Homes & Gardens

Town Tribune Weekly Guide To Fall Living

You're Not Using Dishwasher Tablets to Their Full Potential: *10 Spots You Should Definitely Clean With Them*



With concentrated cleaning power, dishwasher tablets are a tiny but mighty tool that can be used to sanitize a variety of areas beyond just the dishwasher.

They're a nice compact option if you don't have room for a ton of large cleaning bottles in your home, and because they are designed to tackle stuck-on food, they're great for many kitchen messes. But that's not all.

Toilet Bowls:

A dishwasher tablet actually makes a great toilet bowl cleaner.

"Just let it fizz and dissolve for about 20 minutes, give it a scrub with your brush, and it does a great job on hard water rings and stains," Lina DaSilva, founder of Toronto Shine Cleaning, says.

Have stubborn hard water marks on the bowl?

"You can also put on gloves and use a damp tablet directly like a gentle abrasive block to scrub the limescale directly before it fully dissolves," Jessica Gonzalez, COO of Sparkly Maid San Antonio, says.

Glass Shower Doors:

Dishwasher tablets work well for soap scum shower doors because "the combination of enzymes and water softeners cuts through buildup that regular sprays struggle with," Karina Toner, operations manager of Spekless Cleaning, says.

To use this method effectively, dissolve a dishwasher tablet in warm water to create a thick paste.

"Apply it to the door in circular motions using a non-scratch sponge," Gonzalez says. "Let it sit for several minutes, and then scrub and rinse thoroughly."

Tile Grout:

Tile grout should only be treated if there is light buildup. In these cases, Toner recommends dissolving a tablet in water and using a soft brush (a toothbrush works) to scrub the lines.

"The cleaning agents lift grime, but this should be done sparingly to avoid wear over time," Toner says.

Ovens:

Pretty much every part of the oven can benefit from a dishwasher tablet treatment. Place oven racks and baking trays in a tub of hot water with a dissolved tablet and let them soak before scrubbing.

"Dishwasher tablets are designed to break down baked-on food, making them ideal for this task," Toner says.

Oven doors can also see visible results.

"Dip a tablet in water until the coating begins to soften, then use it directly on the glass with light circular pressure," Gonzalez says. "For particularly stubborn spots, let the dissolved tablet solution sit as a paste for 10 to 15 minutes before scrubbing."

Burnt Pots and Pans

Similar to greasy oven racks, dishwasher tablets work wonders on burnt pots and pans.

"Just fill the pan with hot water, drop in a tablet, let it soak for an hour, and the burnt stuff will lift right off," DaSilva says.

Stained Mugs:

Travel mugs and insulated flasks can also be cleaned using this method.

"The enzymes break down the tea and coffee tannins that cause interior staining in a way that dish soap alone cannot," Gonzalez says. "Always rinse multiple times after this use to clear any residual detergent taste."

Air Fryer Baskets:

Air fryers can be meticulous to clean, but the basket can be degreased with a tablet—sans the elbow grease.

"Place the basket in a container large enough to submerge it, dissolve a tablet in hot water, pour it in, and let it soak for 10 to 15 minutes," Gonzalez says. "The food residue that carbonizes in the mesh of an air fryer basket is exactly the type of baked-on organic material that dishwasher tablet enzymes are designed to address."

Trash Cans:

If your trash can is starting to stink, it might be time for a deep clean.

"Dissolve a tablet in a bucket of hot water, pour it into the bin, let it soak for up to an hour, and then pour out and wipe down," Gonzalez says.

Again, here the tablets are designed to "lift food residue and grease," Gonzalez says, and they'll do so in your trashcan while eliminating any bad odors.

You can also use this method for outdoor garbage bins.

Washing Machines:

Obviously laundry pods break down and create suds in a washing machine, but so do dishwasher pods.

"Running an empty hot cycle with a tablet helps break down detergent buildup and odors inside the drum," Toner says.

After all, washing machines are often neglected in the cleaning process, but they need to stay clean to keep your clothes clean.

Range Hoods:

Don't forget about your overhead appliances. Range hoods and filters are where the enzyme content of a dishwasher tablet becomes most useful, Gonzales notes.

"Dissolve a tablet in a bucket of hot water and soak removable range hood filters for 30 minutes to one hour," she says. "The enzymes break down the accumulated cooking grease [in] a way that soap and water alone rarely accomplish."

Then, pour the remaining solution into a spray bottle and use it to wipe down the exterior hood.

Dishwasher tablets are best suited for non-porous surfaces—which means you should avoid using them on marble, granite, or surfaces with special finishes.

The Pros and Cons of Using Dishwasher Tablets to Clean

The primary benefits of using dishwasher tablets are their convenience and aforementioned versatility.

That said, there are a few a few things to watch out for using dishwasher tablets as a multipurpose cleaner, especially if you're going to be using them regularly rather than just in a pinch.

"Because they are concentrated, they may dull finishes, damage coatings, or leave residue if not fully rinsed," Toner says.

Also keep in mind that you'll want to wear gloves when cleaning with dishwasher tablets as they can be rough on skin.

TOWN TRIBUNE'S KITCHEN CORNER

Gingersnap Pumpkin Pie



Ingredients:

For the Crust:

- 8 ounces spiced cookies such as gingersnaps, graham crackers, Biscoff
- 6 tablespoons/3 ounces/85g unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon light brown sugar (optional, depending on your cookies)
- ½–1 teaspoon kosher salt (depending on your cookies)

For the Filling:

- 1 15-ounce can pumpkin puree
- ⅓ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup light brown sugar
- 1 ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger or ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ⅛ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 3 large eggs
- ¾ cup heavy cream
- Lightly sweetened whipped cream, for serving

Directions:

1. Make the Crust: Preheat the oven to 350°F/177°C (no fan).
2. Smash the graham crackers with your hands until you've got coarse crumbs (alternatively, use a food processor). You should end up with about 1 ½ cups crumbs.
3. Place crumbs in a medium bowl and add melted butter, brown sugar (if using) and salt. Using your hands or a spoon, mix well until you've got really moist crumbs, almost like wet sand.
4. Spray a 9-inch pie plate with nonstick cooking spray (or grease it with softened/melted butter). Add crust mixture in an even layer, first pressing up the sides, then onto the bottom (a measuring cup is helpful here to make sure it's evenly packed with nice edges).
5. Place pie plate onto a rimmed baking sheet and bake until the crust is baked through, set on the bottom, and starts to lightly brown around the edges, 12–15 minutes. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool (leave the oven on if continuing right away to the next step).
6. Make the filling: Reduce oven temperature to 325°F/162°C. In a medium bowl, combine pumpkin puree, both sugars, kosher salt, cinnamon, ginger, and nutmeg, and whisk to combine. Add eggs and whisk until they're fully incorporated, then add cream and whisk until combined.
7. Pour the filling into the prebaked crust, return the pie to the oven and bake until filling is no longer jiggling and appears set and slightly matte on top, 35–45 minutes.
8. Remove from oven and let cool completely at room temperature before chilling. Top with lightly sweetened whipped cream, a bit of flaky salt and a crumble of a few extra gingersnaps (you can also serve from room temperature in a pinch, but will be much easier to slice if chilled)



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