Homes & Gardens

Town Tribune Weekly Guide To Fall Living

Washing Dishes in Cold Water?
12 Reasons You Should Stop



Hot water cleans and sanitizes dishes better than cold water. It is possible to wash dishes with cold water and soap and get them relatively clean, especially with thorough scrubbing, but hot dishwashing water generally works better.

Here are 12 reasons to use hot water for washing dishes.

Reasons to Use Hot Water When Washing Dishes

1. Hot Water Cuts Grease

Hot water is better than cold water when cleaning greasy dishes. Cooking oils and fats solidify when they get cold, making them difficult to scrape off dishes. Soaking them in hot water with grease-fighting dish soap is the solution.

2. The Heat Reduces Drying Time

After removing all the grime, you can rinse dishes in either hot or cold water. Hot water usually dries more quickly than warm or cool water, which means you can skip hand-drying your dishes if you opt for hot water. Moreover, if you need to use or put away your dishes immediately after washing them, hot water is the best option to ensure they are dry.

3. You'll Cut Down on Water Spots

Because hot water dries faster, you'll be less likely to get water spots and streaks on your dishes and glasses. Hard water is often the culprit behind water spots, as it leaves mineral deposits as it dries. The less time the water is on the dish or glass, the lighter the spot will be.

4. Heat Can Kill Germs

Hot water can kill bacteria and other microorganisms.1 But typically, the temperature necessary to kill pathogens, such as dishwashing water, is too hot for our hands to handle. According to the FDA, a temperature of at least 160 degrees Fahrenheit is best for washing dishes if your goal is to sanitize them with the heat.2 Use hot water in the sanitize setting of your dishwasher if your machine has that option.

5. Dish Soap Often Works Better in Hot Water

Many dish soaps work better in hot water. This is especially true of powdered detergents. The heat helps to dissolve the soap, allowing it to more effectively coat your dishes as you scrub.

6. You'll Use Less Soap

Because hot water can make dish soap more effective, that means you can use less of it. Instead of having to glob on soap to get a good lather on your dishes, you should only need a few drops. You'll save money on your products while still getting the same level of clean on your dishes.

7. You'll Avoid Cloudy Glasses and Dishes

Using too much soap in dishwashing water can result in cloudy glasses and dishes. And cold water is more likely to leave behind soap residue than hot water. The heat breaks down the soap, so it rinses away more easily.

8. Hot Water Helps to Prevent Food Stains

When it comes to washing stained clothes, it's common knowledge that hot water helps to dissolve the stains.3 The same principle applies to washing dishes with food stains. The trick is to put the dish in hot water as soon as possible to minimize the amount of soap and scrubbing required.

9. Hot Water Can Lift Sticky Foods

Like oils and grease, sticky foods such as jelly and honey get harder when they're cold. This can make them adhere better to a dish. But if you use hot dishwashing water to heat them up, they'll become thinner and easier to remove.

10. You'll Be Less Likely to Damage Dishes

Scrubbing and scraping at stubborn stains and stuck-on food can sometimes damage your dishes. Allow dishes to soak in hot water and let it do the work for you. This reduces the risk of scratching or dropping dishes while you scrub and minimizes the risk of damage.

11. You'll Likely Save Some Water

Because hot water can effectively blast away grease and food particles—and it can improve the function of your dish soap—you'll probably be finished with your dishes faster. Thus, you'll save some water compared to if you had used cold dishwashing water. The tradeoff, of course, is the energy necessary to heat the water.

12. You Won't Freeze Your Hands

Yes, scalding water isn't comfortable on the skin. But neither is icy water. Rather than freezing your hands, you can enjoy dishwashing water temperatures similar to the hot water you use in the shower.

Wait, Why Are People Putting Aluminum Foil in Their Fridges?

Lining your fridge shelves with aluminum foil is a popular shortcut for cutting down on cleaning time. The idea is simple: the foil catches spills and crumbs, and when it gets dirty, you swap it for a fresh sheet. But this seemingly easy hack could end up adding time to your cleaning routine.

Why Are People Lining Their Fridges With Aluminum Foil?

Spills can quickly harden and become sticky if ignored. But inside a fridge, they may go unnoticed for weeks, and the cold environment can accelerate hardening. Even when spills are discovered, awkward angles make the residue hard to clean.

To address these issues, some people recommend lining your shelves with aluminum foil.

"Essentially, aluminum foil has taken on the role of cleanup crew in people's refrigerators," says Mike Lacey, co-owner of Molly Maid of Central Prince George's County.

Alex Varela, a cleaning expert with Oakville Maids, says many people have discovered this cleaning hack via social media.

"It looks really satisfying, so that helped it spread fast," he says. "Cleaning a fridge properly means emptying it, pulling out shelves and drawers, and washing them in the sink, which is a pain nobody enjoys. With foil, you just peel off the dirty sheet when something spills and put a new one down."

Is Lining Your Fridge With Aluminum Foil Effective at Keeping It Clean?

Reducing your fridge cleaning routine to discarding a sheet of foil certainly sounds intriguing, but when we asked cleaning pros for their take on this strategy, they were less enthused.

"I don't think it is effective," Rhonda Wilson, the quality lead cleaner with FreshSpace Cleaning, says. "For example, [if] you have a little spill or leaks from a fruit container, foil won't absorb the liquid. It will just run off the edges if you're not careful."

Wilson, who's been cleaning homes for decades, generally recommends fridge liners instead of aluminum foil and adds that she's never seen a client line their fridge shelves with aluminum foil.

While Varela concedes that foil can help catch spills, he, like Wilson, wouldn't recommend the hack.

"To be honest, it's not worth it," he says. "It doesn't stop mold or bacteria, and you still have to remove the foil and replace it with a new one."

Expert Tips for Lining Your Fridge With Aluminum Foil:

While lining your fridge with aluminum foil has some perks, all three of our experts agree it isn't the most efficient way to keep your fridge clean. However, if you still want to test the hack, our experts suggest the following tips.

- Make sure you've fully cleaned your fridge before adding an aluminum foil lining, to avoid trapping old spills underneath.
- Do not let your aluminum foil lining block any air vents. Leave 1 to 2 inches from the edges so cold air can still circulate.
- Check underneath your aluminum foil lining once a week to make sure there's no moisture or bacteria.
- Consider using aluminum foil on the shelf you use to store raw meat, as well as the crisper drawer. "Another option is if you have a lot of glass jars and bottles that drip (e.g., if you like cooking with a lot of sauces, for example), they can be helpful so they don't leave sticky rings," Varela says.
- Wilson says you can place aluminum foil underneath leftovers like soups and casseroles if you're concerned about a spill, but it's still not her preference. "I'd use a washable tray with raised edges for this job," she says. "Better for anything that holds liquids or sauces."

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