will remove soils without leaving a dull residue.

When using any product containing water, be sure to remove the excess liquid with a soft, dry cloth. Large amounts of water left standing on wood can seep through nicks and scratches in the finish and cause the wood to warp and discolor.

To hide minor scratches and blemishes and protect the wood surface, you should polish your floor periodically. There are solvent-based and water-based waxes. Generally, the use of water-based floor polishes on wood floors isn't recommended. These polishes have to be removed periodically and the removal process can raise the wood grain or cause black stains. Some polyurethane sealers are sensitive to solvent-based waxes. If the sealer becomes soft, cloudy or sticky, remove the wax by wiping gently with a clean, soft cloth. Ask the floor manufacturer to recommend an appropriate cleaning or polishing product.

Some waxes need to be buffed, others are self-polishing. Since buffing and self polishing products are not compatible with each other, it's best to choose one type of product and use it consistently. There are also products that clean and polish in one easy step. Read the product labels and select a polish that is best for you, and always test the wax in an inconspicuous area of the floor before proceeding. ■

WHAT'S NEW?

Is energy consumption on the rise? A new Department of Energy report, *Electricity Consumption by Small End Uses in Residential Buildings*, examines the impact of small appliances, including home computers and televisions, on total energy consumption over the next 10 years. Predictions include a dramatic rise in the use of appliances, while efficiency gains will help control total energy consumption. To obtain a copy of the full report, request NTIS Publication Number PB-98-169204.
U.S. Dept. of Commerce; 5285 Port Royal Road; Springfield, VA 22161.

Plate Pal is a lightweight, microwave-activated polymer disk that heats the center of the plate in seconds while the rim stays cool. It's the perfect way to serve guests hot food on easy-to-handle plates. Plate Pal rinses clean for repeated use.
(ISI International; 30 Chapin Road;
PO Box 616; Pine Brook, NJ 07058)

Goodbye Lice is an automatic comb promoted as one way to get rid of those critters that tenaciously cling to children's hair. The unit is designed to remove both lice and their nits with dual combs that move opposite each other at a rate of 200 cycles per second. The manufacturer states that the comb can be use by children over five without parental assistance.
(Emjoi Inc.; 150 E. 52nd St, 8th Floor;
New York, NY 10022)

On cold winter nights, grown ups and kids alike can brew up a warming treat, thanks to two new small appliances. The Cocomotion hot chocolate maker has kid-safe features, removable mixing impeller with no sharp blades and an automatic shutdown so milk won't scorch. The Mr. Coffee espresso/cappuccino maker can brew up to 16 cups of espresso. It also produces steamed milk for cappuccino, hot chocolate, coffee, etc.
(Sunbeam Corp.; 1615 S. Congress Ave.,
Suite 200; Del Ray Beach, FL 33445) ■

"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS

To launder electric blankets, use a gentle cycle and a short agitation time - about two to three minutes. Do not dry in a dryer unless the care label recommends it. Hang the blanket over two lines or lay it flat to dry.

Never dryclean an electric blanket, the chemicals may ruin the wiring.

Here's how to know if large items, such as comforters, sleeping bags, etc., can be laundered in your home washer.

- Place the item in the empty washer tub.
- If the item fits loosely in the washer and the top row of tub holes is visible, it's safe to wash it.
- If the top row of holes is not visible, the item is too large and should be laundered in a commercial washer at a laundromat.

Laundering pillows helps keep dust mites under control - wash and dry them at least once a month unless you use allergen-impermeable covers.

Launder only pillows that are labeled "washable" by the manufacturer and follow the care instructions. Wash two pillows at a time to keep the load balanced.

Set the washer for a gentle cycle and warm water. Add detergent to the washtub and partially fill the washer. Submerge the pillows in the water to expel air. Allow the washer to complete filling, then wash for one to two minutes.

Dry pillows in the dryer. Periodically take them out and fluff them to prevent clumping as they dry.

Encase pillows, comforters and mattresses in allergen-impermeable covers to reduce your exposure to dust mites. At least four times a year, use a damp cloth to wipe off the covers. Launder them occasionally, following cover manufacturer's instructions.

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