

Spring Housecleaning – Grandma’s Way Still Works

By Elizabeth Jeanne Wheeler

Ah springtime! And time for spring housecleaning!

If you live in a home of “Grandma’s era,” then it’s time to get out those cleaning supplies Grandma probably used and one product unknown to Grandma, dishwasher detergent. Here are a few helpful hints for cleaning for those who never had the pleasure of spring housecleaning with Grandma.

Kitchen cabinets, inside and out, of course, need to be cleaned now that the busy baking season is over. Inside the cabinets, remove all the contents and then wash with a solution of water and that wonderful substance, sudsy ammonia. Wipe dry with cloth rags and consider putting down new shelf paper. Outside, wash the cabinets with a solution of Murphy’s Oil Soap and water. Dry thoroughly with cloth rags. If the hardware is highly decorative, clean it with a toothbrush dipped in the same solution or a sudsy ammonia solution. Bare wood cabinets would appreciate a nice rubbing with furniture oil – not polish, such as Old English Lemon Oil, because our Colorado climate is dry. For cabinet glass, use “Grandma’s window cleaner,” recipe given below.

The stove oven (oh, dear, I hope you have a self-cleaning oven!) can be cleaned with a variety of products available today. However, the outside of the stove can easily be cleaned with that sudsy ammonia again. For super grease and grim, mix dishwasher soap (a wonderful cleaner Grandma didn’t have) and water and scrub. Knobs and handles with grooves can soak in this solution or be cleaned by scrubbing them with a toothbrush dipped in this powerful cleaner.

Hardwood floors can easily be cleaned with a solution of white vinegar and water. Either mop or wash by hand. Be sure to thoroughly dry with cloth rags. If your floors are not varnished, like Grandma, you will probably then wax or oil them. Woodwork and trim can be dusted thoroughly and cleaned with a vinegar water solution, too.

Grandma often took down her winter heavy curtains, hung them on the line, and beat them to get the dust out. She then hung her light summer curtains. Often times, Grandma had cotton drapes or curtains that she washed with soap and bleach and then rinsed in water with bluing in it. The same bluing product that Grandma used is sold today. Next, she starched the curtains to give them some body and resistance to soil and hung them on the clothesline to dry. And yes, that same starch product (in the red and blue box) is sold today. Finally, she ironed (oh, dear!) those curtains.

Spring housecleaning wouldn’t be done without taking down the storm windows, washing them and storing them. Before putting up the screens, Grandma would clean the windows inside and out. She may have used this old-time recipe that is still very effective and cheap today.

When the work is all done, there is nothing like going out to the garden and picking a bunch of daffodils to bring in to the sparkling clean home.

Grandma’s Window Cleaner

1/2 cup sudsy ammonia
2 cups rubbing alcohol
1 tablespoon dishwashing detergent
One quart of water

Mix all together. Pour into a sprits bottle. Spray windows and wipe with a soft cloth or a squeegee.