



All-natural cleaning

Want to make your home sparkle, the old fashioned way? All you need are five simple ingredients says **Michael De Jong** in his new book.

When I first moved to New York to become an artist, nearly 20 years ago, I began working as a house cleaner to help supplement my income. Many of my cleaning rituals come from my Dutch-born mother, and I'll admit that I'm a bit obsessive: I actually move the fridge when I vacuum. You'd be surprised what you find missing, or worst yet, lurking under there.

No matter how you look at it, cleaning is hard work. But after years of doing it professionally, I developed a system that's easy and effective. I clean using just five ingredients: baking soda, lemon, white vinegar, salt, and Borax. There is nothing new or unusual about any of them. In fact, they have been used for centuries. But it's amazing how well these environmentally friendly ele-

ments work. Cleaning this way may require a bit of extra elbow grease, but it gives me satisfaction and peace of mind. From my book, *Clean: the Humble Art of Zen Cleansing*, here are some recipes for using these basics to brighten up your home.

Baking soda

- Spot-clean wallpaper by making a paste of baking soda and water. Add a few drops of water to a quarter cup of baking soda. The finished product should resemble the consistency of toothpaste. Wipe on with a soft cloth and remove the spot in a slow, circular motion.
- Your silver will always look like you have staff on hand if you try this tip. Line your sink with heavy-duty aluminum foil. Load up the silver you intend to polish, ►

making certain that every item touches the foil liner. Cover the entire contents with boiling water and add a cup of baking soda. The tarnish jumps from the silver to the foil in almost no time at all. For any remaining traces from heavy tarnish, make a paste of water and baking soda and polish the surface until they shine.

- Make a tile cleaner that will remove mildew stains by mixing two cups of baking soda and a half cup of lukewarm water. Use a household



When you mix salt and acid ingredients, surfaces cool ever so slightly and the dirt pops off.

brush to work it into the grout and scrub, scrub, scrub.

- Keep your cat box smelling fresher by sprinkling baking soda into the litter box before adding the cat litter.
- Sprinkle baking soda onto your upholstered couch or favorite chair to deodorize it. Let it stand for about an hour or so and then vacuum.

Lemon

- Mix two parts olive oil mixed with one part lemon juice to create furniture polish. Just a few drops on a soft cloth will make your wood furniture shine. Buff the surface with a dry cloth to remove any excess oil. Store your all-natural polish a glass jar.
- Remove ink stains on cloth by

placing lemon juice directly onto the spot. Allow it to sit overnight before laundering as usual. Repeat if necessary.

- To take rust off of household tools and chrome by use salt and one tablespoon of lemon juice. Create a paste and rub on the rusted area with a dry cloth.
- Get rid of stains on your Formica counter tops by squeezing fresh lemon juice on the spot; let it sit for 30 minutes. Sprinkle with baking soda, then scrub with a sponge. Rinse with clean water and wipe dry.
- Put lemon slices into a pot of water and bring to a boil. After an hour, the citrus aroma will refresh your home.
- To brighten your white fabrics, soak them in a pot with boiling wa-

ter and a sliced lemon.

Borax

Borax, an element that's formed in desert regions, is available at most supermarkets.

- Add one-quarter cup of borax to 2 cups of water to make a highly effective bleach substitute. Borax cleans and bleaches by converting some water molecules to hydrogen peroxide.
- Pour one-quarter cup into your toilet bowl to help clean and deodorize it. Swish the mixture with a brush and allow it to stand for at least an hour or, even better, overnight. Then just flush.
- Remove mildew from just about anything by using equal parts borax and white vinegar.

- Dip a half a lemon into borax to create a sink and tile cleaner. Scrub using the halved lemon juicy side down. Rinse with clean water.

Salt

- Remove perspiration stains from clothing by pre-soaking the garment in salt water.
- Soften new jeans by adding one half cup of salt to the wash, along with your regular laundry detergent.
- To get rid of coffee stains from the inside of a glass coffee pot, add 4 teaspoons of salt, 1 cup crushed ice, and 1 tablespoon of water. Gently swirl until clean, then rinse. Note: The coffee pot should be at room temperature before cleaning.
- Use salt to remove wine stains from cotton fabric. Pour enough salt on the stain to soak up the liquid. Soak the fabric for a half and hour in cold water. Wash as usual.

White vinegar

- You can polish patent leather with a cloth dampened with white vinegar. Just wipe it on full strength and gently wipe off the remains till the shine is fully restored.
- Use a solution of two tablespoons of white vinegar to one gallon of warm water in a spray bottle to clean mirrors, glass, and windows. Try this on your car windows too.
- Dilute a cup of vinegar with a cup of room-temperature water to reduce the odor of a pet's urine in carpet. Apply and blot with a clean rag.
- Soften a hardened paintbrush by placing it in hot white vinegar. Place a glass or plastic cup in the microwave and bring it to a boil. Remove it from the heat source and let it soak overnight to refresh your paintbrush.

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