

"Preserve today, Relish tomorrow"

Cleaning & Sanitizing the Home Kitchen



UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County

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Ask a Master Food Preserver: <https://link.ucanr.edu/mfp-cs-ask>

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Introduction

When preparing food for preservation, cleanliness is essential in preventing food-borne illness, especially when handling raw fish, meat and other foods that won't be cooked (including fruits and vegetables). It's important to not only wash your hands, but to properly clean your work area – and then take steps to avoid cross-contamination by re-introducing or spreading bacteria around further.

Cleaning and sanitizing (or disinfecting) are actually two separate processes, and both steps are necessary for reducing pathogens that could cause foodborne illness. **Cleaning** is the act of physically removing dirt and debris from surfaces, usually with water, soap/detergent, and scrubbing. Cleaning alone is not sufficient to remove pathogens. **Sanitizing** is the process of reducing pathogens to a safe level so that illness, contamination or spoilage is unlikely to occur. **Disinfecting** is destroying most pathogenic and other microorganisms. Disinfectants destroy or irreversibly inactivate the specific microorganisms listed on their labels (but they may not inactivate spores).

Sanitizing is generally considered the acceptable level for treating home kitchen surfaces. However, if there are vulnerable persons in the home (elderly; pregnant women; children under age 5; or severely ill or immune-compromised individuals), then disinfecting would be appropriate. For known or suspected cases of COVID-19, follow current CDC guidance.

Cleaning & Sanitizing Your Work Area

As noted above, it's important to first clean, and then sanitize, your work area. Surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized after use, as well. (*Note: Some commercial food service cleaners may be one-steps solutions. Always check the manufacturer's instructions before use.*)

STEP 1: CLEAN

Wash your sink and countertops with soap and warm water, then rinse well. *Note:* Soils and soaps can inactivate bleach solutions, so it is important to clean surfaces and then rinse well. Further, cross-contamination can occur by using dirty cleaning cloths, so be sure to use a fresh, clean cloth or a paper towel. After cleaning, be sure to change out cleaning cloths and towels for fresh, clean ones.

STEP 2: SANITIZE OR DISINFECT

After cleaning and rinsing, apply a sanitizer. If using a commercial product, follow the manufacturer's instructions. ***Note that disinfectants are not always safe for food contact surfaces, and not all bleaches are intended to be used as disinfectants, so be sure to carefully read the product label.***

To make a bleach solution, follow the bleach manufacturer's instructions. If not available, a generic bleach solution, can be made by adding **regular, unscented, liquid chlorine bleach** to cool (not hot) water, selecting the appropriate amount of bleach and water from the chart on the following page. Spray surfaces (or immerse item) completely with the solution. Allow to air dry, or let stand/soak for at least 1 minute then dry with a clean towel.

Cleaning & Sanitizing Your Work Area (cont.)

Bleach solutions should be changed preferably every 24 hours (at least weekly) and should preferably be made from bleach containers that have been opened for no more than 30 days. Be sure to check the expiry date on containers as well. Take appropriate precautions when handling bleach solutions or other chemicals: Apply in a ventilated area and wear disposable or dedicated cleaning gloves and protective clothing.

For **food contact surfaces, use a sanitizing solution only**. Be sure to measure carefully, apply the solution or soak items for 1 minute, then **rinse well** and allow to air dry.

To Sanitize		To Disinfect	
Bleach	Water	Bleach	Water
1 tablespoon	1 gallon	5 tablespoons	1 gallon
1 teaspoon	1 quart	4 ½ - 6 teaspoons	1 quart
¼ teaspoon	1 cup	1 ¼ - 1 ½ teaspoons	1 cup

While bleach is a very effective disinfectant, there are other household products that may be used as alternatives in the kitchen. These include white distilled vinegar and hydrogen peroxide. Further information and instructions on using these products may be found here: <https://ucanr.edu/sites/default/files/2024-02/393196.pdf>

Wash Your Hands

Washing your hands is another important step in ensuring food safety. Wash hands properly, and repeat as often as necessary: when changing tasks, after touching pets or your phone or door handles, if you’ve sneezed or gone to the bathroom, etc.

HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS: Wet your hands, apply soap, lather and then scrub for at least 20 seconds. Rinse well and dry with paper towels or a clean cloth.

If using food handling gloves, first wash your hands and then put on gloves. Just as with your hands, wash gloves in between tasks or after touching surfaces that could introduce pathogens, or put on a new pair. Dispose of gloves after use.



Image Source: FDA

Avoid Cross-Contamination

Be sure to use clean cutting boards and kitchen utensils, and wash them thoroughly before switching from one food type to another, or use separate boards and utensils for different types of foods (e.g., use one board for raw fish or meat and another board for vegetables, herbs, etc.).

Raw meat, poultry and fish should not be washed, as doing so can spread pathogens, leading to cross-contamination. Instead, pat meat dry with paper towels and then dispose of the towels immediately.

Wipe up spills promptly with paper towels or a clean dish towel (and if using a cloth towel, put it straight in the laundry basket and get a fresh towel).

Many experts recommend changing dish cloths and towels every day. At a minimum, change cloths and towels when they become dirty or begin to smell. As noted above, during cooking or preserving, cloths should be changed for fresh ones after cleaning countertops, wiping up spills (especially meat juices), etc. Wash dish cloths and kitchen towels using a hot cycle, then dry completely using high heat.

Sponges are a big source of bacteria in the kitchen, and should be sanitized regularly (at least once per week) and replaced frequently. Avoid using sponges to clean countertops (use a paper towel or a clean dish cloth instead), and refrain from using them to wipe up meat juices as well. Sponges can be sanitized by one of three methods:

- moisten the sponge then heat it in a microwave for 1 minute
- wash the sponge in a dishwasher with a drying cycle
- soak in a bleach solution for 1 minute



Other Resources:

UC Master Food Preservers of Central Sierra <https://link.ucanr.edu/mfp-cs>

UC Master Food Preserver Program <https://mfp.ucanr.edu/>

National Center for Home Food Processing <https://nchfp.uga.edu/>

USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning <https://nchfp.uga.edu/resources/category/usda-guide>

So Easy to Preserve <https://setp.uga.edu/>

References:

USDA and CDC

North Carolina State University, North Dakota State University, Michigan State University, University of Florida, and University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Services

Oklahoma State University Food Technology Factsheet FAPC-116