

Frequently Asked Questions: Cleaning of Stainless Steel in the Home



Slightly damp microfibre cloth is efficient in removing finger marks from decorative finishes

I would like to buy a stainless steel appliance for my kitchen. But isn't its beautiful surface difficult to clean?

No, stainless steels are easy to clean. For this reason, they are normal choice of material in catering and food manufacturing industries. The smooth and non-porous surface makes it difficult for bacteria and other micro-organisms to adhere and survive.



On mirror-polished stainless steel surfaces, chloride-free glass cleaners may perform well

Of course, no material in the home is totally maintenance free, and stainless steel is no exception to this rule. Stainless steel can be cleaned easily, leaving sanitised surfaces with a high standard of hygiene.

The excellent corrosion resistance of stainless steels used in the kitchen means that they resist attack or staining from foods like tomatoes and red peppers, which can affect the surfaces of other materials.

How can I remove fingerprints e.g. from cabinet trim and other decorative surfaces?

In a large majority of cases, a soft cloth or sponge, soaked in soapy water will produce perfect results.

Another easy way of removing them is with a slightly damp microfibre cloth.

On mirror-like stainless steel surfaces, glass cleaners perform well.

Avoid abrasive products as they will leave scratches. On brushed and polished surfaces, wipe along the polish and not across it.

Finger marking on the surfaces of stainless steel is more of a problem on new appliances. After only a few weeks in the kitchen, fingerprints do not show up as much as when the surface was "brand new".

How can I handle more tenacious deposits, e.g. on my kitchen sink?



Cream cleansers are particularly suitable for kitchen sinks

For more stubborn dirt, e.g. grease or tea stains, a normal cream cleanser (e.g. JIF/Cif) will generally do the job.

Especially in areas with hard water, wipe the surfaces dry and remove the wet cloth or sponge to avoid water marks and limescale.

Is there any way I can remove limescale?

If cream cleanser is not enough, treat scale with a 25% vinegar solution and give it some time to dissolve. Then clean, rinse and wipe dry as usual.

What can I do against burnt-on food in pots and pans?

You can reduce the cleaning effort substantially by soaking the burnt-on deposits. Simply fill the pot with hot water and a drop of dish washing liquid and leave it for 15 minutes. After this, the deposit can generally be removed with a sponge or a nylon scouring pad without particular effort.

Never use non stainless steel wool scouring pads. Ordinary steel wool pads can leave rusty stains after cleaning, which may permanently damage the corrosion resistance of the stainless steel.

If stainless steel wool scouring pads are used, where the deposits are very difficult to remove, then the scratches left will not damage the corrosion resistance of the surface. The scratches left however, cannot be removed by further cleaning and so this form of "aggressive" cleaning is not suitable for delicate, decorative surfaces.

Tea stains can be difficult to remove. Is there any particular recommendation?

Washing soda (sodium carbonate) is very efficient in removing tea (tannin) stains. Tea pots can be immersed completely in a hot washing soda solution, on larger surfaces it can be applied with a cloth or sponge. Then rinse with clear water and dry as usual.



Tea stains can be removed with a solution of washing soda

Does the same procedure apply to coffee deposits?

Coffee deposits are oily, and they only occur if coffee urns are not cleaned regularly. In such a case, baking powder (sodium bicarbonate) is the answer. Mix a solution of boiling water and baking powder, allow the solution to work for 15 minutes, and then rinse and dry as usual.

Are there any cleaning practises that should be avoided?

Disinfectants containing bleach (sodium hypochlorite) can damage stainless steel if concentrated or allowed to be in contact with surfaces for too long. Salt or other cleaners shown as containing chlorides can also cause damage. Always dilute these "sanitising" products, if used, keeping the contact times to a minimum and ensuring that the surface are thoroughly rinsed with clean water afterwards.

Hard abrasive scouring powders (e.g. VIM) will leave scratch marks.



Never use "ordinary" wire wool. For pots and pans, special stainless steel scouring pads are available

Wire wool pads made of "ordinary" steel (e.g. Brillo pads) are totally unsuitable for stainless steel as they will impair the self-healing capability of the stainless steel surfaces.

Silver dip cleaners may contain chlorides and strong acids and are not suitable for stainless steel.

There are special protective sprays and pastes for metals. What are they for?

Most spray cleansers for metallic surfaces (e.g. by 3M, Henkel) contain silicon oil. These products, often made specifically for stainless steel, can make cleaning a lot easier. However, although removing old finger marks, these sprays will not prevent new finger marks from being visible. The effect of the spray generally lasts between a few days in heavily exposed areas to several weeks. The silicon oil can be removed again completely with soapy water.

Polishing pastes (e.g. by Johnson, Cox, Erdal, Stahlfix) produce a microscopic, but very resistant wax layer that make metallic surfaces particularly easy to clean. Being resistant to detergents, these layers may last several months. They can be removed with alcohol.

Both these treatments are used for decorative parts, not for food contact articles.