

  
 **C**LEANLINESS FACTS

TIPS AND TRENDS FROM THE SOAP AND DETERGENT ASSOCIATION

475 Park Avenue South New York, New York 10016

**CERAMIC TILE****Versatility and Enduring Beauty**

Ceramic tile is a versatile surface equally at home indoors and outdoors, on floors, walls, ceilings, countertops, tables, fireplaces, pool areas - and more. When clay is combined with special minerals and fired at extremely high temperatures, the result is an extremely strong product.

From an aesthetic perspective, ceramic tile can be matte finish, high gloss, textured, patterned, sculpted, silk-screened, decaled or hand painted. From a practical perspective, ceramic tile is extremely durable. It will not fade, stain, wear, rip or burn. From a health perspective, ceramic tile is hygienic. It will not retain liquids or absorb fumes, smoke, odors or allergy-causing elements.

There are three basic classifications of ceramic tile. Biocottura means that the tile is fired twice. These tiles have a shiny, impermeable surface. Monocottura means that the tile is fired once at an extremely high temperature. The resulting tile has a higher resistance and a less shiny surface than biocottura. Unglazed refers to tiles made from clays, such as terra cotta and porcelain stoneware, that are fired once. They may be left in their natural state or polished smooth for a more finished look.

While just about any tile suits a wall application, floors are another story. In general, high gloss tiles are not suitable for heavily trafficked areas. In kitchens, tiles with smooth surfaces are easy to mop clean. In bathrooms and pool areas, tiles with a textured surface are slip resistant.

Ceramic tile is easy to maintain. The Soap and Detergent Association suggests using a non-abrasive, all-purpose cleaner or a tile cleaner. To avoid water spots and remove any soil residue, tiles should be rinsed with clean water and buffed dry with a soft cloth. On high gloss wall tiles, use glass cleaner to add extra shine.

 **T**ABLE OF CONTENTS**January/February 1995**

CERAMIC TILE Versatility and Enduring Beauty	1
FLOOR CARE LOWDOWN Easy Care for Hard Surface Flooring	2
WHEN DOWN IS DIRTY Caring for and Cleaning Down	3
ELECTRIC COOKTOPS A Brief Overview	3
MISCELLANY Home Furnishings Fabrics Cross Over Spacemakers for Space Age Kitchens Prolonging the Life of Household Fabrics Accessorizing the Sink	4 4 4 4
Q & A SDA Answers Your Questions	5
WHAT'S NEW?	5
"KEEP IT CLEAN" BRIEFS	6

Tiled showers should be cleaned weekly to avoid soap scum and hard water deposits.

When the grout gets dirty, clean it with a brush and an all-purpose cleaner or tub, tile and sink cleaner. For badly stained or mildewed grout, use a mildew stain remover or a solution of 3/4 cup of chlorine bleach in one gallon of water. Carefully apply the latter, using a brush. Rinse thoroughly. Do not mix chlorine bleach with products containing ammonia or acids. ■





## FLOOR CARE LOWDOWN

### Easy Care for Hard Surface Flooring

Whether the materials are natural or man-made, flooring choices have never been more beautiful . . . or easier to maintain. Today consumers can choose from a variety of materials.

Vinyl is the most widely used man-made material. This type of flooring is available in conventional or no-wax styles. When durability takes precedence over price, choose a thick vinyl with homogeneous color - i.e., color that extends through the entire thickness. No-wax versions have a clear wear-layer applied to the surface. Other man-made options include linoleum, which has a low-level shine and is susceptible to damage from strong cleaners; asphalt tile, a hard, brittle tile that can be installed directly over concrete slabs or basement floors; and rubber tile, a very expensive but exceptionally quiet flooring material.

Natural flooring materials include wood, cork, masonry and stone, marble, terrazzo (marble chips imbedded in cement or resin, then smoothly finished), ceramic tile, quarry tile, terra cotta, slate, brick and concrete.

The cardinal rule of good floor care is to pick the right product for the job. There are three basic categories of floor care products:

- The first includes products that clean. These remove dirt and soil from resilient floors or well-sealed wood floors. Some can leave a dulling residue that must be washed away.
- The second category includes products that clean and add shine. These combine cleaning agents for dirt removal with polishing agents that add protection and shine. Since there are many varieties, The Soap and Detergent Association reminds consumers to read the label recommendations for specific types of floorings. Note, too, that some of these products are self-removing, while others should be removed periodically.
- Products that add protective shine comprise the third category. These conventional polishes are used to protect and add or restore shine to resilient floors, as well as stone or masonry floors. They are applied

after the floor has been cleaned, rinsed and dried. They dry shiny and require periodic removal.

The second rule of good floor care is to have a regular cleaning schedule. Floors in heavily trafficked areas will require more frequent maintenance than floors that get less use. In developing a cleaning schedule, it is important to recognize that spills and traffic patterns are more noticeable on very light and very dark floors. In addition, solid color floors show soil more quickly than patterned floors.

Spills should be blotted up as soon as they occur. Avoid rubbing the area dry, as it could leave a dull spot. This is especially true for polished floors.

For wood and cork floors, remove dirt regularly (daily, if possible), using a broom, lightweight vacuum cleaner or dust mop. Small particles of dust and grit can easily scratch the flooring. Periodically clean and restore the shine. Floors previously treated with paste wax may simply require rebuffering. If a tougher hand is required, consider a wax that removes the previous layer as the new layer is applied. When changing products, it is important to completely remove the old layer of wax before applying the new one. Stubborn spots can be removed by rubbing with fine steel wool dipped in a solvent base wax.

For washable floors, remove loose dirt with a broom, lightweight vacuum cleaner or dust mop. Damp mop and clean, using water and an all-purpose cleaner recommended for washing floors. Use a mop, sponge or cloth dipped in the solution then wrung out. Change the cleaning solution as often as necessary. For no-wax vinyl floors, use a cleaner recommended for no-wax floors or a no-wax floor cleaner that cleans and shines. Take particular care to rinse off the cleaner after each use. Otherwise, a cloudy residue can occur that masks the shine. Over time, dirt and grit can cause scratches that dull the no-wax finish. If this occurs, use a floor care product that cleans and shines or adds shine to provide protection and fill in scratches. For conventional vinyl flooring, remove the applied polish after six or eight coats, or at least once a year. Reapply, using a product specially formulated for vinyl floors. ■

## WHEN DOWN IS DIRTY Caring for and Cleaning Down

Down-filled items, long popular with hikers and campers, are now crowding coat racks and closets everywhere. And down-filled comforters and pillows are providing a cozy respite from winter's chilly nights.

Down is the soft, fluffy layer of hair that grows under the feathers of ducks, geese and other water fowl. It is an excellent insulator, retaining its warmth as long as it stays dry. Articles labeled as "down" may include some feathers. If the percentage of down is less than 80%, it must be specified on the label.

As a general rule, down items should be cleaned twice a year --- at least once during the wearing season and again before storing

Down-filled items can be washed or drycleaned, depending on the care required by the shell fabric and the size of the item. Read and follow care label instructions for the proper cleaning method. Washable items can be laundered by hand or in a washing machine. However, the process can be awkward, particularly in the case of very large items that need lots of washer and dryer space. It may be preferable to take such items to a laundromat where the machines are larger or send them to a dry cleaner.

Down must be tumble dried at a temperature no higher than 140° F. Waterproof or water-resistant shell fabrics can slow down the drying process. Although some manufacturers suggest putting tennis balls in the dryer to keep the filling from clumping, The Soap and Detergent Association does not recommend this practice. Several unpleasant things may happen: the rubber in the tennis balls may not withstand the heat; dye transfer may occur from neon tennis balls to down garment; and the balls may wedge between the dryer baffle and bulkhead, causing damage to the dryer. A better practice is to periodically stop the dryer, remove the item and shake it vigorously. Adding clean, dry towels to the dryer load will also help distribute the filling. ■

## ELECTRIC COOKTOPS A Brief Overview

For those considering a new electric cooktop, here is some information, courtesy of The Soap and Detergent Association.

The *conventional coil cooktop* is a modernized version of the first electric cooktop. Heat travels from the hot coil to the cookware by conduction (where there is contact) and radiation.

The *solid element cooktop* is prized for its Euro-styling. It has grooved, cast iron heating elements sealed to a tempered glass or porcelain enamel-on-steel surface. These elements share many qualities with cast-iron cookware: gradual heat-up, even cooking and heat retention.

*Radiant cooktops* have heating wires that operate beneath the glass ceramic surface. When electricity passes through resistance heating wires, the wire element glows brightly and maximum heat is emitted. The heat is radiated to the surface, then transferred to the cookware by conduction and radiation.

*Halogen elements* utilize halogen lamps and resistant heating wires. The infrared heat that results is less subject to absorption by the glass cooktop surface. Therefore, more heat passes directly to the cookware.

An *induction cooktop* responds like a gas range, providing instant on/off temperatures. The induction coils, located beneath a glass ceramic surface, generate a magnetic field that causes the molecules in ferromagnetic cookware to move back and forth. Only the pot and the food get hot. As a result, the cooking surface is cooler.

Most cooktop surfaces can be cleaned using a non-abrasive, all-purpose cleaner; hand dishwashing detergent and water; or glass or multi-surface cleaner. However, some surfaces, such as ceramic glass, may require special procedures. Always check the cooktop manufacturer's instructions before cleaning.

Spills are more easily removed before they cook onto the surface, so wipe up food soils quickly. To avoid burns, be careful that the surface is not too hot. Range top surfaces can be scratched, so use a soft cloth or sponge for cleaning. Buffing dry with a clean, dry cloth will give a nice shine and help prevent water spotting. ■





## MISCELLANY

### Home Furnishings Fabrics Cross Over

The fabric that covers your couch may also jazz up your new jacket, predicts The Soap and Detergent Association. Fabrics originally designed for home furnishings are showing up in the workrooms of apparel manufacturers.

Manufacturers of children's apparel and apparel accessories, such as vests, handbags and hats, are being wooed by home furnishings fabric suppliers.

Industry observers cite two reasons for this fabric cross over. First, pattern and color trends are similar for both markets. Second, home furnishings fabrics provide apparel manufacturers with a way to catch the consumer's eye with merchandise that is trendy, yet different. Paisleys, brushed cotton, novelty wovens, conversational tapestries, even acrylic fabrics designed for outdoor furniture, are all finding homes in the apparel business.

### Spacemakers for Space Age Kitchens

What the space age kitchen often needs is more space, observes The Soap and Detergent Association. Special purpose cookware, appliances and utensils crowd closets and countertop, creating a demand for inventive storage solutions.

Overhead racks are a practical - and colorful - solution for pots, pans and decorative baskets. Grids can accommodate frequently used small items such as measuring cups and spatulas.

Efficiently organized cabinets and cupboards help save space and time. Let frequency-of-use be the guide. Items that are used constantly should be stored close to their place of use, between eye and hip level so they can be grabbed and returned quickly. Top shelves and under-cabinet storage should be reserved for seldom-used items.

Small appliances that fasten underneath the cabinets are specially designed to free up counter space. Can openers, coffee makers and horizontal toasters are popular under-the-cabinet choices.

### Prolonging the Life of Household Fabrics

To prolong the life of fabric-based home furnishings, here are a few tips, courtesy of The Soap and Detergent Association.

Good care begins at the point of purchase. Read all care instructions before making a purchase, then keep those instructions in a safe place for future reference. Rotate draperies to minimize sun damage. Both sunlight and water damage from window condensation can discolor and weaken fabric, causing shredding when draperies are agitated during cleaning. If possible, use mini blinds, shutters and the like to protect carpets and upholstered furniture from the sun's strongest rays. Vacuum regularly to extend the time between cleaning, as well as to minimize the abrasive damage from surface soils.

Dryclean or launder all coordinating items at the same time and by the same process. This way, even minimal color changes will be uniform.

### Accessorizing the Sink

Now that an automatic dishwasher is a kitchen "must have," the sink is taking on a new role as a work station, notes The Soap and Detergent Association. As a result, manufacturers of plastic, wire and wood sinkware are offering new accessories that cover everything from chopping to straining.

One-piece sink centers expand across the sink to reveal a cutting surface that protects the countertop, a colander for food drainage and an in-sink drainer. Folding wire dish racks can be neatly tucked away when not in use. The newest drainboards are inclined so that water drains neatly into the sink.

Color is increasingly important. While white, almond and black remain popular standards, fashion colors, such as hunter green, cobalt blue, slate blue and red, are gaining in popularity.

Mini sinkware sets appeal to campers, owners of recreational vehicles, college students and those with smaller living spaces. ■

**Q & A**

**SDA Answers Your Questions**

**Q: From reading laundry detergent labels, I notice that many do not contain phosphates. Is this a trend? Are there any laundry detergents available with phosphate?**

A: The reformulation of home laundry detergents without phosphate is definitely a trend. This change is due to developments in detergent technology and to legislation which has banned phosphate in many states. Both powdered and liquid laundry detergents can now be successfully produced to perform well without phosphate.

All the major *laundry* detergent brands are now phosphate-free. However, you may still find some regional or private label products that contain phosphate.

Phosphate continues to be an important ingredient in *automatic dishwashing* detergents.

**Q: What ingredients have replaced phosphate in laundry detergents?**

Detergent manufacturers have developed new surfactant systems and cobuilders to make concentrated detergents which are also phosphate-free. Due to these innovations, the new products work as well as the old phosphate formulations. A variety of builders is being used, including sodium aluminosilicate (zeolite), sodium carbonate, sodium silicate and sodium citrate.

In addition, enzymes are being used to enhance cleaning performance. Enzymes break down specific soils into simpler forms that can be removed by the detergent. Amylase is used to break down starchy soils, lipase works on fatty and oily soils, and protease breaks up protein soils.

To boost cleaning power in the face of phosphate removal and the reduction of wash water temperatures, some laundry detergents contain non-chlorine bleaches. Perborates are the predominant bleaching ingredients used in today's detergents. ■

**WHAT'S NEW?**

Tired of fumbling for the right size measuring spoon? Then Adjust-a-measure is the kitchen tool for you. The elongated measuring spoon features a sliding panel that locks into place at various measuring increments. The smaller version adjusts up to one teaspoon; the larger version, to one tablespoon.

(Kitchen Art/Robbins Industries, Inc.;  
4420 Helton Drive; Florence, AL 35630)

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Those who iron on an "as needed" basis will welcome the convenience features of the HandyXpress: 30 second heat-up time; a wall-mountable base designed for bedroom use; an eight-ounce water bottle for easy re-filling; and automatic shut-off when placed in the base. In addition, because the iron produces steam when held vertically, it can double as a steamer. The sleekly designed unit weighs less than two pounds.

(Black & Decker; 6 Armstrong Road;  
Shelton, CT 06484-4797)

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Say good-bye to grunge on the sponge with StayFresh O-Cel-O sponges. Built-in anti-microbial agents help kill the germs and bacteria that usually grow in used sponges. As a result, bacteria-related problems, such as odor and stains, are eliminated or significantly reduced. Aesthetically pleasing, too, the sponges come in teal, raspberry, melon, sunny yellow and light blue.

(3M; 3M Center/Building 223-3N-OS;  
St. Paul, MN 55144-1000)

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Everyday tasks, like doing the laundry, can turn into difficult chores when one's vision is impaired. With this in mind, Whirlpool has developed large print templates that overlay on the controls of selected washers and dryers. They are available with bold black and white graphics or in a Braille version. For more information, or to order a free set, consumers can call the manufacturer's hotline at 1-800-253-1301. ■





## “KEEP IT CLEAN” BRIEFS

A blocked lint screen on a dryer interferes with efficient clothes drying. The lint restricts air flow and extends drying time. Excessive lint build-up can also raise dryer temperatures resulting in automatic shutdown and overdrying of the clothes.

To prevent lint build-up, clean the lint screen after every load. This can be done easily with a used fabric softener sheet. The sheet attracts lint, making it easy to remove.

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One of the left-overs of holiday festivities is candle wax. To remove the wax, use a dull knife to scrape off as much as possible. Place the stained fabric between clean paper towels and press with a warm iron. Replace the towels frequently to absorb more wax.

Place the remaining stain face down on clean paper towels and sponge with a prewash stain remover; blot with paper towels. Let dry, then launder using a bleach that is safe for the fabric.

Customized garments, such as sweatshirts and t-shirts, are popular and may include paint, beads, studs and/or leather patches. Use extra care when laundering such items, as the trim or paint may not be colorfast or may not be able to withstand washing and drying.

Wash the decorated garment separately the first time, washing on the delicate cycle or by hand. Notice if there is color left in the wash water. For subsequent washings, continue laundering the garment separately until color no longer bleeds into the wash water.

Heat can damage some trims so wash in cool water and line dry or use the air dry cycle on the dryer.

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Detergents work best in warm or hot wash water. Consider using cold water only for washing clothes whose colors might fade or clothes that are only lightly soiled. It's ok to use a cold water rinse. ■

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The Soap and Detergent Association  
475 Park Avenue South  
New York, New York 10016

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