

## 20 UNUSUAL USES FOR BAKING SODA

by Stephanie Rogers on October 13, 2011 in **FOOD**



*Baking soda is a lazy housekeeper's best friend.*

If I said that my home is sparkling clean thanks to my addiction to white powder, would you haul me off to rehab? No need, because the powder I'm talking about is cheap, natural and totally legal. Sit back and file your nails or lose track of time watching cute cats on YouTube while baking soda cleans and freshens your life. This list of 20 unusual uses for baking soda – most of which require virtually no effort at all – will have you stockpiling the stuff in bulk.

### **Dissolving baked-on drips in the oven**

Get rid of those gross, blackened globs on the bottom of your oven without scrubbing yourself sore or flavoring your next meal with chemical-based cleaner. It really is as easy as sprinkling a liberal amount of baking soda all over the oven floor, spraying it with water until well dampened, and forgetting about it for a few hours. Come back, wipe it out and rinse with vinegar to prevent a white film of baking soda residue.

### **Carpet deodorizer**

All those little fibers in carpeting really hold on to all kinds of smells that you don't exactly want lingering in your home. Sprinkle baking soda liberally, let it sit overnight and then sweep most of it up before vacuuming what's left. Baking soda absorbs the odors instead of trying to cover them, so you don't end up with a disturbing melange of floral perfume and cat vomit.

### **Acne-curing face scrub**

Just coarse enough to slough off dead skin cells, baking soda makes an ideal natural face scrub. Many acne sufferers swear by the stuff, saying that mixing it into a paste with either water or facial cleanser can help clear up breakouts and prevent them from occurring in the first place. Just be sure to moisturize afterwards to prevent excessive drying.

## **Treat itchy insect bites**

A paste of baking soda and water will relieve itching brought on by insect bites, and soothe the pain of stings. To get relief from poison ivy, chicken pox and other widespread sources of intense itching, add 1/2 cup of baking soda to a warm bath and soak.



## **Fruit and vegetable wash**

Pests and, worse, pesticides are common contaminants on produce, so washing our fruits and veggies is essential. Sure, you could buy a pricey spray, but you know what works even better? A few tablespoons of baking soda in a bowl of cool water. Just soak them for five to ten minutes, giving some hard-to-clean veggies like potatoes and celery a little scrub with a vegetable brush.

## **Scrub out the toughest dirty dishes**

Baking soda makes those dreaded dishes covered in dried crud so much easier to tackle. Dunk the dishes into soapy water, then sprinkle the trouble spots with baking soda. Let them sit a little while to soften. You can also add a dash of baking soda to the dishwasher for a boost in cleaning power and a reduction in funky smells.

## **Deodorize sneakers**

Pour a few tablespoons into a paper coffee filter or scrap of tissue paper, tie it up with a rubber band and stick it into a less-than-fresh-smelling shoe and it will absorb the odor without making a mess or damaging delicate materials like suede.

## **Eliminate musty smell in books**

Mold growth makes old books, photographs and other stored items smell musty. Get rid of both the odor and the cause, excess moisture, by sealing the items in an airtight container with a large, open tub of baking soda. You can also sprinkle the baking soda directly onto the items and brush it off.

## **Spackle substitute**

If you want to fill a small hole in plaster or drywall but would rather not purchase a whole tub of spackle for such a small job, try this odd tip: mix baking soda and white toothpaste into a stiff paste. Once it hardens, you won't be able to tell the difference.



## **Brighten your smile**

Baking soda is a common ingredient in toothpaste, but you can give your teeth a little boost by scrubbing them with a paste of baking soda and water between brushings. Baking soda is just abrasive enough to scrape off coffee, wine and other yellowing substances before they penetrate your teeth.

## **Clean patio furniture**

Even cleansers that are specifically made for resin or plastic outdoor furniture can be too abrasive, scratching or dulling the surface. A wet sponge dipped in baking soda will dissolve dirt without causing damage.

## **Buff out bug splatters and clear cloudy headlights**

It may be among the most unusual uses of baking soda, but a paste with water will remove most insect carnage from unpainted car surfaces like bumpers and windshields; add a little dish soap for extra cleaning power if necessary. Headlights that have lost much of their brightness due to hazy, yellowing plastic can also be cleared considerably with the same mixture.

## **Waterless dog bath**

Just like it freshens sneakers and smelly carpets, baking soda can make even the world's most water-phobic dog smell freshly bathed. Rub it onto your dog's coat, leave for a few minutes and then brush it out for a quick dry bath that won't end with the scent of wet dog all over your couch.

## **Cut kitty litter odor**

A shake or two of baking soda is all it takes to make your cat's litter box a far less intrusive presence in your home. This super-cheap additive works just as well as commercial litter box deodorizers, and it won't mingle artificial perfumes with the odor of pet waste.

## **Chemical-free ice melt**

You don't want to break your neck on icy steps in the winter, but you don't want people tracking chemicals into your house, either. Melt that ice naturally without substances that put animals at risk and eat away at your flooring. Just shake on a layer of baking soda, then apply a little bit of sand for traction.



## **Remove oil, grease and wine stains**

Sometimes, scrubbing a stain just makes it worse. Let baking soda do most of the work. Sprinkle it on, let it sit and it will lift much of the offending substance from the surface. Brush it off and then rub the area with a paste of baking soda and water if necessary. This baking soda cleaning trick will remove oil stains from concrete floors, and can save carpets and couches from permanent splotches of spilled red wine.

## **Clarifying hair treatment**

Remove the product build-up that makes your locks limp and dull. A teaspoon of baking soda mixed in with your regular shampoo can be used as a clarifier once a week or so, and a little baking soda dissolved in hot water will clean crusty hairbrushes, too.

## **Polish silver, chrome and stainless steel**

You don't need a special polish for every surface in your home. A damp cloth dipped in baking soda makes chrome and stainless steel shine; add a little lemon juice to brighten brass. **Real Simple** notes that baking soda will even take the tarnish off silver: place the items on a piece of aluminum foil in the bottom of a pot and add a solution of 1/4 cup baking soda, 3 teaspoons of salt and a quart of boiling water. Cover the pot for a few seconds, and the ensuing chemical reaction will do all the work.

## **Neutralize battery acid corrosion**

The ability of baking soda to neutralize acid can save even the most corroded battery terminals. Mix six heaping tablespoons of baking soda into four cups of water and pour the mixture over the corrosion, allowing it to sit for about five minutes. Scrub with a toothbrush, then rinse.

## **Extinguish fires and control flames**

Toss a little baking soda onto the coals if your cookout flames get too high for your liking. In an emergency, baking soda can also be used to extinguish small fires like stove top grease fires.