

The Essentialist

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Bigfork's Essential Stuff Newsletter -- Bringing People Together
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LIQUID CASTILE SOAP

This is a most basic of cleaners used in many recipes in this article. The most popular brand is Dr. Bronner's.

The easiest way to make liquid soap at home is from a bar of soap. Look for one made from vegetable fats for a Castile-like soap (Kirk's Castile is a good brand).

NOTE: A similar method can also be used to make liquid laundry soap from a bar of Fels Naphtha or Ivory Soap--see Laundry section of this article.

**Liquid Castile Soap from a Bar*

This recipe is from AssociatedContent.com.

- 1 cup firmly packed grated Castile soap (about two 4 oz. bars)
- 4 cups water
- 2 tablespoons vegetable glycerin

Before you begin, grate castile soap with cheese grater, into large pot. Try to shred it as fine as possible since it will take less time to melt the soap down if the pieces are small.

Mix water with grated castile soap in pot. Set over low heat, stirring occasionally until soap has dissolved. Add glycerin. Keep your eye on it! Once dissolved, transfer to a jar and cover tightly. This makes a thick liquid soap. For a thinner liquid soap, add more water until desired consistency is reached.

***Liquid and Bar Castile Soap from Scratch**

See separate flyers for instructions.

GENERAL HOUSEHOLD CLEANERS

**Air Freshener Ideas* ₂

- Set out a dish of vinegar
- Simmer stick cinnamon and whole cloves in a saucepan
- Pour vanilla extract, or essential oil on a cotton ball and place on a bowl or saucer

**All Purpose Cleaner* ₂

Small jobs

- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/2 tsp liquid Castile soap
- 3/4 cup warm water
- spray bottle

Larger jobs

- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/4 cup liquid Castile soap
- 2 gallons warm water
- bucket

Instructions (for Small and Large Jobs):

1. Mix in labeled spray bottle or bucket.
2. Shake or stir well before each use, to blend ingredients.

**Furniture Polish (Two versions)*

Furniture Polish 1 ₁

- 1 part linseed oil (flax oil)
- 1 part white vinegar
- 1 part turpentine*
- spray bottle

Instructions:

1. Mix three ingredients in a spray bottle. Do not use paint thinner in place of turpentine
2. Spray and then wipe off

Furniture Polish 2 ₂

- 1/4 cup white vinegar
- few drops food-grade linseed oil, jojoba or olive oil
- spray bottle

Instructions:

1. Combine vinegar and oil in spray bottle.
2. Spray and then wipe off.

**Marble or Brass Cleaner* ₁

Cut a lemon in half; sprinkle it with salt and rub it all over the surface.

***Windows & Glass** ₂

NOTE: Commercial window cleaners deposit waxes on your windows, so the first time you clean your windows with homemade cleaner, you need to add Castile soap to the cleaner to remove the wax. Subsequent cleanings will not require the soap addition, unless, of course, your kids have used crayons on your windows.

Regular cleaning

- 1/4 cup white vinegar
- 2 cups warm water
- spray bottle
- cotton diaper

Process:

1. Combine soap (if using), vinegar and water in labeled spray bottle. Shake to blend.
2. Spray on window and wipe clean with cotton diaper.

Remove wax buildup

add 1/2 tsp liquid Castile soap to regular cleaning recipe

***Wood Surfaces** ₂

- 1/4 cup white vinegar
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 tsp liquid Castile soap
- few drops jojoba or olive oil
- 3 - 5 drops essential oil (optional fragrance)
- bowl
- sponge

Process:

1. Combine vinegar, water, soap and oils in bowl.
2. Saturate sponge; squeeze out excess, and test wood surface to be cleaned.
3. If tested area looks good, wash entire surface, rinsing sponge in clear warm water between washes.

KITCHEN AND BATH

***Drains** ₂

- 1 cup baking soda (or 1/2 cup washing soda)
- 3 cups boiling water

Instructions:

1. Pour soda down drain, followed by boiling water

Foul-Smelling Drains ₁

- 1 box baking soda (such as old one from refrigerator)
- 1 cup of table salt
- 1 cup of white vinegar
- 3 - 4 quarts boiling water
- pot for boiling water

Instructions:

1. Dump soda down drain.
2. Follow that with salt and then vinegar.
3. Let fizz up to 30 seconds.
4. Chase with boiling water and let mixture work overnight. Drain won't smell in the morning.

***Bathtubs and Sinks: Chlorine-free Scrubbers** ₂

Soft-scrubber

- 1/2 c baking soda
- liquid Castile soap
- Scrubbing sponge

Instructions:

1. Add enough Castile soap to soda to make a frosting-like mixture.
2. Scoop onto surface and scrub with sponge.

Mild / Heavy Duty Cleanser

- Baking soda / or half baking soda, half washing soda for a heavy-duty cleanser
- Water
- Scrubbing sponge
- gloves (for heavy-duty cleanser)

Instructions:

1. Apply soda or soda mixture to wet scrubbing sponge. Apply to surface and let rest 15 minutes.
2. Scrub and rinse off with warm water.
3. To remove grit, use vinegar rinse.

[NOTE: Heavy-duty cleanser is not for fiberglass, such as shower bases. Washing soda is caustic, so use gloves]

Vinegar Rinse

Combine 1/4 cup white vinegar in 2 quarts warm water in a bottle or bucket.

Rust Stains from Porcelain

Scour stains with cream of tartar

***Oven Cleaner** ₂

1. Sprinkle baking soda to cover bottom of oven

NOTE: For really bad ovens, use half baking, half washing soda. Use gloves because washing soda is caustic).

2. Spray with water until very damp. Keep moist by spraying every few hours. Leave overnight
3. Remove soda & grime with spatula. Rinse well.

***Shower Heads** ₁

1. Fill small plastic bag with vinegar; hang on the arm of the shower head with the head submerged.
2. Hold bag in place with a rubber band wrapped around the shower arm.
3. Wait 2 hours; wipe away the softened mineral crust with sponge.

***Tile (Ceramic or Glass)** ₂

1. Add enough liquid Castile soap to 1/2 cup baking soda, to make a frosting-like paste.
2. Stir in 15 drops tea-tree oil (this kills mold and mildew).
3. Scoop mixture onto sponge, wash surface & rinse well.

***Toilets** ₂

Regular cleaning

1. Combine 1/4 cup vinegar in 2 cups water in labeled spray bottle.
2. Spray along inside rim of toilet; leave on for 15 minutes before scrubbing.

Stubborn iron rings

1. Put 1/2 cup borax into toilet, swirl, scrub and let sit overnight.
2. Swirl with brush in morning.

Disinfect

- 2 tsp tea-tree oil
- 2 cups water
- Spray bottle, labeled
- brush or sponge

Instructions:

1. Combine oil and water in labeled spray bottle.
2. Shake and spray along inside rim of toilet. Let stand 30 minutes before scrubbing.

FLOORS

***Carpets** ₂

General carpet cleaning

Apply soap-based, non-aerosol rug shampoo. Vacuum Dry

Neutralize carpet odors

- baking soda
- broom
- vacuum

Instructions:

1. Sprinkle soda over area. Leave overnight.
2. Sweep off what you can and vacuum the rest.

Spills on carpets

- Blot spill quickly with cotton towels dampened with clear water
- If alcoholic beverages, coffee or tomato-based food, dampen cloth with club soda.
- Use pulverized chalk to absorb grease

Urine on carpets

- White vinegar
- Water
- spray bottle or sponge
- paper towel

Instructions:

1. Mix equal parts vinegar and water; spray or sponge onto stain.
2. Let stand 10 minutes before blotting with sponge or paper towel

***Linoleum (Marmoleum and other Real Linoleum) 2**

- Mix 1/4 cup liquid Castile soap in 2 gallons warm water in bucket. Damp mop.
- Rinse well with water or water and vinegar.

***Vinyl Flooring 2**

- Mix 1 cup white vinegar in 2 gallons warm water. Damp mop.
- No need to rinse, or rinse with fresh batch of vinegar water.

***Wood Floors (real wood) 2**

Unvarnished

- 1/4 cup liquid Castile soap
- 1/2 tsp glycerin
- 1/4 cup white vinegar
- 2 gallons water
- bucket and mop

Instructions:

1. Mix Castile glycerine and water in bucket.
2. Damp mop.
3. Rinse well with water or water and vinegar.

Varnished (Varathane)

- 1 part vinegar
- 10 parts water
- bucket and mop

Instructions:

1. Mix vinegar and water in bucket.
2. Damp mop.
3. Rinse well with water or water and vinegar.

***Black Heel Marks (Removing) 2**

- 1/2 cup baking soda
- liquid Castile soap
- cotton cloth

Instructions:

1. Make a paste of soda and soap. Test on small portion of scuff mark, by washing and rinsing well.

Restore Finish

If floor finish is removed, you may be able to restore it using 1/2 cup cornstarch and enough water to make a paste. Rub into the spot, let dry, then buff to a polish.

LAUNDRY

**Laundry Soap or Detergent*

[Soaps Gone Buy](http://www.soapsgonebuy.com/) sells hard-to-find old-fashioned soaps. (<http://www.soapsgonebuy.com/>)
[Frugal Families](http://frugal.families.com/blog/the-frugal-washing-machine) has great laundry tips. (frugal.families.com/blog/the-frugal-washing-machine)

Ivory Snow Laundry Soap

Use according to instructions on box. This is a gentle soap for lingerie and bedding.

Fels Naphtha Laundry Soap

- 1/3 bar Fels Naptha soap, grated *
- 1/2 cup washing soda *
- 1/2 cup borax *
- water
- non-reactive saucepan or stock pot

Instructions for 1 gallon:

1. Grate soap into a pot with 3 pints (6 cups) water. Heat until dissolved.
2. Stir in washing soda and borax. Mix until dissolved.
3. Pour into storage container with lid.

[this recipe is from cdKitchen.com]

* NOTE: Can also use 1 bar ivory soap. Omit borax and use 1 cup washing soda.

**Bleach*

Alternatives

- Commercial non-chlorine bleach (such as Seventh Generation);
- 1/2 cup 3% hydrogen peroxide or lemon juice added during rinse cycle; or
- 1/2 cup washing soda added to warm or hot water wash cycles.

For Fine Linens:

From Grandmother's Cedar Chest, chapter III: "Wash and Wear if you Don't Care"

Whether the fibre content of your goods is linen, cotton or silk, we recommend a soaking in Biz to remove soil and stains, followed by a Snowy Bleach bath for final whitening. Use slightly more Snowy Bleach than manufacturer suggests for best results.

Chlorine bleach may be used as a last resort on cottons, although a very diluted solution, left overnight is all we recommend.

Biz	Snowy	Clorox
1 cup - washload	1 cup - washload	1/4 cup - washload
1/4 cup - sinkfull	1/4 cup - sinkfull	1 Tbsp - sinkfull

Re-dampen linens before ironing for a smooth, fast press. It helps to place item in a plastic bag overnight or for an hour or so to have uniform dampness.

HAND WASH

**Disinfectant hand wash* 2

- 4 oz (1/2 cup) liquid Castile soap
- 10 drops tea tree oil
- small bottle or hand pump container

Instructions:

1. Add tea tree oil to small bottle of liquid castile, or combine oil and castile in a pump container. Shake to blend.

**Heavy duty hand wash* 2

This is about the only use I can find for margarine or Crisco: Simply rub onto hands to dissolve oil or grease-based gunk. Or try the following recipe.

- 4 oz beach sand
- 1 oz pumice powder
- enough glycerin to moisten
- screw-top jar

Instructions:

1. Mix sand & pumice powder in jar, then stir in glycerin just until moistened. Screw on cap.
2. Use about 1 Tbsp at a time, rubbing into hands thoroughly.

INSECT PROBLEMS

**Moth Repellent* 2

Pre-Process:

Place clean garments in freezer for several days to kill moths and larvae.

Store in airtight containers or tuck sachets (below) between garments in a drawer or on hangers.

Sachet I.

- 2 oz dried rosemary
- 2 oz dried mint
- 1 oz dried thyme
- 1 oz powdered ginseng
- 8 oz whole cloves
- large glass bowl
- fabric sachets

Sachet II

- 2 handful dried bay leaves, crushed
- 1 oz dried rosemary
- 1 oz dried peppermint
- 1/2 oz dried thyme
- 4 oz whole cloves
- large glass bowl
- fabric sachets

Instructions for sachets:

1. Toss ingredients with hands in glass bowl (do not use plastic, ceramic or stainless steel). You can fill sachets immediately, or store in a large glass jar with screw-on lid. Best to store in a cool dark place.
2. Hang sachets in closet or tuck into drawers.

***Ant Bait** ₂

- 1 cup borax
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 cups water
- bowl
- 4 screw-top jars

This works for worker ants, but not the queen.

Instructions:

1. Combine borax, sugar and water in bowl until dissolved. Pour into jars.
2. Before putting the lid on, use a hammer and nail to make 4 - 8 holes in each lid.
3. Place jars in area where you have ants, but keep away from children and pets.

METAL POLISH

***Aluminum, Bronze, Brass, Copper** ₂

Apply vinegar, lemon juice or other natural acids to soft cloth;
Rub onto surface and allow to rest a few minutes, then wipe off.

***Bronze, Brass, Copper** ₂

- 3 tsp salt
- 1 Tbsp flour
- white vinegar
- bowl
- clean sponge
- soft cloth

Instructions:

1. Combine salt, flour and enough water to make a paste in a bowl.
2. Scoop paste onto a clean sponge and polish.
3. Rinse with hot water; buff dry with soft cloth.

***Chrome** ₂

Apply apple cider vinegar or club soda to soft cloth and wipe surface.

***Silver** ₂

Rub in white toothpaste; then polish with soft cloth.

Sources:

1. www.OnTheHouse.com , Phil Holm, AP
2. The Oregonian
3. http://www.cdktichen.com/recipes/recs/609/Fels_Naphtha_Laundry_Soap61143.shtml
4. <http://frugal.families.com/blog/the-frugal-washing-machine>