

# Kitchen Cleanup After the Flood

NC STATE EXTENSION

## Disaster Recovery

Floodwater can bring silt, raw sewage, oil, and chemical wastes into your home. If these compounds come in contact with food, it makes the food unsafe to eat.

## Wash and Sanitize Metal, Glass, or Ceramic Pots, Pans, Dishes, and Utensils in Contact With Flood Water

### Wash:

1. Remove detachable parts, such as blades, plastic or wooden handles, and screens.
2. Wash dishes, pots, pans, and utensils and detached parts in hot, soapy water. Water for washing and sanitizing must be certified safe to use. Use a stiff brush to get into all corners.
3. Rinse items in non-contaminated, clear, hot water.

### Sanitize:

1. Make a sanitizing solution by mixing 1 tablespoon of unscented chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of warm (not hot) water. (Hot water causes bleach to dissipate, making it less effective).
2. Completely immerse all cleaned pots, pans, dishes, glassware, and utensils in the sanitizing solution for 10-15 minutes.
3. Remove all pieces and let them air dry in a clean and sanitized dish rack. Using a dishtowel could recontaminate the dishes.
4. Boiling cookware can also be used as an alternative sanitizing step

Empty and clean and sanitize the sink after washing each sinkful of dishes and utensils.

### Discard these dishes, pots, pan, and utensils:

Bowls, cups, cutting boards, and any utensil or container made of porous material that can absorb water, such as wood

Dishes and serving dishes with any cracks, chips, or scoring can be salvaged if they will only be used for decorative purposes

Thoroughly wash countertops with soap and water, using hot water if available. Rinse and then sanitize them by applying a solution of 1 tablespoon of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach per gallon of drinking water (or the cleanest, clearest water available). Allow to air-dry.

## Iron Pots, Pans, and Utensils

1. Wash with soap and water, using a stiff brush, scouring powder, or steel wool.
2. If rust remains, wipe items with an oil-saturated cloth or a commercial rust remover. If using a commercial rust remover, be sure to follow the label instructions.
3. Wash again in hot, soapy water, rinse, and dry thoroughly.

Season iron pans and utensils with a generous amount of unsalted cooking oil. Heat in a 250°F oven for 2 or 3 hours. This will permit oil to soak into the pores of the metal. During the heating process, apply more oil as needed. When seasoning is completed, wipe off the excess oil.

## Stainless Steel, Nickel-Copper Alloy, Nickel, or Chrome-Plated Metals

Wash thoroughly and polish with a fine-powdered cleanser. If hardware is broken so that base metal is exposed and rusted, wipe with kerosene. Then wash and dry the surface. Wax after each use to prevent further rusting.

## Copper and Brass

1. Polish with a copper or brass polish or rub with a cloth saturated with vinegar or rub with a piece of salted lemon.
2. Always wash copper thoroughly with soapy water after using acids or commercial polishes or they will retarnish rapidly.
3. Wash lacquered ornamental copper in warm soapy water. Rinse with warm water and wipe dry. Do not polish. Do not soak.

NOTE: Do not use copper and brass items for food preparation or service.

## Aluminum Pans and Utensils

1. Wash thoroughly with hot soapy water. Scour any unpolished surfaces, such as the insides of pans, with soapy steel wool pads. However, do not scour plated aluminum surfaces because it might remove the finish.
2. Sanitize in a bleach solution (1 tablespoon unscented chlorine bleach per gallon of warm, not hot, water).

3. To remove dark stains from aluminum pans, fill pan with water. Add 1 tablespoon vinegar or 2 teaspoons cream of tartar for each quart of water. Boil for 10 to 15 minutes, scour with steel wool, wash with soap, rinse, and dry.

## For More Information

For more information on disaster preparedness and recovery visit the [NC Disaster Information Center](#).

Materials adapted the USDA FSIS and University of Florida/ Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences' Disaster Handbook.

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**Publication date: Oct. 20, 2016**

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This publication printed on: Sept. 27, 2018

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