

SPOTLESS

THE OVEN

You use it weekly, maybe even daily.
Be honest: How often do you clean it?
Here's your biannual game plan.

BY LESLIE CORONA



PROP STYLING BY CARLA GONZALEZ-HART

Do This...

Address spills as they happen to make the twice-yearly deep-cleaning sessions much easier. Scrape off small spatters with a nylon spatula when the oven is cool. Coat big spills with salt while the mess is still hot, then scoop up the salt pile (and the soaked-up spill) the next morning.

DAY ONE

Start by placing the oven racks in the bathtub (line the tub with an old bath towel to prevent scratching). Fill with hot water, drop in four to six dryer sheets, and add two or three squirts of dish soap. Let the racks soak for a few hours or, ideally, overnight. Meanwhile, open the door to the cool oven; spread a towel on the floor to catch spills as you clean. Remove food bits from the bottom of the oven with a cloth or handheld vac. Lay a damp, soapy microfiber cloth on the door's glass panel for at least 10 minutes to break down grease. With a spray bottle, lightly spritz the cavity with water, avoiding any heating elements, to soften hardened spills. Wait 15 to 20 minutes, then make a paste with a half cup of baking soda and three tablespoons of water. Wearing gloves, spread the paste on the inner walls (skipping vents or openings). Let it sit for 12 hours or overnight.

NEW USES FOR OLD THINGS

Keep a baking sheet on the lower rack to catch spills.
(Don't worry! Your pies and casseroles will still cook evenly.)

THE NEXT DAY

Rinse your racks. Remove stubborn gunk with a stiff brush or scouring pad, douse the racks in clean water, and let them dry. Give your tub a final rinse too. Return to your oven. Rub the paste (which may have dried into a powder) into the surface with a microfiber cloth, then wipe it off. Bust out a nonscratch scouring pad or cleaning pumice for interior caked-on grime, and use the abrasive side of a dish sponge on the door's glass. Break down any leftover buildup by spraying the interior and door with a vinegar-based cleaner and wiping. Finally, spray with water and wipe with a clean cloth. The residue might dry into a white cast, so you may need to spray with water and wipe a few times to ensure it's all gone. Return the racks.

TRY THE SELF-CLEAN CYCLE

If you have a self-cleaning oven and never use that feature, we don't blame you. The oven gets blazing hot (over 800 degrees Fahrenheit!) and can smell funky. To try it, sweep out crumbs, remove the racks, and empty the warmer drawer. Open windows, because the room will get warm and smelly. Once your oven is cool, wipe the inside with a damp cloth.

...With These

SCOURING PAD

Scotch-Brite's Non-Scratch Scour Pad (\$5 for 4; target.com) erases gunk.



SPRAY BOTTLE

Try this Refillable Glass Spray Bottle (\$12; fullcirclehome.com) to rinse off the oven interior.



CLEANING PUMICE

Use the Pumie Scouring Stick (\$2; amazon.com) to remove buildup from oven walls. Wet it first to prevent scratching.



DRYER SHEETS

Mrs. Meyer's Dryer Sheets (\$9; mrsmeyers.com) are surprisingly effective at lifting gunk from racks.



HEAVY-DUTY BRUSH

If you prefer something with a handle, go for the Smart Scrub All Purpose Brush (\$7; casabella.com).



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