

How to Keep Kitchen Drains Smelling Fresh

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A fresh-smelling kitchen is one of the simple joys in life, and it is super frustrating when your kitchen drain starts to stink! You're in luck though—you probably have what you need in your pantry to clean and deodorize your drain, and it won't take you very long to tackle. Keep in mind that smelly odors normally come from bits of food and grease that are stuck in the drain and have started to deteriorate and decompose, so once you get rid of the source, the smell should go away.^[1]

Things You'll Need

■ Deodorizing Drains with a Garbage Disposal

- ☐ Sponge
- ☐ Dish soap
- ☐ Citrus rinds
- ☐ Ice cubes
- ☐ Salt
- ☐ Lemon wedges
- ☐ White vinegar
- ☐ Ice cube tray
- ☐ Oxygen bleach
- ☐ Plastic bucket
- ☐ Wrench
- ☐ Rubber pipe plug

■ Treating Drains without a Garbage Disposal

- ☐ White vinegar
- ☐ Baking soda
- ☐ Lemon juice
- ☐ Essential oils

■ Maintaining a Clean Drain

- ☐ Baking soda
- ☐ White vinegar
- ☐ Drain cleaner
- ☐ Sponge

Method 1 of 3: Deodorizing Drains with a Garbage Disposal



1 Grind up citrus rinds in the disposal to release a bright, fresh scent. There's nothing better in a kitchen than the clean, crisp aroma of lemons, limes, oranges, or even grapefruits. Simply toss 2-3 pieces of rind down the disposal, run the water, and turn on the disposal to release the sharp-smelling oils.^[2]

- The citric acid in the fruit peels also helps get rid of food residue that may be stuck in the disposal.
- While the flesh of the citrus fruits will release a pleasant scent, it will dissipate much more quickly than the aroma from the rinds. It's best to enjoy the fruit yourself and dispose of just the rinds.
- If you do grind up the fleshy parts of the fruit, too, make sure to remove all the seeds first.^[3]

Tip: Save your citrus peels in an airtight container in the fridge so you'll always have some available to make your kitchen smell pleasant and clean.^[4]



2 Remove unwanted grime and food by grinding ice cubes and salt. If you notice a foul smell coming from your kitchen drain, it's probably because of food, grease, and bacteria that has collected along the sides of the garbage disposal. Toss a handful of ice into the disposal and dump 1 tablespoon (17 grams) of salt on top of it. Turn the cold water on low and flip on the garbage disposal. Turn it off once all the ice is gone.^[5]

- The abrasiveness of the salt should work to scrub away all the gunk and grease that is stuck in the disposal.
- You can use whatever type of salt you have on hand. Table salt will work just as well as sea salt.



- 3 Use lemon wedges frozen in white vinegar to clean and deodorize the drain.** Quarter several lemons and place 1 wedge in each compartment of an ice cube tray. Fill the rest of the space with white vinegar, and place the tray in the freezer. Whenever your drain starts to smell, grind up 3-4 ice cubes while running some cold water down the drain.^[6]
- The white vinegar will neutralize odors, the lemon will release a bright citrus scent, and the ice will help dislodge food and grime from the garbage disposal.



4 Battle stubborn smells by soaking the disposal in oxygen bleach. If you've tried several other methods to no avail, it's time to tackle the drain with a more abrasive cleaner. There may be food, grease, or bacteria stuck further down in the disposal and in the pipes that are causing the bad smell. To give them a more thorough clean, follow these steps:^[7]

- Get underneath your sink and unscrew the elbow-shaped P-trap that connects your drain pipe to the sewer.
- Plug the end of the pipe with a rubber pipe plug, making sure it's the same size as the pipe itself so it fits tightly.
- Turn on the hot water and let it run until it reaches the top of the sink drain.
- Add in 1/4 cup (34 grams) of powdered oxygen bleach.
- Let the bleach sit for 1 hour.
- Place a bucket underneath the end of the drain pipe and remove the plug, then reconnect the P-trap.
- Run hot water for 30 seconds with the garbage disposal turned on to finishing flushing it out.



5 Scrub the sink flange after doing the dishes to keep it clean. The flange is the metal ring at the top of the drain and it easily accumulates grease and grime. You'd think it would get clean just from the soapy water passing over it, but bacteria can get in the little crevices all around its edges and cause bad smells. Wet a sponge with warm water and dish soap and give it a good scrub every night.[8]

- Once the flange starts to shine, you know that it's getting clean.



6 Switch to **composting instead of putting food down the disposal.** This is one way you can reduce the risk of food getting stuck along the disposal and potentially reduce how often you need to treat or flush the drain. Plus, composting is environmentally friendly![9]

- Things like bones, egg shells, coffee grounds, fibrous foods, and fruit pits should never go down the disposal.[10]
- Never put cooking oils, fats, or grease down your garbage disposal.

Method 2 of 3: Treating Drains without a Garbage Disposal



1 Clear the drain by running cold water before and after doing dishes. For 30 seconds before beginning to wash your dishes, turn the cold water on and let it run down the drain. After you finish the dishes, turn the water back to cold and let it run for an additional 30 seconds. This should help flush out any bits of food that are leftover and keep them from getting stuck.^[11]

- Warm or hot water could actually cause oil or grease to congeal.



2 Flush the drain with white vinegar to neutralize any smelly odors. Because white vinegar is an acetic acid, it can easily counterbalance bad odors, making it a great product to use in your kitchen. Simply pour 1 cup (240 mL) of white vinegar down the drain when you notice a funky smell, and then flush the drain with cold water.^[12]

- You could even do a white-vinegar flush on a daily or weekly basis to help keep your kitchen drain smelling fresh. It definitely won't hurt anything!



3 Clean and deodorize at the same time with baking soda and lemon juice. Sprinkle about 1/2 cup (115 grams) of baking soda down the kitchen drain. Pour 2 tablespoons (30 mL) of lemon juice on top of the baking soda. Flush the mixture down the drain with cold water.^[13]

- You can use fresh lemon juice or bottled lemon juice.



4 Freshen up the drain with baking soda, vinegar, and essential oil. Pour 1/4 cup (45 grams) of baking soda down the drain and add 3-4 drops of essential oil. Add 1 cup (240 mL) of hot white vinegar to the drain, then let the mixture bubble for about 15 minutes. Plug the drain and fill the basin halfway with hot water, then remove the plug to flush the drain.^[14]

- To heat the white vinegar, simply pop it into the microwave in a glass container for about 1-2 minutes.
- The essential oil will diffuse into the air and last for a few days, making your kitchen smell nice.
- Peppermint, lemon, eucalyptus, tea tree, rosemary, orange, and lavender are all great scent options that you might enjoy.



5 Avoid pouring cooking oil, grease, or melted butter down the drain. These types of fats are likely to solidify in your drain. They can catch other bits of food, which could then start to decay and cause foul odors, or they could cause blockages in the drain.^[15]

- To safely dispose of cooking fats, pour them into a disposable container with a lid and throw them away. An old margarine container, sour cream container, or something similar could work well to hold cooking fats until you're ready to put them out with the trash.

Method 3 of 3: Maintaining a Clean Drain



1 Give your drain a weekly baking-soda treatment to combat grease. A great way to maintain a fresh-smelling drain is to regularly treat it with a natural cleaning solution. Put it on your calendar so you don't forget, or plan on always doing it on trash night so you can flush your drain after emptying any leftover containers from the week. To clean your drain this way:[16]

- Pour 1 cup (230 grams) of baking soda down your kitchen drain.
- Pour 2 cups (470 mL) of boiling water down the drain.
- Add another cup (230 grams) of baking soda to the drain.
- Immediately pour 1 cup (240 mL) of white vinegar on top of the baking soda.
- Plug the drain and wait until the vinegar and baking soda stop bubbling.
- Flush the drain one more time with 2 cups (470 ml) of boiling water.



2 Treat the sink basin once a week to dissolve any bacteria build-up. Get the sink basin wet and then sprinkle it with a light coat of baking soda. Spritz it with white vinegar, then let it bubble. Once it stops bubbling, rinse the sink and wipe away any remaining residue.^[17]

- You could do this at the same time you give the drain a thorough cleaning to consolidate your tasks.



3 Use a flashlight to try and spot obvious blockages. If you've tried a few other methods to clear your drain and remove a bad smell, try shining a flashlight down the drain. You may be able to visually see the blockage and be able to use a hook to remove it on your own without having to use a chemical product.^[18]

- Try turning the lights off in the kitchen so that it's easier to illuminate the drain or disposal.



4 Take care of tough blockages with a chemical drain cleaner. Sometimes your kitchen drain may become blocked with food or residue that you can't clean out with things like baking soda or white vinegar. If you've tried a few other cleaning options but are still struggling, try a chemical cleaning product made specifically for drains.^[19]

- Always make sure to follow the instructions on the product very carefully. You may want to wear gloves or open up a window, too.



Expert Q&A

Question

Can vinegar help clear a clogged drain?



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Expert Answer

Yes. Pour 1 cup of vinegar into the drain and let it sit for 30-40 minutes. Vinegar is really acidic, and it will break down anything organic in your drain that's stuck.

Helpful ☐ 0 Not Helpful ☐ 0



Tips

- Sometimes smells come from food that has dried on the sink basin, so don't forget to scrub the walls of your sink regularly.^[20]
- If you're dealing with a clog or a smell that you just can't get rid of on your own, it may be time to call in a professional.^[21]



Warnings

- Always follow the instructions for chemical cleaners to make sure you're using them safely.^[22]
- Be very careful if you're removing a clog from the garbage disposal. You don't want

it to accidentally turn on while your hand is down there.[23]

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About This Article



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This article was co-authored by [Susan Stocker](#). Susan Stocker runs and owns Susan's Green Cleaning, the #1 Green Cleaning Company in Seattle. She is well known in the region for outstanding customer service protocols — winning the 2017 Better Business Torch Award for Ethics & Integrity —and her energetic support of green cleaning practices. This article has been viewed 2,743 times.

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1 votes - 100%

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