

The natural cleaning guide

Powerful, non-toxic ways to clean almost anything, with simple DIY recipes and fixes for everyday stains like wine, gum and tree sap. We wrote it for our own team, and we're sharing it free because everyone deserves a safer home, whether you hire us or do it yourself.

THE KIT

Six ingredients that handle almost everything

Add microfiber cloths, a few spray bottles and a soft brush, and you're set for nearly any job.

White vinegar (5–6%)

Good for: Cuts hard-water spots, soap scum and greasy film. Deodorizes.

Avoid on: Marble, limestone, travertine, onyx, waxed wood, cast iron.

Baking soda

Good for: Gentle scrubbing powder. Absorbs odors and fresh grease.

Avoid on: Soft woods and high-gloss finishes if scrubbed hard. Test first.

Plant-based liquid soap

Good for: The everyday degreaser: castile soap or a plant-based soap like Sal Suds. Safe on most surfaces.

Avoid on: Don't mix castile soap with vinegar. They cancel out and leave a film.

3% hydrogen peroxide

Good for: Brightens grout and lifts organic stains like wine and blood.

Avoid on: Can lighten colored fabrics and carpets. Always test.

Lemon and citric acid

Good for: Fresh scent and gentle acid for hard water, rust spots and dull glass.

Avoid on: Same stone warnings as vinegar.

Essential oils

Good for: Our all-purpose spray uses sweet orange, rosemary and clove. Clove also handles mildew-prone spots.

Avoid on: Very strong when undiluted. Always dilute before use.

SAFETY FIRST

Six rules to follow every time

- ✓ **Never mix bleach with vinegar or ammonia.**
Bleach plus an acid makes chlorine gas. Bleach plus ammonia makes chloramine gas. Both can cause serious lung injury.
- ✓ **Vinegar and baking soda cancel each other out.**
The fizz is fun for drains and toilets, but mixed in a bottle you're left with salty water. Use them as separate steps.
- ✓ **Don't mix vinegar and hydrogen peroxide in one bottle.**
Together they form peracetic acid, a strong irritant. Using them one after the other on a surface is fine. Just wipe in between.
- ✓ **Keep acids off natural stone.**
Vinegar and lemon etch marble, limestone, travertine and onyx. Use warm water and a few drops of plant-based soap instead.



Disinfect high-touch spots in one step.

Use our botanical disinfectant instead of the all-purpose spray on toilets, sinks, counters and handles. Leave it wet for the time on the label, then wipe. On heavy grime, wipe the dirt off first.



Test, label and ventilate.

Test on a hidden spot, label every bottle with its contents and date, open a window, and wear gloves for long jobs.

DIY RECIPES

Simple recipes you can mix yourself

Each recipe makes a team batch sized for our standard containers, like a 1 gallon jug for refilling spray bottles. A home-size version is listed under each one. Shake before every use.

All-purpose vinegar spray

Counters, sinks, tile, glass and stainless steel. Not for natural stone.

Team batch: 1 gallon jug

- 1/2 gallon white vinegar
- 1/2 gallon water
- 1 tsp sweet orange essential oil
- 1/2 tsp rosemary essential oil
- 1/4 tsp clove essential oil

How: Shake before each use. Let it sit 1 minute on greasy spots, then wipe with microfiber. One spray for every room; the clove adds extra germ-fighting power.

Home size (16 oz bottle): 1 cup white vinegar, 1 cup water, 12 drops sweet orange essential oil, 6 drops rosemary essential oil, 3 drops clove essential oil

Stone-safe everyday spray

Granite, marble, quartz, sealed wood and any surface you're unsure about.

Team batch: 1 gallon jug

- 1 gallon warm water
- 2 1/2 tbsp castile soap or Sal Suds
- 1/2 tsp sweet orange essential oil
- 1/4 tsp rosemary essential oil

How: Spray, wipe, then buff dry with a clean microfiber cloth to avoid streaks.

Home size (16 oz bottle): 2 cups warm water, 1 tsp castile soap or Sal Suds, 6 drops sweet orange essential oil, 3 drops rosemary essential oil

Streak-free glass and mirror spray

Windows, mirrors, shower glass and salt-spray film.

Team batch: 1 gallon jug

- 1/2 gallon white vinegar
- 1/2 gallon water

How: Wipe with a flat-weave microfiber cloth, then buff with a dry one. Squeegee large windows. No essential oils here, since oil leaves streaks on glass.

Home size (16 oz bottle): 1 cup white vinegar, 1 cup water

Soft scrub paste

Tubs, sinks, stovetops, grout and baked-on spots.

Team batch: 1 quart tub

- 3 cups baking soda
- 3/4 cup castile soap or Sal Suds
- 1/4 tsp sweet orange essential oil
- 1/8 tsp rosemary essential oil
- Add water a little at a time until it's a creamy paste. Store airtight.

How: Scrub with a damp sponge or brush, then rinse well. Make fresh as needed.

Home size (1 cup): 3/4 cup baking soda, 3 tbsp castile soap or Sal Suds, 9 drops sweet orange essential oil, 4 drops rosemary essential oil, Add water a little at a time until it's a creamy paste. Store airtight.

Heavy-duty clove spray

Bathrooms, mildew and tough jobs: grout, caulk, shower walls, bathroom ceilings, window tracks and patio cushions (test fabric first).

Team batch: 32 oz bottle

- 2 cups white vinegar
- 2 cups water
- 1/2 tsp clove essential oil
- 1/4 tsp sweet orange essential oil

How: Spray it first thing when you arrive and let it work while you clean the rest of the home. Wipe the area clean at the end of the visit. Shake well before use, wear gloves and open a window, since the smell is strong. Near marble, travertine or limestone, replace the vinegar with water.

Home size (16 oz bottle): 1 cup white vinegar, 1 cup water, 1/4 tsp clove essential oil, 1/8 tsp sweet orange essential oil

Botanical disinfectant (ready-made)

Toilets, sinks, kitchen counters, doorknobs and other high-touch spots.

- An EPA-registered disinfectant made with thymol from thyme oil, such as Benefect Botanical Decon 30

How: This is the one product we buy instead of mixing, because only EPA-registered products are proven to kill germs. Use it instead of the all-purpose spray on these spots, not after it. Spray, leave it wet for the time on the label, then wipe.

Oven and grill degreaser

Ovens, oven racks, sheet pans and grill grates.

Team batch: 1 quart tub

- 3 cups baking soda
- 1 cup water
- Vinegar in a spray bottle, to mist the paste

How: Spread the paste first thing when you arrive and let it work for 2 to 3 hours while you clean the rest of the home. At the end of the visit, mist with vinegar so it foams, then wipe and rinse.

Home size (1 oven): 1/2 cup baking soda, 3 tbsp water, Vinegar in a spray bottle, to mist the paste

Laundry stain pre-treat

Wine, blood, sweat and food on whites and colorfast fabrics.

Team batch: 32 oz bottle

- 1 1/4 cups plant-based dish soap
- 2 3/4 cups 3% hydrogen peroxide (opaque bottle)

How: Store in an opaque bottle and mix a fresh batch every few weeks. Dab on, wait 10 minutes, then wash. Test colored fabrics first, since peroxide can lighten them.

Home size (16 oz bottle): 3/4 cup plant-based dish soap, 1 1/4 cups 3% hydrogen peroxide (opaque bottle)

Carpet and mattress refresher

Rugs, carpets, mattresses and pet beds.

Team batch: 32 oz jar

- 4 cups baking soda
- 1/4 tsp sweet orange essential oil
- 1/8 tsp rosemary essential oil

How: Mix in a jar, sprinkle, leave 30 minutes or longer, then vacuum slowly.

Home size (16 oz shaker): 2 cups baking soda, 12 drops sweet orange essential oil, 8 drops rosemary essential oil

Wood furniture polish

Finished wood tables, chairs and cabinets.

Team batch: 8 oz bottle

- 1 cup fractionated coconut oil
- 3/4 tsp sweet orange essential oil

How: Use a very small amount on a soft cloth, rub in with the grain and buff dry. Test first.

Home size (4 oz bottle): 1/2 cup fractionated coconut oil, 1/2 tsp sweet orange essential oil

Streak-free wood floor cleaner

Sealed hardwood, engineered wood and laminate floors.

Team batch: 1 gallon bucket

- 1 gallon warm water
- 1/2 tsp castile soap or Sal Suds
- 6 drops sweet orange essential oil
- 3 drops rosemary essential oil

How: Wring a microfiber mop until it's barely damp and mop with the grain. Then buff with a clean, dry microfiber pad for a streak-free shine. Too much soap causes streaks, so less is more.

ESSENTIAL OILS

The oils we use, and why

Our all-purpose spray uses rosemary, citrus and a touch of clove. It smells fresh and natural, and each oil adds its own cleaning power.

Citrus: sweet orange and lemon

Rich in d-limonene, the same natural compound used as the solvent in commercial citrus degreasers. It helps lift grease and sticky residue, and its bright scent covers the smell of vinegar.

House blend: 12 drops sweet orange per 16 oz

Rosemary

Its main compounds, 1,8-cineole and alpha-pinene, showed antifungal and antibacterial activity in lab studies. Its fresh, herbal scent keeps the blend smelling clean instead of sweet.

House blend: 6 drops per 16 oz

Clove

High in eugenol, which stopped every *Candida* and *Aspergillus* mold strain tested in lab studies.

All-purpose spray: 3 drops per 16 oz. Heavy-duty clove spray: 1/2 tsp per 32 oz



Our all-purpose blend: rosemary, citrus and clove

12 drops sweet orange, 6 drops rosemary and 3 drops clove per 16 oz bottle. For a crisper scent, swap half the orange for lemon.



Shake before every use

Oils float on water. A quick shake spreads them evenly so every spray smells the same.



Vinegar smell fades as it dries

Any vinegar scent disappears within about 10 minutes of drying, leaving only the rosemary, citrus and clove.



Offer unscented

Note any client who prefers unscented, and leave the oils out for them.

STAINS AND SITUATIONS

What to use, and a quick tip for each

Act fast, blot instead of rubbing, use cold water on unknown stains, and test on a hidden spot first.

Fabric & carpet

SITUATION	BEST NATURAL OPTION	QUICK TIP
Red wine	Cold water, then dish soap + 3% hydrogen peroxide (light or colorfast) or a baking soda paste (dark colors)	Blot from the outside in. Never rub, and never use hot water first.
Coffee or tea	Cold water, then dish soap with a few drops of vinegar	For a set stain, use a plant-based enzyme stain remover before washing.
Blood	Cold water, then an enzyme cleaner or 3% hydrogen peroxide (whites)	Heat sets blood. Keep everything cold until the stain is gone.
Grass	Enzyme stain remover, then a dab of rubbing alcohol if needed	Work it in, wait 15 minutes, then wash warm.
Grease or cooking oil	Cornstarch or baking soda, then plant-based dish soap	Let the powder absorb oil for 15 minutes, brush it off, then work in soap.
Ballpoint ink	Rubbing alcohol on a cotton pad	Put a towel underneath and blot from the back so the ink moves out, not deeper.
Sweat and deodorant marks	Baking soda paste, or a vinegar soak for 30 minutes	On whites, follow with the peroxide pre-treat. Avoid the dryer until it's gone.
Chocolate	Scrape, cold water, then dish soap or enzyme remover	Treat from the back of the fabric so it doesn't spread.
Makeup or foundation	Plant-based dish soap; rubbing alcohol for lipstick	Dab, don't scrub. Rinse with cool water.
Candle wax	Ice, a dull knife, then a warm iron over a paper towel	Harden it, scrape off the bulk, then iron on low so the towel soaks up the rest.
Chewing gum	Ice, then a little coconut or olive oil	Freeze and pick it off. Loosen what's left with oil, then remove the oil with dish soap.
Pet urine	Plant-based enzyme cleaner	Blot well, soak the spot so the enzymes reach the padding, and let it air dry. Don't steam, since heat sets the smell.
Vomit	Baking soda, then enzyme cleaner	Scrape, cover with baking soda for 15 minutes to absorb, vacuum, then treat.
Mud	Let it dry, vacuum, then dish soap and water	Wet mud smears. Dry mud brushes right off.
Rust (white fabric)	Lemon juice and salt	Rub in, set in the sun for an hour, then rinse. Whites only.

Kitchen

SITUATION	BEST NATURAL OPTION	QUICK TIP
Greasy stovetop or range hood	Hot water + plant-based dish soap; baking soda paste for stuck-on spots	Soak hood filters in hot water with baking soda and dish soap for 20 minutes.
Baked-on oven grime	Baking soda paste for 2 to 3 hours, then vinegar spray	Apply it first thing on arrival and wipe it off at the end of the visit. Wipe with a damp cloth until the residue is gone.
Burnt pots and pans	Simmer water with a splash of vinegar, then scrub with baking soda	Not for cast iron. For cast iron, scrub with coarse salt and re-oil.
Microwave splatters	Bowl of water with lemon slices	Microwave 3 minutes, wait 5 with the door closed, then wipe.
Stainless steel fingerprints	Microfiber with a drop of dish soap	Wipe with the grain, then buff with a drop of fractionated coconut oil for shine.
Wood cutting boards	Coarse salt and half a lemon	Scrub, rinse, dry standing up, and oil monthly. Never soak.
Fridge odors	Baking soda	Wipe shelves with 1 tablespoon baking soda per quart of warm water, then leave an open box inside.
Smelly garbage disposal	Ice cubes and citrus peels	Run them with cold water, then flush with baking soda and vinegar.
Hard-water spots on faucets	Vinegar-soaked cloth	Wrap it around the fixture for 20 to 30 minutes. Test first on brass, gold or bronze finishes.

Bathroom

SITUATION	BEST NATURAL OPTION	QUICK TIP
Soap scum on shower glass	Vinegar spray, then baking soda scrub	A squeegee after each shower keeps it from coming back.
Toilet ring	Baking soda and vinegar, then a wet pumice stone	Pumice only on porcelain, and keep it wet so it doesn't scratch.
Dingy grout	Baking soda paste with 3% hydrogen peroxide	Brush with a stiff toothbrush, rinse, and seal grout once a year.
Mildew on grout or caulk	Heavy-duty clove spray or 3% hydrogen peroxide	Fix the moisture with a fan or open window. For mold over about 10 square feet, call a professional.
Clogged showerhead	A bag of vinegar tied around the head	Soak 1 to 2 hours while you clean, then run hot water. Test plated or colored finishes first.
Mirrors	Glass spray (1:1 vinegar and water)	Use a flat-weave microfiber cloth and buff dry.

Floors & surfaces

SITUATION	BEST NATURAL OPTION	QUICK TIP
Finished hardwood floors	Streak-free wood floor cleaner (see recipes)	Wring the mop nearly dry, go with the grain, and buff with a dry microfiber pad for shine. Skip vinegar and steam mops.
Tile and vinyl floors	1/2 cup vinegar per gallon of warm water	Mop, then go over once with plain water if you notice residue.

SITUATION	BEST NATURAL OPTION	QUICK TIP
Marble, limestone and travertine	Warm water and a few drops of plant-based soap	Blot spills right away. Never use vinegar, lemon or abrasive powders.
Granite and quartz counters	Stone-safe everyday spray	Acids can wear down granite sealer over time. Stick with soap and water.
Sticky labels and adhesive	Coconut or olive oil, or a paste of oil and baking soda	Let it soak in for 10 minutes, rub off, then remove the oil with dish soap.
Scuff marks on walls	Damp microfiber with a little baking soda	Rub gently and test on flat paint first, since it can burnish.

Outdoors & sticky stuff

SITUATION	BEST NATURAL OPTION	QUICK TIP
Tree sap (hands, furniture, tools)	Coconut or olive oil; rubbing alcohol on hard surfaces	Rub until it softens, then wash with soapy water. Test on car paint first.
Gum on shoes or patio	Ice, then a scraper	Freeze and pop it off. Use a little oil on the leftover residue.
Bird droppings	Warm water and dish soap	Lay a soaked cloth on top for 10 minutes to soften it, then wipe.
Salt spray film on windows	Plain warm water, then vinegar glass spray	Rinse first so salt crystals don't scratch the glass, then squeegee.
Mildew on patio cushions	Sunlight plus heavy-duty clove spray or diluted vinegar	Test the fabric, brush off loose growth outside, and dry fully in the sun.

LAUNDRY

Natural laundry that actually works

Clean, soft linens without fragrance or harsh chemicals. For client homes, especially vacation rental turnovers, we use a ready-made natural detergent so results are the same every time.

Detergent: our pick for client homes

A fragrance-free, plant-based detergent with the EPA Safer Choice or EWG Verified label, like Seventh Generation Free & Clear or Molly's Suds. Its enzymes break down sweat, body oils and blood on sheets.

How: Use the amount on the label. Safe for high-efficiency (HE) washers.

DIY detergent: Sal Suds

Dr. Bronner's Sal Suds is a true plant-based detergent, not a soap, so it rinses clean even in hard water.

How: 1 tablespoon per load in an HE washer, or 2 tablespoons in a standard washer. Add it to the drum or the detergent drawer.

Whites, towels and sheets: oxygen whitener

Sodium percarbonate breaks down into oxygen, water and soda ash. It brightens whites and lifts stains without chlorine. Choose a pure one, or OxiClean Free (no fragrance or dye).

How: Add one scoop per load, as the label directs, with warm or hot water. It works best hot.

Stains: pre-treat first

Use our stain pre-treat (dish soap plus 3% hydrogen peroxide) for wine, blood and makeup, and an enzyme cleaner for protein stains.

How: Rinse blood and sweat in cold water first. Dab on the pre-treat, wait 10 minutes, then wash. Check before drying, since heat sets stains.

Odors: baking soda

Baking soda softens hard water and neutralizes odors in gym clothes, musty towels and pet bedding. It doesn't whiten or remove stains.

How: Add 1/2 cup directly to the drum with the clothes.

Softness and scent: wool dryer balls

Wool dryer balls soften fabric and cut drying time, with no coating on fibers like dryer sheets leave.

How: Use 3 to 6 balls per load. For a light scent, add 2 to 3 drops of our rosemary and citrus blend to one ball and let it soak in for a few minutes first. A splash of vinegar in the rinse also softens, but use it only now and then, since it can wear washer seals.

Skip DIY recipes made with grated bar soap and borax: soap leaves a film in hard water that grays whites and stiffens towels. Skip castile soap and dryer sheets too. Never mix oxygen whitener or hydrogen peroxide with chlorine bleach.

HONEST LIMITS

Where natural cleaning falls short

Natural products handle almost everything in a home. A few jobs are still tough, and we'd rather tell you than pretend. For each one, we list the safest conventional product we know that still works well. It's your call, and we're happy to talk it through.

Stomach bugs and serious illness

Why natural struggles: Vinegar and essential oils aren't proven to kill norovirus, the stomach bug, and many botanical disinfectants aren't approved for it.

Safest strong option: A hydrogen peroxide disinfectant on the EPA's norovirus list (List G), like Clorox Healthcare Hydrogen Peroxide Cleaner Disinfectant. It's far gentler than bleach. Diluted bleach also works, but it's harsh on lungs, fabrics and grout.

Our take: Worth it for bathrooms, toilets and door handles while someone in the home is sick.

Mold that has spread

Why natural struggles: Natural sprays handle surface mildew well. Mold growing into drywall, wood or carpet, or covering more than about 10 square feet, comes back after cleaning.

Safest strong option: Concrobium Mold Control, which is EPA-registered with no bleach or ammonia, for small areas on hard surfaces. For black stains in grout and caulk, a bleach-based stain remover like RMR-86.

Our take: For large areas or mold inside walls, call a remediation specialist and fix the moisture source.

Years of baked-on oven grime

Why natural struggles: Baking soda needs hours of contact. Thick, burnt-on layers won't fully lift in a single visit.

Safest strong option: Easy-Off Fume Free, which is much milder and fits our apply-on-arrival, wipe-at-the-end routine. Heavy-duty Easy-Off works in minutes but has strong lye fumes.

Our take: Two or three natural cleanings in a row usually get there. After that, regular wipe-downs keep it easy.

Heavy rust and thick hard-water scale

Why natural struggles: Vinegar dissolves light scale. Thick crust and rust stains in toilets, tubs and sinks need a stronger acid.

Safest strong option: CLR Calcium, Lime & Rust, made with lactic and gluconic acids, or Bar Keepers Friend for rust stains. Iron Out for stubborn toilet rust rings. Never use these on marble, travertine or limestone.

Our take: Try a pumice stone first on porcelain toilets. It's natural and very effective.

Clogged drains

Why natural struggles: The baking soda and vinegar fizz looks impressive, but it doesn't clear a real clog.

Safest strong option: A plastic barbed drain tool like Zip-It, which clears most hair clogs in a minute with no chemicals. If a chemical is needed, a gel opener like Drano Max Gel. Avoid sulfuric acid drain openers.

Our take: Leave real clogs to the homeowner or a plumber.

For any of these, wear gloves, open a window and never mix two products, especially anything with bleach. Rinse the surface with water before using a natural spray there.

RATHER BUY THAN MIX?

Good ready-made options

Look for the EPA Safer Choice or EWG Verified label, and skip products with "fragrance" as an unexplained ingredient.

Plant-based soap concentrate

One gallon covers most daily cleaning. Look for castile soap or a plant-based soap like Sal Suds.

Gentle powder cleanser

Non-chlorine scrubbing powder for sinks and tubs.

Enzyme stain and odor remover

For pet accidents, food and protein stains. Look for plant-based enzymes.

EPA-registered botanical disinfectant

Our pick is a thymol-based product like Benefect Botanical Decon 30. Other good active ingredients are hydrogen peroxide, citric acid and lactic acid. Check for the EPA registration number on the label.

Natural paste wax for waxed wood floors

Only for wax- or oil-finished floors. Test a hidden spot with fine steel wool: a gray, waxy smudge means it's waxed. Look for beeswax and carnauba without petroleum solvents, and never use it on polyurethane-sealed floors, where it makes them slippery.

pH-neutral stone cleaner

For marble, travertine and limestone if you'd rather not mix your own.

Microfiber cloths

The most important tool. Most dirt comes off with microfiber and water alone.

STOCKING UP

Buying in bulk

Larger sizes mean you never run out mid-job, with less plastic waste. Always choose quality over the lowest price.

Vinegar

Buy by the gallon at warehouse stores like Costco or Smart & Final. "Cleaning vinegar" is slightly stronger (about 6%).

Baking soda

Large bags from warehouse stores keep you stocked for months.

Castile soap

Gallon jugs refill your bottles for months.

Essential oils

Buy 4 oz or 16 oz bottles from bulk suppliers instead of tiny retail bottles. Check the botanical name on the label (clove bud is *Syzygium aromaticum*).

Essential oils, wholesale

Bulk Apothecary sells larger sizes for businesses and frequent users.

Spray bottles

Glass or heavy-duty bottles last for years. Label each one with its recipe and the date.

THE SCIENCE

What research says about natural cleaning

Natural products are excellent cleaners. For killing germs, the evidence is strongest for hydrogen peroxide and EPA-registered disinfectants, which is why we use one ready-made, EPA-registered botanical disinfectant on high-touch spots.

Vinegar kills some tough bacteria, given enough time and strength

In lab tests, 6% acetic acid for 30 minutes killed tuberculosis bacteria, including drug-resistant strains. Regular 5% vinegar for 20 minutes was less effective against them.

What it means: Vinegar is a capable cleaner. Stronger cleaning vinegar and longer contact help.

[Cortesia C, et al. Acetic acid, the active component of vinegar, is an effective tuberculocidal disinfectant. mBio, 2014.](#)

Vinegar and baking soda aren't full disinfectants

Household vinegar quickly reduced Salmonella and Pseudomonas bacteria but did much less against Staph aureus. Baking soda did little against any of the germs tested.

What it means: Use them for cleaning, and use an EPA-registered disinfectant where germs matter: kitchens, bathrooms and high-touch spots.

[Rutala WA, et al. Antimicrobial activity of home disinfectants and natural products against potential human pathogens. Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology, 2000.](#)

3% hydrogen peroxide is an effective surface disinfectant

CDC's healthcare guideline states: "Commercially available 3% hydrogen peroxide is a stable and effective disinfectant when used on inanimate surfaces."

What it means: It's still a great stain fighter and backup, and it's the active ingredient in many green disinfectants.

[CDC. Guideline for Disinfection and Sterilization in Healthcare Facilities, 2008.](#)

Thymol, from thyme oil, is an EPA-registered disinfectant

Benefect's botanical disinfectant (EPA Reg. No. 84683-3) uses thymol, the main active compound in thyme oil. Its EPA label says it cleans and disinfects in one step, with no rinsing required.

What it means: Green cleaning companies use products like this so one spray both cleans and disinfects high-touch spots.

[U.S. EPA. Pesticide product label, Benefect botanical disinfectant, EPA Reg. No. 84683-3.](#)

Clove oil stops common molds and yeasts in the lab

Clove essential oil and its main compound, eugenol, inhibited every Candida and Aspergillus strain tested in laboratory studies.

What it means: Promising for mildew-prone spots, but these are lab results, not an EPA disinfectant claim. Fixing moisture still matters most.

[Pinto E, et al. Antifungal activity of the clove essential oil from Syzygium aromaticum on Candida, Aspergillus and dermatophyte species. Journal of Medical Microbiology, 2009.](#)

Rosemary oil fights yeast in the lab

Rosemary essential oil and its main compounds, 1,8-cineole and alpha-pinene, killed and weakened Candida albicans yeast in laboratory tests.

What it means: A good reason rosemary is half of our house blend, alongside its fresh scent. These are lab results, so we still use an EPA-registered disinfectant where germs matter.

[Rosemary essential oil and its components 1,8-cineole and \$\alpha\$ -pinene induce ROS-dependent lethality and ROS-independent virulence inhibition in Candida albicans. PLOS ONE, 2022.](#)

Tea tree and thyme oils work, with limits

A public health review found tea tree and thyme oils strongly reduced E. coli but needed long contact times and did less against Staph aureus. Tea tree oil can irritate skin.

What it means: Useful as a boost in recipes. Thymol works best in a tested, EPA-registered formula, which is why we buy our disinfectant ready-made.

[National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health. Effectiveness of Alternative Antimicrobial Agents for Disinfection of Hard Surfaces, 2014.](#)

Regular cleaning sprays are linked to faster lung decline

In a 20-year study of more than 6,000 adults, women who cleaned at home or worked as cleaners lost lung function faster than women who didn't. The lead author said "microfiber cloths and water are more than enough for most purposes."

What it means: Fewer harsh sprays protects the people who clean, including our team.

[Svanes Ø, et al. Cleaning at home and at work in relation to lung function decline and airway obstruction. American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine, 2018.](#)

Safer disinfectant ingredients

San Francisco's environment department recommends hydrogen peroxide, citric acid and lactic acid disinfectants, and flags bleach and quaternary ammonium ("quats") for health concerns.

What it means: When you buy a disinfectant, check the active ingredient on the label.

[San Francisco Department of the Environment. Safer products and practices for disinfecting and sanitizing surfaces.](#)

For mold, removal beats killing

EPA advises scrubbing mold off hard surfaces with detergent and water, fixing the moisture source, and getting professional help for areas over about 10 square feet. Dead mold can still trigger allergies, so it has to be removed.

What it means: Soap, scrubbing and drying come first. Clove spray and peroxide are helpers.

[U.S. EPA. A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture and Your Home.](#)

FOR OUR TEAM

The Malibu Organic Maids standard

Every cleaner reads this guide before their first visit. These eight habits apply on every job.

- ✓ Label every bottle with the recipe name and date mixed.
- ✓ Check the surface before using vinegar or lemon: no acids on marble, limestone, travertine or onyx.
- ✓ Never mix products in one bottle, and never bring bleach to a job.
- ✓ Use color-coded microfiber: one color for bathrooms, one for kitchens and one for everything else, with a fresh set for every home.
- ✓ Test new products and recipes on a hidden spot first.
- ✓ Use our botanical disinfectant instead of the all-purpose spray on toilets, sinks, counters and handles, and leave it wet for the time on the label.
- ✓ Open a window and wear gloves for long jobs.
- ✓ Ask each client's scent preference (our rosemary, citrus and clove blend, or unscented) and note it in their file.

This guide is general information, not professional or medical advice. Always follow fabric care labels and manufacturer instructions, test on a hidden area first, and store cleaning products out of reach of children. Amazon and supplier links are suggestions only; we aren't paid for them.