



Want to Text with Us? Join the What to Eat This Week Text Updates!

TIPS & TECHNIQUES

KITCHEN

11 Secrets from People Who Always Have Amazing-Smelling Homes



BY ASHLEY ABRAMSON

Updated Mar 4, 2022



Credit: Hinterhaus Productions | Getty Images

We independently select these products—if you buy from one of our links, we may earn a commission. All prices were accurate at the time of publishing.



A few years ago, my best friend bought a new house and had me over to check it out. Right away, I noticed how amazing it smelled — like she'd infused the whole place with freshly washed laundry (she hadn't). After I got home, I couldn't help but fixate on one thing about my own space: It didn't smell good. My house didn't *stink*, but it also didn't smell memorably good like my friend's — a problem I wanted to solve with haste. Sure, I'm not having many people over these days, but that's no reason not to search for my home's signature scent. I've been home a *lot* more than usual, so I may as well enjoy sniffing it.

Curious how folks like my friend keep their homes smelling amazing? Here are some of those people's best tips.





Credit: [Joe Lingeman](#)

1. Absorb bad smells with baking soda.

Sometimes, keeping your space in amazing-smelling condition means preventing the odors that don't smell good from taking over the atmosphere — especially if you regularly cook with distinct-smelling spices like food blogger [Vered DeLeeuw](#). Her secret? A few bowls of baking soda scattered around the house and replaced weekly. "This is especially helpful in the pantry and in a small kitchen," she says. "Baking soda does a wonderful job of absorbing, not masking, odors — plus, it's easy to find and cheap!"





Credit: [Joe Lingeman](#)

2. Make a DIY room spray.

Steve Schwartz, founder and master tea blender at the Los Angeles-based tea purveyor [Art of Tea](#), swears by a DIY concentrate of botanicals such as eucalyptus, lavender, and lemon myrtle. First, he steeps the herbs in hot water (just like making tea) then transfers the mix to a spray bottle for freshening up the kitchen.

Another interesting fact from Schwartz: Tea is also a natural odor absorber, so you can use old dried tea leaves to nix smells in your fridge instead of baking soda. Who knew?







Credit: [Maria Siriano](#)

3. Simmer spent lemons.

Don't throw away those lemon rinds! Chef [Carla Contreras](#) uses the lemons she squeezes for lemon waters to make her kitchen smell amazing. "I place the lemons in a giant stock pot and fill it up with water, then let them simmer on low on my stove for hours," she says. "It's such a beautiful smell for something that might go to waste."



Credit: Photo: Joe Lingeman; Food Styling: Cyd McDowell

4. Roast coffee beans.

Another trick Contreras loves is one she learned in her days as a barista. Just take a couple of coffee beans and place them in the oven at 400 degrees for seven to 10 minutes, then leave the oven door open afterwards for an energizing, coffee house smell.

Related: [The Last Thing You Should Do with Used Coffee Grounds](#)



Credit: [Carly Diaz](#)

5. Whip up a stovetop potpourri.

Simmering warm, spicy herbs on the stovetop is one of the best ways to make your home smell good while adding a touch of seasonal nostalgia. Haeley Giambalvo, founder of [Design Improvised](#),



Credit: Sarah Crowley

6. Warm up vanilla extract.

When he's at home, travel blogger [Philip Weiss](#) puts a few drops of vanilla extract in a dish, then bakes it for half an hour in the oven. The vanilla releases a subtle-but-cozy scent that'll *almost* trick you into thinking someone baked a delicious cake.

Put a citrusy twist on your vanilla cake vibes by adding lemon zest and a capful of vanilla extract to a ramekin along with some water. "Set the ramekin on a small baking sheet and slide it into a 300-degree oven, and you get to enjoy an hour or so of deliciousness in the air," says cookbook author [Lisa Chernick](#).

Related: [The First Thing You Should Do with a New Bottle of Vanilla Extract](#)



Credit: Catherine Meschia



One of the most effective and affordable odor busters in the kitchen is activated charcoal, which is electrically nonpolar and can absorb most common kitchen vapors and gases. For a quick fix in a smelly kitchen, Lee hangs a pound of activated charcoal in a porous bag by his kitchen window. You can also put activated charcoal in a few bowls around your kitchen near potential odor sources, like your garbage disposal or your trash.

Credit: Sarah Crowley

8. Use a cup of vinegar.

You probably already use vinegar to clean. According to David Cusick, chief strategy officer at House Method, you can also use it to deodorize. His go-to trick: "After cooking, especially with a greasy dish, simmer white vinegar on the stove to help remove the smell," he says. "You can also leave a glass of vinegar on the counter overnight to wake up with a fresher-smelling kitchen."

Why is vinegar so effective? Cusick says it's chemistry 101. Vinegar is acetic acid, which binds with bad odor molecules. But don't worry! The smell of vinegar won't stick around; it'll just absorb the yuck.





Credit: Photo: Joe Lingeman/Kitchn; Food Stylist: CC Buckley/Kitchn

9. Bake cookies (yes, really).

Author and naturalist [Lora Hein](#) learned one of her favorite tricks from a realtor, who would pop a sheet of chocolate chip cookies in the oven minutes before an open house for an enticing, homey smell. If you don't need all those cookies on hand every day, Hein suggests freezing a roll of cookie dough and just putting two or three slices in the toaster oven for a delicious snack and an amazing-smelling kitchen.



Credit: AT Video

10. Diffuse essential oils.

Essential oils, or concentrated plants and herbs, are a common way to lend a fresh smell to your space if you're not a fan of perfumed candles or air fresheners. Ian Kelly, VP of operations at [NuLeaf Naturals](#), says he uses essential oil diffusers throughout his home, keeping it natural and simple with oils like grapefruit, rosemary, lemon, mint, and cinnamon orange.

Credit: [Quentin Bacon](#)

11. Hang dried herbs.

Founder of Colony Roofers (and avid home chef) Zach Reece likes to hang dried herbs like olive branches, sage, and bay leaf. Just tie a bunch of them and hang them at face-level somewhere in



TIPS AS NEEDED FOR COOKING:

Does your home always smell amazing? What are your secrets?



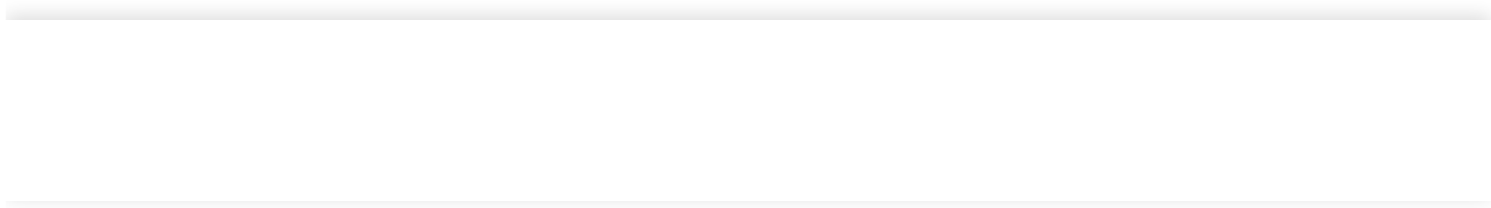
Ashley Abramson

CONTRIBUTOR

Ashley Abramson is a writer-mom hybrid in Minneapolis, MN. Her work, mostly focused on health, psychology, and parenting, has been featured in the Washington Post, New York Times, Allure, and more. She lives in the Minneapolis suburbs with her husband and two young sons.

FOLLOW ASHLEY









Follow us



Get our best recipes, grocery lists, and clever kitchen tips delivered to your inbox.

Email Address

I'M IN

By signing up, you agree to our [terms of service](#) and [privacy policy](#).

- Recipes
- Occasions
- Kitchens
- Cooking Tips
- Tools & Groceries
- Food & Culture

- Partner With Us

Contact

Privacy Policy

Jobs

EU And California Data Subject Requests
- About

Terms Of Use

Our Team

Site Map

Kitchn is © 1994-2022 Apartment Therapy, LLC

