

## 23 Ingenious Uses for White Vinegar

DivineCaroline

About 10,000 years ago, ancient people discovered a product that would change lives forever. Wine had been around for a while, but after some was allowed to oxidize, vinegar was born. It became an immediate hit. The Babylonians used vinegar as a preservative, as did Ancient Greeks and Romans. Some peoples, including the Chinese, believed that vinegar was a tonic that would give them strength and vitality, as well as bestow healing properties. Legend has it that Hannibal only succeeded in crossing the Alps because his armies heated mountain boulders and doused them with vinegar, causing the rocks to crumble and clear the path.



Vinegar's magic ingredient is acetic acid, which comprises about 5 percent of the finished product. Vinegar has been produced commercially for about 2,500 years, making it one of the oldest products in use by humans. There are many different types of vinegar out there, all produced by the oxidization of alcohol into acetic acid, but white vinegar is the most useful and the most versatile by far.

White vinegar has dozens of household applications, and the best part is that it's green. It's enjoying a newfound popularity as many people try to avoid toxic or harsh cleaning chemicals around their pets and children, as well as save money by making their own [cleansers](#). Not to mention that vinegar is cheap, it's versatile, and it doesn't irritate allergies like some fragranced cleansers. Chances are, whenever you run into a household funk, vinegar is your answer.

**Kitchen Remedies:** Besides adding zest to salad dressings, white vinegar is handy for many cooking tasks.

1. Adding a few tablespoons of white vinegar to the water when poaching eggs helps the whites stay formed. Add a few tablespoons to the water when boiling eggs, and if any shells crack, the whites won't leak out.
2. If your leafy veggies are wilted, soaking them in cold water with a little vinegar can perk them right up.
3. After chopping an onion, you can eliminate the odor from your hands by rubbing them with a bit of white vinegar.
4. When cooking any [vegetables from the cabbage family](#) (like broccoli or cauliflower), adding a little vinegar to the water will perk up the taste and reduce the gassiness they can induce. This also works when cooking beans, making Mexican food a far more attractive option.



**Cleaning House:** Vinegar can help with a variety of cleaning tasks, since the acid acts as a disinfectant and an odor neutralizer.

5. Clean and deodorize the garbage disposal by mixing equal parts vinegar and baking soda and putting it down the drain. After letting this fizzing mixture sit for a few minutes, flush out the drain with warm water for a clean and stink-free sink.

6. The steam from a boiling a bowl of vinegar and water can loosen caked-on food and get rid of odors in the microwave, too.

7. One of my favorite vinegar remedies and my personal weapon against fruit flies is to set out a small dish of white vinegar and some smashed fruit, covered with plastic wrap with some holes in it—the flies crawl into the trap, but can't get out.

8. If your stemware is cloudy from the dishwasher, wrap the glasses in paper towels soaked in vinegar, let them sit, and the cloudy deposits will rinse right off.

9. There's no need to use bleach on tile grouting when you can let vinegar soak on it and then [scrub with a toothbrush](#).

10. Bring lightly scuffed or dirty DVDs back to life by wiping them down with some vinegar on a soft cloth.

11. If you have water condensation marks on your wood, just rub the piece of furniture with equal parts vinegar and vegetable oil to remove them. Make sure to rub with the grain, and then invest in a set of coasters.

**Cleaning Clothes:** Vinegar works magic on upholstery and fabric, too.

12. If a child has an "accident" on a mattress, clean it with a solution of vinegar and water. Afterwards, pour some baking soda onto the mattress, and brush or vacuum the residue once it's dry.

13. Spraying vinegar onto deodorant-stained shirts before the wash can remove the discoloration. It's also great for fighting mustard, tomato sauce, or ketchup stains.

14. Adding a cupful of [vinegar to the rinse cycle](#) of your washing machine can freshen up bright colors and give you cleaner laundry. Acetic acid won't harm fabrics, but it dissolves the soap residue that can dull dark clothing. It also acts as a fabric softener, a static reducer, and a mildew-inhibitor.

15. Vinegar will also loosen chewing gum stuck to car upholstery, rugs, and carpeting.

**Outdoor Solutions:** Tough enough even for the outdoors, vinegar can function as a car cleaner and an organic pest



remover.

16. If your car still sports a bumper sticker from two elections ago, remove it by spraying the decal with white vinegar to saturate the area, and the sticker will peel off in a few hours. (You might need to spray it a few times.)

17. Wiping down your car [windows](#) and windshield with a three-to-one vinegar-water mixture can keep them frost-free in the wintertime.

18. Kill weeds and crabgrass growing in sidewalks and driveways by pouring vinegar onto them. A half-and-half solution of vinegar and water can even kill garden slugs if it's sprayed directly onto them.

19. To extend the life of cut flowers, add a few tablespoons of vinegar to the water in their vase, along with a teaspoon of sugar.

**Pet Protection:** There's no need to use chemicals near pets when vinegar can handle most cleaning and bathing tasks.

20. Wipe out itchy ears with undiluted vinegar to keep dogs and cats from scratching at them.

21. Cats avoid vinegar, so to keep them from scratching furniture or sitting on certain areas, spray a vinegar solution onto the spot.

22. For outdoor areas, soak a sponge in vinegar and place it in the forbidden area to keep cats away. If kitty likes to mark his territory, spraying the area with vinegar can help eliminate the smell and deter recurrences.

23. Vinegar also gets rid of skunk odor. Soak the animal with a half-and-half vinegar and water solution, and then rinse with fresh water.

Vinegar can disinfect, deodorize, and de-gunkify just about everything. From shower curtains to sofa cushions, there's not much that it can't do. As an alternative to expensive and harsh cleaning chemicals, vinegar is something you can feel good about keeping in your cupboards. White vinegar and baking soda can even remove product buildup from hair and leave it soft and manageable. A product that can clean you, the dog, your car, and your house is what I'd call a good, green buy.

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