

# Clean cooking: Tips for reducing mess

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## Cook with less mess

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Cooking and baking would be so much more pleasurable without the chore of cleaning up afterward. With some simple changes to your routine, you can reduce the mess and bring the joy back to cooking.



### Be prepared

Wash produce as soon as you bring it home. That way, when you're ready to prepare your meal, you'll have one less pot or colander to deal with.

When you're cutting veggies for your recipe, double them and bag the extra. You'll save yourself an entire step Top 5 salmonella carriers and how to stop the spread — and its accompanying mess — for the next time you cook.

### Stop the spatter

When using an iPad, iPhone or Kindle to look up recipes, you can prevent damaging dirt and food splatter with disposable [Chef Sleeves](#). Just slide your device into the recyclable sleeve and close the sticky strip — all ports, sides and surfaces are protected, and your iPad won't end up looking like a grimy cookbook.

Eliminate spatter at the stove and microwave, too. [Brette Sember](#), author of [The Organized Kitchen](#), recommends using lids and spatter guards. "These tools reduce the mess on your stovetop and in your microwave so you spend less time cleaning up after the meal," says Sember.

### Do it now

Wipe down spills as soon as they happen," says Sember. If you wait, they can harden, leaving you with a much bigger cleaning chore later.

"Pay special attention to liquids and foods that have fallen to the floor," says registered dietician and chef consultant [Michelle Dudash](#). "Otherwise, the messes can get tracked and multiplied throughout the house."

### Protect your counters

"Place your stirring spoon on a plate so you don't get dried messes on your counters," says Dudash. It's a simple, time-saving step for which you will be thankful later.

And use a cutting board. It protects countertops from germs and sharp tools, it contains messes and it's a cinch to clean — simply place it in the dishwasher after every use.

### Clean pots and pans *before* you eat

"Wash colanders and pots as soon as you are done with them," says Sember. "They are easier to clean before the food has a chance to dry, and you reduce the clutter of dirty dishes."

For extra grease- and grime-fighting power, add two heaping tablespoons of [baking soda](#) with your regular dish detergent. Without scratching, the baking soda will cut the grease and foods left on pots and pans.

You'll enjoy your meal so much more knowing that there are fewer dishes to wash later.

### Stop spreading the germs

Did you know that the very thing that you use to clean kitchen surfaces — the sponge — is actually the germiest item in most homes? The kitchen sponge contains more germs than most bathrooms, according to a 2011 study by [NSF International](#), a non-profit organization that writes product and practice standards and certifies against those standards.

"Sponges can pick up bacteria during the cleaning process," say NSF researchers. "If not properly sanitized between uses, they are a prime spot for germ growth."

Place wet sponges in the microwave for two minutes once per day and replace them often — at least every two weeks. Or consider replacing sponges altogether with dishcloths, towels and rags, which can be sanitized by washing in the hot water cycle with bleach.

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